Why Is It Important to Learn About Media?

All media try to persuade or influence us on some level. This is why it is important for us to analyze and be critical of media. We need to think about the information and how it is presented to us before we decide what we think, feel, and say about it.

Should We Believe the Media Message?

How do we decide for ourselves whether we should believe a media message? We have to think very carefully about the message and ask ourselves questions about it. For example, imagine you saw a web site that said, "Send us $5 and we will send you $50. This is not a hoax!" You might ask yourself these questions:

- Why would this web site want to give away money?
- If someone really does want to give away money, why do I have to send $5 first?
- Should I believe this is not a hoax just because the web site says it is not?

A short time later, you might see on the news that police are looking for the person who ran the web site. He collected thousands of dollars from people who sent in money, but those people did not get any money back.

Effective Media Messages

Another good reason to learn about media is to understand how to create an effective media message that achieves its purposes. Imagine that you want to create a poster to advertise a fundraising event at your school. You might look at similar types of posters to see which ones stand out as great examples. Here are some questions you might ask yourself:

- Which posters really grab my attention? How do they do that?
- Which posters make me want to go the event? How do they do that?
- Which posters give just enough information? Which posters have too much text?

When you learn what makes a media message effective, you can use this information to make sure your own media messages are effective.