A logo for a tv show

Description automatically generated

Library Extension Project

# Activity: Same Message/Different Meaning

Created by: Megan Goedge, Petoskey District Library; Stephie Luyt, Traverse City Area Public Schools; Sue Ellen Christian, Western Michigan University

Description: Group discussion and hands-on activity in which participants create messages that can be interpreted in a variety of ways.

Target audience: Teens, tweens, anyone who could benefit.

Objectives: Demonstrate that everyone perceives and receives messages differently.

Suggested text:Have you ever experienced media (song lyrics, video, text, etc.) very differently from a friend or family member? Did this surprise you? Together, we are going to explore the ways that the same message can be interpreted differently by different people by creating simple messages for others to interpret.

Program details: Participants think of a message they want to convey via text; the text should be short. One suggestion is to use pop culture phrases (e.g., “That’s fire!” means something is great, or “This is bussin’ food” means it’s yummy) or song lyrics. Participants can use a smartphone or library iPad/device to write the message and use Canva for fonts and colors to design it. Once each participant has created at least one message, share each on a projector or monitor, and discuss how the messages are interpreted by those present as well as by others.

Emojis mean different things to different people. Ask teens and tweens to discuss how they use emojis differently depending on who they are communicating with – peers, relatives, teammates, caregivers, etc. Use the Emoji Discussion Prompt slides (in Resources below) or the PPT version in Resources.

Materials needed: Smart phones, iPads or computers, wi-fi access, Canva or a similar design software, monitor or projector, emoji discussion prompt slide.

For a low-tech version of this activity, use paper, glue crayons, colored pencils, print the emoji discussion prompt slide and if desired, provide a variety of printed words and emojis for participants to use in creating their own messages.

Suggested runtime: 30 minutes

Youth adaptation: Select from a range of [templates](https://www.thewordfinder.com/wordlibs/) for participants to create their own Mad Lib stories. But, in a twist of same message/different meaning, ask participants to fill in their template not with words but with emojis! Provide a sheet of emojis they can cut and paste onto their templates.

Youth Extension: Read *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* by Mac Barnett. Ask for opinions about the ending. Read *Mr. S* by Monica Arnaldo. Talk about the mystery of Mr. S. The concept is that participants read the same book (message), and likely have very different interpretations.

Adaptation for adults: Discuss ***why*** it is that different people understand the same message differently; consider variables such as demographics, income, occupational backgrounds, culture, belief systems, ideologies.

OR: Use emojis and discuss the perceived meaning of each. Compare participants’ interpretations; this is ideal for families and intergenerational groups.

Unique Space or Personnel Needs: Meeting room, classroom space.

Resources: Wonder Media Library website’s Same Message/Different Meaning game page.

Printables: For a low-tech version of this activity, print various emojis and words so participants can arrange them to make messages (as in Magnetic Poetry).

  

A group of emojis with a skull and a white text

Description automatically generated

A bar graph with emojis

Description automatically generated

A group of emojis

Description automatically generated