

Digital Life 101

Essential Question

What is the place of digital media in our lives?

Lesson Overview

Students are introduced to the 24/7, social nature of digital media and technologies, and gain basic vocabulary and knowledge for discussing the media landscape.

Students watch the video “**Digital Life 101 Animation**,” which shows the 24/7, social nature of digital media — a change from the media consumption culture of the past. They then make similes about their digital lives and learn that because media connect us in more social and interactive ways than ever before, it is important to carry out online relationships responsibly. This lesson also serves as an assessment baseline for teachers to gain a better understanding of their students’ familiarity with digital media and vocabulary associated with digital life.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- learn about the 24/7, social nature of digital media.
- explore their digital lives.
- learn that it is important to act responsibly when carrying out relationships over digital media.

Materials and Preparation

-  Preview the video “**Digital Life 101 Animation**,” and prepare to show it to students.
- Copy the **My Media Life Is Like ... Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Copy the **Got Media Smarts? Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Copy the **Digital Life Glossary Student Handout**, one for each student.

Family Resources

- Send home the **Digital Life Family Tip Sheet (Middle & High School)**.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grade 6: RI.7, RI.10, W.4, W.6, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6

grade 7: RI.10, W.4, W.6, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6

grade 8: RI.10, W.4, W.6, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6

NETS•S: 1a, 1b, 2a, 5a, 5b

Key Vocabulary –

media: communication, including television, radio, and newspapers, that often reaches and impacts a large audience

digital media: electronic devices and media platforms such as computers, cell phones, the Internet, digital video, social networking sites, video games, and virtual worlds that allow users to create, communicate, and interact with one another or with the device or application itself

simile: a literary device for comparing two unlike things

introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **media** and **digital media**.

DISCUSS some differences between digital media and traditional media, such as TV and radio, and how digital media generally allow people opportunities for interactive communication — for creation and self-expression. Instant messaging, for instance, is more “two-way,” because people are talking with one another. Media such as TV and radio are generally more “one-way,” because people generally do not interact with one another through these technologies. Innovations in digital media enable us to create, share, and communicate in addition to consuming media.

ASK:

What are examples of things you do with one-way media, such as TVs or radios?

Sample responses:

- Watch TV
- Listen to the radio

What are some of the ways people communicate with or share with others over digital media?

Samples responses:

- Go on social networks
- Text
- Talk in virtual worlds
- Blog
- Upload videos and photos
- Play multiplayer games

teach 1

Watch Video (10 minutes)

EXPLAIN to students that they are going to watch a video about how digital media are a 24/7 part of our culture – that video game consoles and portable devices, such as cell phones, seem to surround us. Remind students, though, that the media lives of all kids and families are not the same. Some kids are allowed to use more digital media than others, and some kids like these tools more than others.

SHOW students the video “**Digital Life 101.**” The video touches on the different types of media and digital media that exist, the actions that people take with these technologies, and even specific programs and applications.

ASK:

What are some things you learned from the video?

Sample responses:

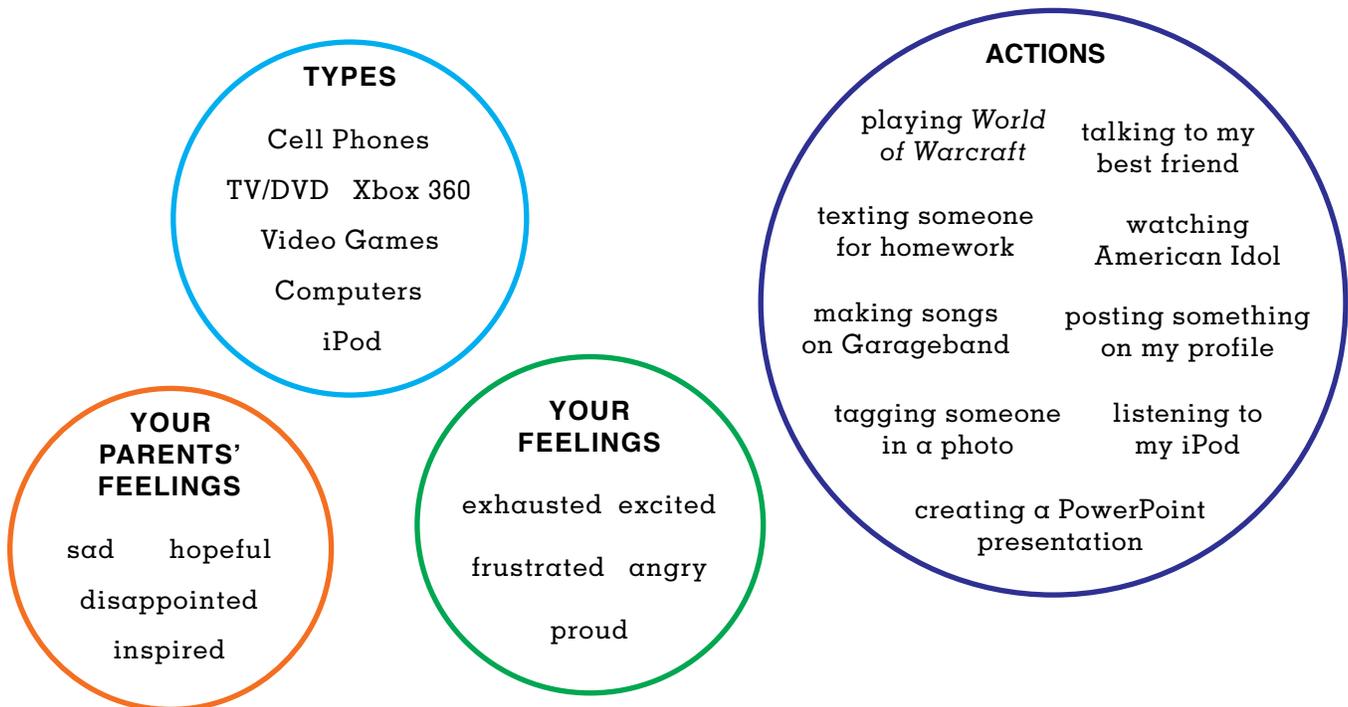
- Digital media are a 24/7 part of our culture.
- Digital media are social. They allow people to build friendships, join new communities, and provide amazing opportunities for creation and self-expression.

teach 2

Make a Concept Map (15 minutes)

CREATE a concept map on the board that contains the following headings: “Types” of digital media, “Actions” students take with digital media, “Your Feelings” about digital media, and “Your Parents’ Feelings” about digital media.

INVITE students to self-reflect and brainstorm about all four parts of the concept map. Encourage them to list items that are both general (e.g., cell phones) and specific (e.g., playing World of Warcraft).



teach 3

Create Similes (10 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **simile**.

HAVE students fill out the **My Media Life Is Like ... Student Handout** in which they create and illustrate a simile about their digital lives. When students are finished, they should share their similes.

HAVE students place their similes on their desks and rotate three to four times so they can see different people's similes. Have students share observations about their classmates' similes with each rotation. You may want to provide the following examples for students of similes:

- Someone who does not use much media at all might say that her media life is like a dry desert because there is little life there.
- Someone might say that his media life is like a track meet because he is exhausted at the end of the day.

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

What are digital media?

Digital media and technologies are electronic devices and media platforms such as computers, cell phones, digital video, social networking sites, the Internet, video games, and virtual worlds, which allow users to create, communicate and interact with one another or with the device or application themselves.

What are two important characteristics of digital media?

- (1) They are a 24/7 part of our culture
- (2) They are social – people communicate over digital media

Why might people feel differently about their digital lives?

Some people use digital media more than others. People like and dislike different things for different reasons.

Digital Life 101

Directions

Below are common words related to digital media. Test your family members on the definitions! If they are having trouble understanding the term, help them by reading the correct definition. For more digital terms, check out our online digital glossary at www.common sense media.org/educators/digital-glossary.

An **aggregator** is a website or Web application where headlines and other content are collected for easy viewing. Aggregators such as Google News compile news articles and posts.

An **avatar** is a two- or three-dimensional icon that represents a computer user or a gamer. An avatar can be a cartoonish graphic, a photograph, a screen name, or a fully-developed character.

A **blog**, from the term “weblog,” is a type of website usually updated by an individual or a group of bloggers. Some blogs provide news or opinions on a specific subject, while others are more like online journals. Most blogs allow readers to leave comments on blog posts.

Flaming is the act of saying mean things online, usually in ALL CAPS, and often in a public forum with the intention to humiliate. **Flame wars** can occur easily online, as it can be difficult to figure out people’s intentions or emotions online.

A **mash-up** is a remix or blend of multiple songs, videos, or other media content into one product. Fan fiction writing is one form of a mash-up, as writers take characters from a well-known video game, movie, or book, and rewrite their actions or relationships.

A **massively multiplayer online game (MMOG)** is usually an online virtual world that multiple players navigate and play in together. While in this virtual world, their avatars chat, cooperate, and quest together, oftentimes towards a goal.

A **P2P**, or **Peer-to-Peer**, network allows for sharing of mp3s, videos, and other digital files by transferring information directly between two computers rather than by going through a central server. P2P technology is also behind the popular Internet phone service Skype.

Phishing is the illegal act of sending emails or messages that appear to come from authentic sources, but really come from spammers. Phishers often try to get people to send them their personal information, everything from account numbers to passwords.

A **podcast** is a downloadable video or audio file. Podcasts can be verbal, based on a certain topic, or can include music, video, and commentary. Most podcasts are updated regularly through the addition of new episodes.

An **SMS**, or **text message**, is a short message of fewer than 160 characters sent from a cell phone. An **MMS** is a text message that contains an attached multimedia file, such as a picture or song.

Digital Life 101

Directions

Think about your life with media. First consider the questions below. Use your responses to help you finish the statement, “My media life is like a ...” This statement is a simile, a literary device for comparing two unlike things. For instance, someone who does not use much media might say that her media life is like a desert, because there is little life there. Someone might say that his media life is like a track meet, because he is exhausted at the end of the day. Finally, make a picture or drawing of the simile you created. The drawing can include text.

Questions to consider:

1. Are digital media a small, medium, or big part of your life?
2. What kind of impact do digital media have on you (a little, some, a lot)?
3. What are your favorite and least-favorite things to do with digital media?
4. Do you connect with others or create things with digital media?

Finish this statement: My media life is like a _____

because _____.

Illustrate your simile here:



Digital Life 101

Directions

First, take the quiz on your own. When you are done, trade with your partner. Together, use the answer key to calculate each other's score. Discuss what surprised you the most and which answers were the closest to or farthest from your own experiences.

YOUR SCORE

___ / 10

1. 82% of teens say that they own which of the following?

- a) cell phone
- b) smartphone
- c) iPod Touch or similar device
- d) iPad or similar device

2. What percent of teens describe themselves as “addicted” to their cell phones?

- a) 11%
- b) 27%
- c) 41%
- d) 63%

3. 68% of teens say they do which of the following at least once a day?

- a) text
- b) visit a social network
- c) instant message (IM)
- d) use email

4. How many characters (letters, punctuation marks, symbols, and spaces) can you send in a regular text message?

- a) 110
- b) 140
- c) 200
- d) 250

5. How often do 34% of teens visit social networking sites?

- a) at least once a day
- b) several times a day
- c) once a week or less
- d) never

6. What percent of teens say that they don't understand their social networking site's privacy policies?

a) 24%

b) 35%

c) 46%

d) 61%

7. What percent of teens still prefer face-to-face communication with their friends over communication online or via texting?

a) 22%

b) 36%

c) 49%

d) 61%

8. What percent of teens say they have said something bad about someone online that they wouldn't have said in person?

a) 33%

b) 67%

c) 49%

d) 25%

9. What percent of teens say that social networking helps them connect with people who share a common interest?

a) 35%

b) 42%

c) 57%

d) 66%

10. What percent of teens agreed they wish they could "unplug" for a while?

a) 13%

b) 27%

c) 29%

d) 43%

Note: All statistics and answer feedback (except for question #4) come from Social Media, Social Life: How Teens View Their Digital Lives, the 2012 research report from Common Sense Media's Program for the Study of Children and Media. We surveyed more than 1,000 13- to 17-year-olds nationally to understand how they perceive social media (like Facebook and Twitter) affects their relationships and feelings about themselves.

Digital Life 101

1. 82% of teens say that they own which of the following?

The correct answer is **a**, a cell phone. The vast majority of teenagers have their own cell phone (82%), including 41% who say they have a smartphone. Cell phone ownership varies by age – 74% of 13- to 14-year olds, compared with 87% of 15- to 17-year-olds.

2. What percent of teens describe themselves as “addicted” to their cell phones?

The correct answer is **c**, 41%. And 21% of wish that their parents would spend less time with their cell phones and other devices.

3. 68% of teens say they do which of the following at least once a day?

The correct answer is **a**, text. Two-thirds (68%) of teens text every day, half (51%) visit social networking sites daily, and 11% send or receive tweets at least once every day. Teens prefer texting due to the convenience – 30% saying it’s the quickest and 23% because it’s the easiest way to get in touch with one another.

4. How many characters (letters, punctuation marks, symbols, and spaces) can you send in a regular text message?

The correct answer is **b**, 140. Text messages and tweets are limited to 140 characters (including letters, punctuation marks, symbols, and spaces).

5. How often do 34% of teens visit social networking sites?

The correct answer is **b**: About a third of teens visit their main social networking site several times a day. In fact, 90% of teens say they have used social media and 75% currently have a profile on a social networking site.

6. What percent of teens say that they don’t understand their social networking site’s privacy policies?

The correct answer is **a**, 24%. About a quarter of teen users admit they understand their social networking site’s policies either “not too well” or “not at all.”

7. What percent of teens still prefer face-to-face communication with their friends over communication online or via texting?

The correct answer is **c**, 49%. About half of all teens say their favorite way to communicate with their friends is in person. 38% believe face-to-face conversations to be more fun, and 29% say that they can better understand what people really mean in person. Only 4% prefer talking on the phone as their favored way to communicate with friends.

8. What percent of teens say they have said something bad about someone online that they wouldn’t have said in person?

The correct answer is **d**, 25%. A quarter of all teens admit to saying something bad about someone online that they wouldn’t have in person. Similarly, 1 in 4 (24%) social media users say they “often” encounter one or more types of derogatory speech (sexist, homophobic, racist, or anti-religious).

9. What percent of teens say that social networking helps them connect with people who share a common interest?

The correct answer is **c**, 57%. A majority of teens say social media help them keep in touch with friends they can’t see regularly (88%), get to know other students at their school better (69%), and connect with new people who share a common interest (57%).

10. What percent of teens agreed they wish they could “unplug” for a while?

The correct answer is **d**, 43%. Of this percentage, 13% agree strongly and 30% agree somewhat that they sometimes wish they could “unplug.” More than a third agree “somewhat” that they sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook.

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Digital Life 101

1. Which of the following activities involve using a type of digital media? (You may circle more than one answer.)

- a) Instant messaging
- b) Playing baseball
- c) Sending a text message to a friend
- d) Playing a card game
- e) Sending a postcard to a friend

2. People use the term “24/7” to describe digital media because:

- a) This type of media is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- b) You need a password with 24 letters and 7 numbers to use digital media.
- c) There are 24 different kinds of digital media.

3. When digital media is described as being interactive, this means:

- a) People can make friends on the Internet
- b) Communication can be “two-way”
- c) Both a and b

Digital Life 101

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- b) Playing baseball
- c) **Sending a text message to a friend**
- d) Playing a card game
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Answer feedback

The correct answers are **a** and **c**. Instant messaging and sending text messages both use digital media. All of the others are offline activities.

2. People use the term “24/7” to describe digital media because:

- a) **This type of media is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**
- b) You need a password with 24 letters and 7 numbers to use digital media.
- c) There are 24 different kinds of digital media.

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**. “24/7” is a term used to describe things that are always available.

3. When digital media is described as being interactive, this means:

- a) People can make friends on the Internet
- b) Communication can be “two-way”
- c) **Both a and b**

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **c**. Digital media is described as interactive because people use it to interact with each other.