



IS SEEING BELIVING...OR DECEIVING?

Grade: Seventh Grade

Subjects:



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OVERVIEW

This lesson uses communication and media literacy to engage students in exploring the issues of trespassing on railroad property. Students discuss real-life trespassing incidents and the glorification of trespassing in the media. Then they develop a legal action letter against one of the companies responsible for the media campaign. An extension to this lesson involves students in creating a mock trial of a trespasser who has caused a train to go off the tracks.

SAFETY MESSAGE:

■ Trains can move at any time; never crawl under or between trains.

SUGGESTED TIME ALLOWANCE

Two 40-50 minute class periods

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Define trespassing and identify examples of trespassing on railroad property.
- Present evidence that supports legal action against media producers.
- Express an argument in writing.
- Make a persuasive oral presentation.
- Evaluate whether an argument against a media producer is valid.

National Academic Content Standards addressed by this lesson.

MATERIALS

For the class:

- Examples of trespassing, either on cards or on video
- Internet-connected computer(s)
- Copies of magazines or ads that teacher has located (or students in other classes have located) that provide examples of media glorification of trespassing on railroad tracks

VOCABULARY

Trespassing, media, media campaign, legal action, argument

PROCEDURES

TEACHER PREPARATION:

Read background information on trespasser safety (Track Facts and Myths & Realities). If the video *Die Hard If You're Dumb* is available, prepare to show specific clips of the video. If possible, locate examples of the media's misuse of railroad property, including music videos, commercials and television programs.

MOTIVATION:

Use one of the following activities, based on resources available:

- If *David's Run* is available, view it with them, stopping throughout to discuss things that happen. Give students responsibility for viewing by telling them they should watch for specific examples of trespassing on railroads. Play the video and have them raise their hands when they see an example. When a hand is raised, pause the video to briefly discuss the example shown. Discuss: *Why is this an example of trespassing? What is wrong with the action described? How should an action like this be penalized?* Have all students make note of the trespassing violation that they have just seen. Resume the video and continue viewing in this interactive fashion. (See additional suggestions for using David's Run in the classroom.)
- Alternatively, have students work in pairs or groups, depending upon class size to complete the cards activity. Pass out one "No Trespassing" card to each pair or group. Go around the room. Each pair reads aloud their trespassing example, followed by a brief class discussion of the following questions: *Why is this an example of trespassing? What is wrong with the action described? How should an action like this be penalized?* Have all students take note of the trespassing violations represented by the cards around the room.

ACTIVITY:

1. Ask students if they have ever seen trains or railroads depicted in any movies, TV shows, commercials, books or print advertisements. Allow for their recollections of specific examples to be shared. *What harm may there be in allowing these media campaigns to air or be published?*
2. Tell them that in an effort to "expose" the producers of these media examples (and others), we will be going on a hunt for trespassing examples in the media. Start them out with some additional examples, if available.
3. Give students one class period within their groups to find and evaluate at least one media example that demonstrates "glorification" of trespassing on railroad property. Tell them their charge is to have the ad or program pulled from distribution. Have them develop an argument for why this particular media example should be contested legally. The details of this argument should go into a formal business letter written to the producer/publisher and presented to the class.

CONCLUSION:

Have students present their media example and read their business letter to the class. The class should review the efficacy of the argument presented. Have students in the audience pose as the creator of the campaign and determine whether they would pull the campaign from the marketplace as a result of the argument presented in the letter.

HIGHER ORDER THINKING

To assure students are using critical thinking skills, present problems such as this at an appropriate place within the lesson: *You are a top producer of television commercials. You know that trespassing on railroads is illegal, but your client, Levi's Jean Co., wants a commercial that shows how a pair of jeans can become a pair of frayed cutoff shorts just by laying the jeans on the railroad tracks when a train goes by. What do you do short of losing the job?*

ASSESSMENT

- Class discussion of trespassing examples (Define "trespassing" and identify examples of trespassing on railroad property.)
- Written presentation of argument in legal action letter (Present evidence that supports legal action against media producers. Express an argument in writing.)
- Presentation to class (Make a persuasive oral presentation.)
- Discussion of presentations with class (Evaluate whether an argument against a

media producer is valid.)

EXTENSIONS

Social Studies: Conduct a mock trial in which the defense must help a defendant who has trespassed on the train tracks and caused a train to go off the tracks (killing no one). The prosecutors are working for the railway industry, which has accused the trespasser of ruining one of their newest trains. Students should determine the best way to argue both sides and justify consequences for the trespasser's actions if he/she is convicted.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Background information on trespasser safety (Track Facts and Myths & Realities - Acrobat Reader required)

David's Run Video

David's Run Video Clip (Quicktime Required)

Video utilization tips for David's Run

Media examples

NATIONAL ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

These standards are provided by the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) online publication, Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education. <<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>>

The following standards are addressed by the activities of this lesson:

Arts: Theater

Level III: Middle School (Gr. 5-8)

Standard 2: Uses acting skills

Benchmark: Interacts as an invented character in improvised and scripted scenes

Health

Level III: Middle School (Gr. 6-8)

Standard 5: Knows essential concepts and practices concerning injury prevention and safety

Benchmark: Knows injury prevention strategies for family health

Language Arts

Level III: Middle School (Gr. 6-8)

Standard 1: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Benchmarks:

- Uses style and structure appropriate for specific audiences (e.g., public, private) and purposes (e.g., to entertain, to influence, to inform)
- Writes expository compositions (e.g., presents information that reflects knowledge about the topic of the report; organizes and presents information in a logical manner)

Standard 2: Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

Benchmark: Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas (e.g., establishes tone and mood; uses figurative language)

Standard 3: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions

Benchmark: Uses standard format in written compositions

Standard 8: Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning

Benchmarks:

- Conveys a clear main point when speaking to others and stays on the topic being discussed
- Presents simple prepared reports to the class

Life Skills: Thinking and Reasoning

Level III: Middle School (Gr. 6-8)

Standard 1: Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument

Benchmark: Questions conclusions based on very small samples of data, biased samples or samples for which there is no central sample

To see related standards for your state, search [Achieve's Clearinghouse](http://www.achievethecore.org/clearinghouse/):

< <http://www.achievethecore.org/clearinghouse/> >

