

## **Practice and Pedagogy**

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## Connections to the Manitoba Curriculum

This activity is a pedagogical tool that supports students' understanding of being good citizens and aligns with the grade 1 Social Studies curriculum. Specifically, focusing on Cluster 3: Connecting with Others, this activity is a lens into how one can express themselves within a community using various forms of media literacy. Gerodimos (2018) acknowledges that "it is necessary to question which skills people need to develop to approach news on international issues critically, to achieve a wider perspective of the world we live in, and become informed and active citizens of the world". Furthermore, introducing grade 1 students to media literacies is a tool that will help prepare them for the world of media we live in today. The Manitoba Social Studies curriculum stresses the importance of community building and learning how to express oneself while accepting others. Therefore, connecting with others and community building through this activity will encourage students to think critically about the world around them.

Students will strengthen their communication skills by experimenting with and using print by understanding form and techniques. Specifically, students are *Creating Original Texts* (2.3.5) through illustrations that demonstrate they can make decisions, form ideas and respond critically to texts by making interpretations (English Language Arts Student Learning Outcomes p. 19). Further, this activity focuses on Language as a System, as "learners are experimenting with, using and adjusting conventions of familiar print, oral, and visual texts to enhance communication" (MediaSmarts, 2021).

The teacher will begin by reading the mentor text, *The Good Egg*, then start a discussion asking the students to think and share what it means to be a good citizen. Specifically, the learners are encouraged to think about mental health and how the egg exemplifies being a

positive community member. Share (2015) stresses that "students are taught to value aesthetic qualities of media and the arts while using their creativity for self-expression through creating and media" (p. 9). Students will understand how to express themselves using media literacies through meaning-making of oral literacy and media texts. They will experience various cultures and learn about themselves, as media texts allow multiple interpretations (English Language Arts Student Learning Outcomes, p .19). Furthermore, students will have the opportunity to voice their opinions and share their identities equitably through creating their representation of the egg in the story. For example, the teacher will point out the use of colour in the book and how colour choice connects to the expressions and body language used by the egg. The teacher will ask questions that reflect the codes used in the story, such as, "what do the egg's facial expressions represent?" "What do his expressions say to you as readers, and do you ever feel the same as the egg, or do you feel different?"

Next, students will create personal eggs that reflect the book. They will focus on the Social Studies Learning Outcomes, 1.3.1 Diversity, specifically, K1-010: giving examples of diverse ways people live and express themselves and VI-006: valuing diversity around their peers and community members. Students will also develop skills that reflect 1.3.4: Getting Along, as they share examples of decision-making in their daily lives and describe how people may influence their lives and how they influence the lives of others (Social Studies Manitoba Curriculum, 2003). Learners will express these outcomes through six codes (colour, symbolism, facial eggsspressions, body language, background, and shading). Understanding these codes will help students choose which expressions and colours to use when creating their eggs while valuing and analyzing their peers' use of colours, expressions, and body language. For example, they can think about the facial expressions of the egg in the story and how they may have similar

expressions or possibly be opposite from themselves. Students will use visual literacies to identify the elements in the text, therefore, developing an understanding of why the author used specific colours, expressions, and body language. This tool enables students to reach the SLOs using a critical media literacy approach. Specifically, Share (2015) discusses four key roles reflecting learners' critical approach to breaking the code. He writes, "participate in understanding and composing, use text functionally and critically analyze and transform texts by acting on the knowledge that is texts are ideologically natural or neutral" (p. 13).

Lastly, students will finish the activity by sharing their eggs. The eggs will reflect the curriculum regarding the SLOs above as they exemplify diversity through self-expression and identity.

### **Connection to Theories of Media Education**

In *Media literacy is Elementary*, Share (2015) defines media arts education as, "Students are taught to value the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts while using their creativity for self-expression through creating art and media" (p. 9). The egg activity aligns with media literacy and the media arts approach by allowing students who struggle with oppression to voice their opinions and create their own representations (Share, 2015, p. 9). Kellner and Share (2019) provide five media literacies concepts, Social Constructivism, Language/Semiotics, Audience/Positionality, Politics of Representation, and Production/Institutions. This pedagogical tool uses the concepts, Language/Semiotics: Each medium has its own language (how was the text constructed and delivered/accessed?) and Audience/Positionality: People understand media messages differently, depending on multiple contextual factors, how could this text be understood differently?). Regarding language/semiotics, during the read-aloud and discussion, the teacher will encourage students to think about how the text is constructed ("how does the

author tell us the egg is upset and how does he show us the egg finds her identity?""). Relating to Audience/Positionality, students can use the activity to share how they understood the media messages in the story. Thus, students must be aware and show their understanding by analyzing and applying the six codes, colour, facial eggsspressions, symbolism, body language, background, and shading when creating their egg.

The egg activity also embodies a critical media literacy approach by "including information literacy, technical literacy, multimodal literacy and use other tools and modes of communicating" (Share, 2015, p. 12). For example, during the discussion stage of the activity, the teacher will point to the different representations of the egg and stress the author's use of colours to represent the mood of the egg. The teacher will have the students critically analyze the story. The students will acknowledge that the egg's cracks represent stress and exhaustion. However, once the egg learns about self-care and well-being, she discovers the importance of being *good* to herself. As the egg starts to practice well-being, her cracks disappear, therefore, realizing that no one is perfect; everyone matters and has the right to contribute to society the best way they can.

In addition, Share (2015) recognizes the importance of the iceberg image, noting that many educators only have their students work on the tip of the iceberg, not looking deeper to understand the message and meaning. During this activity, students will learn how an author can change the perspective and meaning of the story by sharing a picture or word. Once the egg finds time for herself and discovers self-care, her cracks start to disappear, and she feels healthier and "less scrambled". The teacher can also talk about using words in the text (scrambled has two meanings in this context). Thus, this pedagogical tool helps support critical thinking,

understanding that literacy is a social process that requires depth while planting seeds and scaffolding the steps for a life-changing pedagogy (Share, 2015, p. 14).

Another critical point is the importance of social activism and media production. During the last part of this activity, students will communicate by interviewing each other. They will begin to learn the relevance of participation through sharing a piece of themselves with a classmate. As Share (2015) writes, "the ability to participate in the production of shared fictions remains fundamental to any sense of belonging, and therefore, to 'citizenship' and identity themselves" (p. 14). Furthermore, this pedagogical tool enables students to make design choices for different purposes and actively participate in their communities to explore ideas and deepen thinking (MediaSmarts, 2021). Thus, allowing students to participate and share their eggs gives them agency and provides them with an outlet for engaging in critical, mindful discussions.

## References

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Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). The Critical Media Literacy Guide: Engaging Media and Transforming Education. BRILL. [Chapter 1]

Share, J. (2015). *Media is Elementary: Teaching youth to critically read and create media* (Second edition). Peter Lang Publishing. [Chapter 2, pp. 9-31].

## Lesson/Learning Plan

### Cluster 3: Connecting with Others

**Grade & Subject:** Grade 1 Social Studies and ELA

**Duration:** Afternoon activity or can be split into two lessons

**“You Matter and You Are EGGTASTIC” activity:** a pedagogical tool that focuses on six specific codes used by the author in the book, *The Good Egg*. Through critically analyzing the text, this activity allows students to develop visual representations of what it means to be a good citizen and community member and encourages them to think critically about the world around them.

Begin by reading: *The Good Egg* by Jory John and Pete Oswald

#### **Objectives:**

Students will be creating an egg that represents their identity, relating to being a good citizen and community member. The egg art piece will reflect the book, *The Good Egg*. The teacher will begin reading the book, focusing on media literacy, specifically using two of Kellner & Share's (2019) Literacy Concepts, **Language/Semiotics**: Each medium has its own language (how was the text constructed and delivered/accessible?) and **Audience/Positionality**: People understand media messages differently, depending on multiple contextual factors, how could this text be understood differently?). The teacher will point, ask questions, and discuss the author's use of six codes: colour, symbolism, facial expressions, body language, background, and shading. The goal is for students to see that the author shares a message and provides meaning through these six codes. For example, at the beginning of the story, the egg represents a “sad/unhealthy” egg (the cracks express her sadness/feelings). However, once she discovers self-care and the importance of looking after herself and contributing to her community, her cracks disappear, and she becomes a “healthy/happy” egg. Furthermore, students will critically analyze the text/illustrations and then apply what they learned to create their own healthy, helpful egg using media literacies.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

##### **Social Studies:**

- **1.3.1 Diversity:**
- **K1-010:** giving examples of diverse ways people live and express themselves
- **VI-006:** valuing diversity around their peers and community members
- **1.3.4 Getting Along**

##### **Cross-curricular connections:**

##### **ELA:**

- **Language as a System:** Learners are experimenting with, using and adjusting conventions of familiar print, oral, and visual texts to enhance communication.
- **2.3.5 Creating Original Texts**

**Materials & Resources:**

- The book, *The Good Egg*
- Prepped paper eggs
- Pencil, pencil crayons, markers, and paint pens

**Instructional Strategies:** Verbal, Visual, Auditory**Step 1: Read-aloud**

The teacher will introduce the book, *The Good Egg* and read it together as a class. The teacher will pause and discuss specific parts of the book, focusing on the six codes, colour, symbolism, facial expressions, body language, background, and shading. For example, the teacher will acknowledge the use of colour to represent the egg's emotions, the weather (background), the mood of the egg (facial expressions).

**Step 2: Discussion**

The class will relate themselves to the egg by sharing how they feel when they are upset and how helping others in their community make them feel better and happier. Referring back to the six codes, the teacher will stress the importance of the cracks (symbol for stress) in the egg. For example, the cracks could represent headaches individuals get when they don't drink enough water or don't take care of their mental health; therefore, connecting to the topic of mental health and self-care (message readers see throughout the book).

Students will use their imaginations and think deeply about how the author uses the six codes to share a message. Understanding these techniques will enable students to apply the codes to their eggs.

### Step 3: Creating Personal Egg

Students will create an egg that reflects being a good citizen. Regarding media literacy, the goal is to be mindful and consider using the six codes discussed.

The students should be purposeful with colour, choice of expression, etc. (they may add a green hat to their egg to represent the responsibility of caring for their environment). One side of the egg will represent their identity; they can create a self-portrait type egg. One student may have eyeglasses; therefore, they can add glasses to their egg. However, they will be mindful of the colour (choosing a colour representing their mood and well-being).

Students will then create the other side of their egg, drawing images and symbols. The goal is only to use illustrations representing their position in society and as citizens. They are encouraged to visually express their place in society by decoding and using the author's techniques (the six codes discussed during the read-aloud and discussion). A few questions to help students begin their illustrations could be, "How did the author tell us the egg was upset without using words?" "How did the author tell us the egg was happy without using words?" "What do the facial expressions tell us about the egg at the beginning vs the end of the book?" Therefore, students will use the codes provided and apply them to their own art pieces. Furthermore, each egg will be different, representing how students interpreted the story and how they felt using the six codes discussed above.

### Step 4: Interview/Share with a partner

Lastly, Students will share their eggs with a partner. Each student is encouraged to ask at least one question related to their peers' egg (questions regarding the codes used). For example, a student may ask, "why did you add sun and trees to one side of your egg?" Or "why did you choose blue hair when your hair is brown?" One student may have utilized the colour red because it's captivating or used the colours of their country's flag. Students are also welcome to come to the front and share their eggs with the class during this time. The goal is to share and express their messages and show that their eggs embrace meaning.

An extension could be recording students interview each other or share their eggs individually to post on Seesaw. Posting on Seesaw would allow the school community to see, participate, and comment on their eggs differently, representing how students interpreted the story and felt using the six codes discussed above.

### Adaptations/Differentiation:

- The teacher will define media literacy, and individuals need to be aware and critical when detecting/decoding media. The teacher may write the six codes discussed onto the board for students to see as they create their eggs. Some students may find it difficult to "break the code"; therefore, the teacher must explain the goal further before reading the story.
- Some students may need help expressing their ideas; therefore, the teacher should be circulating the classroom, scaffolding.
- Some students may have missed a few critical points or pictures during the story; thus, the teacher should have the book available for students to view.

- The teacher can also play the book on YouTube for students who want to see and hear the story again.

**Assessment Strategies:**

- During the read-aloud, the teacher asks questions to see if students are decoding and can identify the different visual codes used by the author.
- During the discussion, the teacher is listening to see who is sharing critical comments relating to media literacy and who is contributing meaningfully by connecting themselves to the egg/illustrations in the book.
- Checking to see if students understand the story's message during the discussion (be kind, be a good community member and take care of your mental health/well-being)
- Creating the egg and considering the six codes allows the teacher to see that the students expressed themselves and understand the media messages from the text.
- Lastly, the teacher will see that students are engaged and curious, ready to ask questions and answer questions relating to language/semiotics and audience/positionality. Furthermore, students should think critically and apply their thoughts and learning to their work (egg).

## Example of Activity

I added personal drawings to represent myself using the six codes provided in the lesson. I was mindful of colour choice, shading, background, facial expressions and body language. For example, I created a pawprint to attract attention in red, as rescuing animals is vital for me and is one way I consider myself a good citizen. I also added a green (representing growth and life) house inside the heart to symbolize giving animals a better life.

This activity has me reflecting on how special it is to be a good citizen and part of a community; therefore, passing this message to my students is essential. The other side of the egg represents me regarding my mental health and well-being. I chose to add a red smile to represent a statement of contentment and gratitude. I also drew my eyes closed and was purposeful when placing my eyebrows. Specifically, I focused on how and why my eyebrows reflect particular expressions and emotions.



