

Fact vs. fiction

Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

- SMART Board
- examples of substance use in media (images, songs, or video clips)
- chart paper or white board and markers

Prepare ahead:

- Search online for examples of substance use in media, especially in movies, music, and TV shows that are popular among students in the class
 - Examples of tobacco use in films can be found at [Smoke Free Movies](#)
 - IMDB includes information about substance use in movies/shows (Parents Guide)
 - Examples from movies:
 - Alcohol in *Harry Potter & the Half-Blood Prince*
 - Alcohol in *Beauty & the Beast*
 - Alcohol in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (video game and film)
 - Alcoholism in *The Hunger Games* series
 - Tobacco and alcohol in *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them*
 - Tobacco and alcohol in *Snatched* (14A)
 - Tobacco and alcohol in *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*
 - Examples from TV shows
 - Drugs and alcohol in *13 Reasons Why* (US Rated TV-MA, unsuitable under 17)
 - Drugs and alcohol in *Switched at Birth*
 - Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in *Awkward*
 - Drugs, alcohol, and caffeine pill addiction in *Pretty Little Liars* (14A)
 - Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in *Teen Wolf*
 - Tobacco and alcohol in *Modern Family*
 - Examples from songs
 - Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in *Castle on the Hill* by Ed Sheeran

Teaching Tool

Grade 6 - Be drug-free

- Drugs and alcohol in *Here* by Alessia Cara
- Alcohol in *Say You Won't Let Go* by James Arthur
- Alcohol in *Hotline Bling* by Drake

Instructions:

- Organize students into small groups (3-4 students).
- Play a short clip of a popular song (including a reference to alcohol, drugs, or 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 substance use. Ask them to discuss how substance 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 drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are depicted in the clip.
- Ask students to discuss other places they might see substance use in the media (e.g. TV commercials, ads at sporting events) and how these depict substance use.
- Move on to a whole class discussion about their perception of substance 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 (Fiction) 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)
- Ask students to discuss briefly with their groups what they know about the effects of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco (e.g. physical health, mental health, relationships, behaviours, etc.).
- Move on to a whole class discussion about the effects of substance use.
- In the right column (Fact) 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 substance use.
- Ask students to discuss why media depictions glamourize substance use (i.e. what purposes and audience media creators are trying to reach, what messages they are trying to portray, and what factors, such as advertising dollars, influence the representations of substance use in media).

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Variations:

- Have students complete their own t-charts using a simple graphic organizer worksheet when presented a video clip or image.
- Have students create an illustration contrasting media depictions of substance use and the reality of its effects.
- Have students find examples of depictions as homework and bring them in to present them to the class.
- 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.

Curriculum connections:

- This activity can be connected to curriculum expectations in Language (Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, Language (2006), Grade 6: Media Literacy, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6)