

Learning Activity

Smoke and mirrors

Time: 20 minutes

Materials

- SMART board
- Examples of tobacco use in media (images or video clips)
- Chart paper or white board and markers

Prepare Ahead

- Search online for examples of tobacco use in media, especially in movies, music, and TV shows that are popular among students in the class
- IMDB includes information about tobacco use in movies/TV shows (Parents Guide)
- [Smoke Free Movies](#)
- [Smoking in the Movies CDC fact sheets](#)

Instructions

- Organize students into small groups (3-4 students)
- Play a short clip of a popular song that includes a reference to tobacco and have students discuss what they heard
- Ask students to think about the TV shows and movies they watch and whether they have noticed any tobacco use. Ask them to discuss how tobacco use is depicted in their favourite shows, movies, songs, etc.
- Present images or video clips of examples and ask students to discuss how the use of tobacco is depicted in the clip
- Move on to a whole class discussion about their perception of tobacco use in the media. Ask students what kinds of things they notice about how substance use is portrayed in ads, movies, TV shows, and songs
- On chart paper or a whiteboard, create a t-chart and in the left column (Media) write down some of the students' reflections on the examples shown, using key words or phrases (e.g. "cool", "rich", "fun", "sick", "peer pressure", "gross", etc.)

Teaching Tool

Grade 4: Talking About Tobacco

- Ask students to discuss briefly with their groups what they know about the effects of tobacco (e.g. physical health, mental health, relationships, behaviours, etc.)
- Move on to a whole class discussion about the effects of tobacco use
- In the right column (Reality) of the t-chart, write down the effects identified by the students
- Ask the students to discuss with their groups the similarities and differences between media depictions and the real effects of tobacco use
- Ask students to discuss why media depictions glamorize tobacco use (i.e. what purposes and audience media creators are trying to reach, what messages they are trying to portray, and what factors influence the representations of tobacco use in media)

Variations

- Students can find examples of depictions as homework and bring them in to present them to the class
- Students can complete their own t-charts using a graphic organizer worksheet when presented a video clip or image
- Students can demonstrate learning by creating an illustration contrasting media depictions of substance use and the reality of its effects
- This can be made into a group project in which small groups contrast depictions of one of the substances discussed and create some visual or textual comparison between media and reality. This can become a presentation to the whole class.