

# Annie Leibovitz and Media Literacy

**Developed by:** Sue Siri

**Suggested grade levels:** 8-10

**Suggested length of instruction time:** 3- 4 classes

1. Discussion and videos
2. A look at the work of acclaimed celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz
3. Basic instruction on how lighting, posing and perspective can enhance or diminish a person
4. Have students make photographs of each other in various poses

## **Rationale:**

Students are exposed to more unfiltered media images today than ever before. We need to arm them with the skills to analyze and evaluate these images.

## **Logistics:**

Students will discuss topic as a group, facilitated by teacher.

Students will work in pairs to capture images under direction and guidance of teacher.

## **Required Materials:**

Students will need a cell phone, iPad or camera capable of capturing images.

The class will need an LCD projector and screen for viewing videos and photographs.

A means of printing out student photographs, two to a page.

If possible, try using *Paint* (free photo editing software) found at [getpaint.net](http://getpaint.net). Student photos can be in colour or black and white and should have a border around each image.

**SAMPLE:**



**Suggested resources:**

Misrepresentation by Jennifer Siebel Newsom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5pM1fW6hNs>

The Mask We Wear by Jennifer Siebel Newsom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc45-ptHMxo>

Annie Liebovitz – A Photographers Life 1990-2005

Annie Leibovitz at Work

The Annie Liebovitz collection at the AGNS

Biography of Annie Leibovitz <http://www.biography.com/people/annie-leibovitz-9542372> - awesm=~oBUMQ59DTpL6Hq

American Masters <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/annie-leibovitz-photo-gallery/19/#morefeatures>

**Suggested Outcomes:**

Develop critical thinking around pop culture and social media.

Explore photography and the power of images to influence society and gender stereotypes.

Become familiar with the work of Annie Leibovitz.

Gain a basic understanding of the principles of photography.

**Suggestions for teaching and learning:**Day one:

Show students the video on Misrepresentation.

Discuss how the fashion industry portrays women and beauty. How does this affect the way young women and girls think about themselves, their abilities and sexuality?

Ask students to share examples of advertising they recognize as being offensive or derogatory and how that affects their sense of self.

Ask students in what ways they modify their behavior based on social media advertising.

Explore ways that young people can affect change both locally and in a broader sense.

Seventeen Magazine was influenced to stop using Photoshopped images after 14 year old Julia Bluhm got 80,000 signatures on a petition and brought it to their head office in NYC. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/05/julia-bluhm-seventeen-mag\\_n\\_1650938.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/05/julia-bluhm-seventeen-mag_n_1650938.html)

Every time we spend our money we are endorsing a product and their message. Spend wisely.

Watch The Mask We Wear with students and discuss the social pressures faced by boys and men.

Explore ways that boys and men can resist the message to “man up” and be more authentic.

Introduce and examine images that are demeaning and ones that are empowering and encourage students to start to recognize the difference.

### Day 2:

View photography by Annie Leibovitz. Have students question whether each image they see is empowering to the subject.

Look closely at the lighting, posing and angles Liebovitz uses to affect a person's stature.

Encourage students to question the message and intent behind each photograph.

### Day 3: (possible 4<sup>th</sup> day)

Review and show examples of props, posing and lens perspectives. Props can be sports equipment (power), music instruments (talent), Glasses (intelligence). Posing can be wide, direct, folded inward, or crouched down. Shooting from lower than the subject makes a person look larger and looming. Shooting from above can flatter a person or make them look small depending on the angle. Play with some examples of these.

Discuss the rules of composition and lighting. (Rule of thirds, diagonal lines, deep shadows and under lighting) Great site on composition at - <http://www.digitalcameraworld.com/2012/04/12/10-rules-of-photo-composition-and-why-they-work/>.

Have students partner up to work in pairs.

Each student takes two images of their partner. One must empower the subject and make them look heroic or iconic. The other should make the subject look frightened, small, or unflattering in some way.

Print the two photos as diptychs to show the contrast between an empowering photograph and an unflattering one and illustrate the power of imagery.

If possible, have a gallery night showcasing the students' photography. Invite parents and friends.

Have a student speak on behalf of the group explaining what was learned and gained from the assignment.