



EAT THIS!

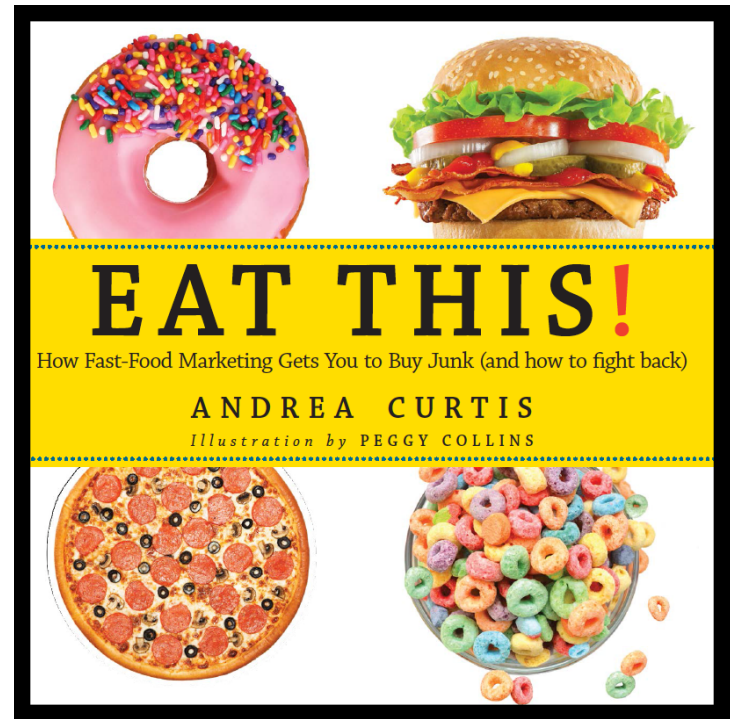
*The Teachers'
Guide*

**CURRICULUM-BASED IDEAS FOR DISCUSSING
MEDIA LITERACY & FOOD LITERACY
A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS & EDUCATORS
BY ANDREA CURTIS**

/ CURRICULUM LINKS /

EAT THIS! IS A TOOL FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS AND EDUCATORS. CONSIDER USING IT TO TALK ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY, FOOD LITERACY, HEALTH, NUTRITION & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Media literacy:** understanding media texts/forms/conventions and techniques; creating media texts; reflecting on media literacy skills and strategies; interpreting media texts
- **Social Studies:** changing families and community traditions; communities, past and present; global communities; responsible citizenship; interaction with global communities



- **Health/Physical Education:** active living; personal skills; making healthy choices; nutrition; healthy eating; diet-related illness
- **Environmental Education:** food waste; composting; recycling; industrial and organic agriculture; food system change and adaptation

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR /



Andrea at 10 years old

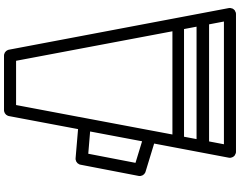
Andrea Curtis is an award-winning author who writes for both kids and adults. She loves to dig in her tiny city vegetable patch, read books and draw pictures of birds. Her first book for children was *What's for Lunch? How Schoolchildren Eat Around the World*. Andrea lives in Toronto with her family.

www.andreacurtiskids.ca



Red Deer Press

www.reddeerpress.com



/ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS /

- 1. Media is everywhere. Do you question the media you hear/see/read? Choose a popular marketing campaign for a food or drink item or restaurant and break down its strategy. Are there visuals? Music? Sound? Characters? Why was it made? What is it selling? How does the ad make the viewer feel? Does it make you want the item being marketed? Why?
- 2. The author says marketing works. Do you think she's right? Why or why not?
- 3. What does food literacy mean? Why is it important that we know what we are eating and how it is being sold?
- 4. Look at the marketing strategies highlighted in the book. Do you recognize them? They are changing all the time -- can you think of other strategies that the author doesn't mention?
- 5. The author notes that research shows children who eat a lot of junk food do less well in school. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
- 6. Do you think children are easier to fool with marketing than adults ? Why?
- 7. Does your country or community have regulations protecting kids from products that aren't healthy? Do you think it's a good idea? What kind of protections should children have?
- 8. What else can you do to be more media literate? Do you create your own media? How?
- 9. The author believes that children can help change the food system and make it healthier for all of us. Do you agree with her? Can children change the world?

/ MONSTERS INC./

Big idea: Spokescharacters are used to persuade people to buy things and be loyal to a brand.

Goal: Understanding the role of marketing strategies; engaging students in creating their own media.

Curriculum links: Media literacy, math, visual art

Materials: multiple blank pieces of paper



1. Exquisite monster: this fun activity based on the "exquisite corpse" writing exercise will get kids collaborating and thinking about potential spokescharacters. Divide your class into groups of four. Give each group one piece of paper folded lengthwise into four equal sections. Ask one student in each group to draw the head of one of the following: bird, monster, clown, magical creature, talking animal, sports/TV/music celebrity (let them choose and encourage them to get creative). The head should be drawn in the middle of the page, just above the first fold. When they're done (after a few minutes) ask them to fold over their drawing without showing it to anyone else, and pass it to the person in the group on the left. The next person will draw the body (of a different creature if they choose), fold over, pass it on; the third person will draw the legs ; the final person will draw feet (or shoes/talons/tail). When the creature is unfolded, share the wacky characters they've created, part human, part animal, part bird, etc.

2. Brainstorm about all the spokescharacters or celebrities the class can think of that endorse food and beverages aimed at children (not just for fast food and sugary drinks). Write it down on the blackboard or on a large piece of paper. Divide the spokescharacters into categories like the ones in the drawing exercise (bird, magical creature, etc.). What creatures are the most popular? What colors are most popular? If your class is studying graphing, you could use this as a graphing exercise. Show the results in line, pie graph, pictograph or another form.

3. Continue brainstorming. Ask kids why certain types of characters are most popular. Where do they see these spokescharacters (on labels, TV, games, etc.)? What food/drink are they marketing? Are any of the items healthy food or drink? How do they know? Do children in the class have a fondness for any particular spokescharacters? Why? How do they act? What do they say? Does the class know the slogan associated with the spokescharacters? Ask them to explain how the character makes them feel or how they think they're designed to appeal to kids.

4. Students now work independently or in groups using one of the wacky characters to create an advertisement for a healthy item that they choose. They should use what they know from your brainstorming session and their own experience with successful spokescharacters to promote their products. Depending on the age and interest in the class, their ad might be a poster or a design for a billboard, a stop motion animated short, a radio ad, video or any other kind of marketing.

EXTRA: Have students create a marketing plan for their spokescharacter and his/her product. Include these four key elements:

- summary (what you're selling and how)
- who are the target customers?
- what makes the character/plan unique?
- positioning in the market (how does your product stand out compared to other similar ones).

/ WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST? /



Big idea: How family, cultural background, marketing and the food environment influences what we eat.

Goal: To highlight how fast food has changed our culture as well as the ways in which food can bring us together and celebrate diversity.

Curriculum link: Social studies; media literacy; changing families and community traditions; communities, past and present; global communities; responsible citizenship; interaction with global communities.

1. As you read in *Eat this!* sugary breakfast cereal is one of the most heavily marketed foods aimed at young people. Brainstorm with the class about what they eat for breakfast. Why do they or their parents choose a particular item? Is it marketed to them? Discuss what they think other people eat for breakfast. How has it changed over time? Does it matter where you live? Does culture influence what you eat for breakfast?

2. Create a survey about favorite foods in your school community in order to explore the influence of culture on food choices. You might ask questions like: Where were you born? How long have you lived in your current country? What do you eat for breakfast? Is your breakfast hot or cold? Do you cook it yourself? What did your parents eat for breakfast when they were your age? Analyze the results, looking for patterns that will reveal more about your school's community. Create a large pictograph to show the results to your school.

3. Ask students to interview their parents and/or grandparents about the foods they ate for breakfast when they were children. Ask them to find out as much detail as possible. If breakfast proves difficult, focus on an important meal or

dish used for celebrations. Have students ask their relative if there is a reason a particular food was eaten (for instance, fried plantains because plantains grew nearby).

4. Gather pictures online or in magazines to create a visual representation of the food the parents or grandparents ate for breakfast and another one showing what the students eat (if different). Or perhaps create a 3-D representation of the meals using paper, clay or another material.

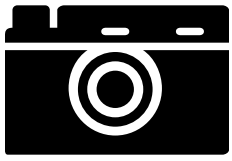
5. Consider having a breakfast potluck with the class or create a recipe book with the featured items from the different cultures and traditions. (Maybe even get everyone in the school kitchen creating a meal together!)

EXTRA: Write a short story or vignette that explores how food might change in the next 20 years. What will happen to our cultural traditions?

Will we be eating bugs?
(<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130514-edible-insects-entomophagy-science-food-bugs-beetles/>)?

Will meat be out of fashion because of its heavy environmental impact and high cost?
<https://www.livescience.com/22814-meat-eating-vegetarianism.html>?

Will we only drink our meals?
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/07/soylent-is-healthier-than-our-diet/489830/>?



/PHOTO BOMB FIELD TRIP/

Big Idea: Media literacy is no longer just about understanding how media works, it's about making your own.

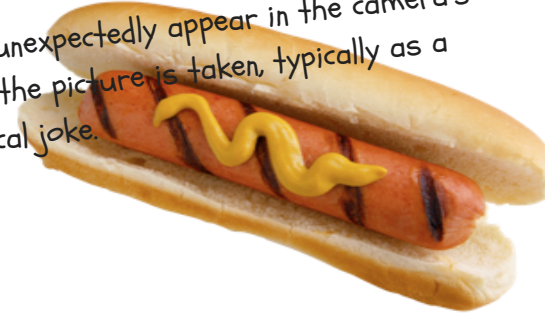
Goal: To encourage students to see themselves as potential creators of media, not simply passive consumers.

Curriculum link: media literacy; health/physical education; visual art

Materials: cameras, computers

1. Brainstorm about the places kids in your class see marketing aimed at children. Consider billboards, web-based ads, TV, radio, flyers, etc. Where do they see it the most?
2. Walk around your school and make a list of all the food and beverage advertising you see. Don't forget vending machines, food promotions in the cafeteria, fundraisers, posters promoting events, even books in the library. What are the most common brands? Are there any healthy food products advertised in your school? Are you surprised by how many ads there are? Do the same thing in your neighborhood. Do you think your school should be an advertising-free zone? Why? Create a map and mark down all the ads you see in the school and/or outside it. How many of them are targeted at children? What are the strategies used to appeal to kids? Do you recognize any of the strategies from *Eat This!*?
3. Field trip: as a class or in smaller supervised groups have students walk around the community and take photos of marketing aimed at young people. Encourage them to

photobomb: to unexpectedly appear in the camera's field of view as the picture is taken, typically as a prank or practical joke.



- take straightforward images and also photo bomb the ads. Back in class, get the groups to create simple slideshows of their photo bomb excursion.
4. Discuss the idea of culture jamming, a concept that emerged in the 1980s and continues to this day. It's similar to the idea of "hacking." Hackers and culture jammers have turned marketing messages on their head--painting over images, changing slogans, etc. Show your class examples from popular culture of ads that have been "hacked" (for some examples search online for "best culture jamming"--note: some of them will be inappropriate for the classroom!), especially those for fast food and drinks.
5. Using the ads from the photobombing field trip or others that they find, ask students to create their own hacked ads that point to the real intention of the marketers and the real consequences (personal, political, health, environment) of buying into the marketing. Can you change the words or alter the images to tell a different story--maybe even one that is more accurate?



/FOOD RULES/

Big idea: Lots of foods make health claims. Some are true, others are not. How can we make good decisions about what to eat?

Goal: Create your own food rules

Curriculum link: making healthy choices; healthy eating; nutrition; diet-related illness; food system change; media literacy

1. Brainstorm food rules your students have heard from their families, in school or elsewhere. (Never eat before you swim, Eat the rainbow, etc.) Do these rules make sense given what you've already discussed about healthy eating and the environment? Have you heard nutrition advice that contradicts these familiar food rules?

2. Discuss Michael Pollan's famous statement: "Eat food, mostly plants, not too much." Is that enough? Is it even helpful? Pollan wrote a book called *Food Rules* that explored this in a lot more detail. Introduce some of his rules to the class, such as "Eat when you are hungry, not when you are bored," "Do all your eating at a table," and "Don't eat breakfast cereals that change the color of the milk." Is this common sense? If so, why is it so hard to follow? Watch the slide show Pollan put together after receiving responses to his book from readers.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/11/magazine/11food-rules-t.html> Do any of these rules resonate? Discuss.

3. Create your own class food rules together or in small groups. Remember: make sure it makes sense for your students. It should be fun and inspirational--doable!--rather than judgmental. If there are too many rules everyone will stop listening.

4. Have students make a poster or a video to explain their rules in groups or on their own. Encourage students to use what they know about marketing after reading *Eat This!* to promote their food rules.

EXTRA: Have students design a perfect day's menu based on the class food rules. What would it look like? Make one of the meals together and enjoy it with the class!



/OTHER RESOURCES/



This *New York Times* article about creating a fake advertising campaign for broccoli is an excellent read. There is also an accompanying video: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/03/magazine/broccolis-extreme-makeover.html?pagewanted=all>

Here are some great books about diverse food traditions. *Everybody Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley; *How my parents learned to eat* by Ina R. Friedman; *Yoko* by Rosemary Wells; *What's for Lunch? How Schoolchildren Eat Around the World* by Andrea Curtis; *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio; and *Let's Eat: Sustainable Food for a Hungry Planet* by Kimberley Veness

Adbusters is the original cultural jamming magazine. See its spoof ads section for inspiration: <https://www.adbusters.org/spoofads/> (warning: some of it is not appropriate for the classroom!)

/BONUS SUGGESTIONS/

1. Research how the same item is sold differently to different people and cultures. (Remember on page 7 in *Eat This!* you learned how pizza toppings are different in Nigeria? Also, on page 27 you saw that fast food companies are targeting Hispanic and black youth.) Why do marketers use different strategies to target different groups? Is this a good thing? Why would people think it is unfair?
2. Ask students about the foods/drinks most heavily marketed to them. What are the most popular strategies used by marketers (use the nine techniques in *Eat This!* as a guide)? Are they effective? Which strategies are the most effective? Why?
3. Create a pop quiz with 5 to 10 questions on current food ads targeted at kids. Here's an example of some questions:
 - a. "Frosted Lucky Charms, they're _____!" (magically delicious)
 - b. Who is the cartoon mascot for Burger King? (a king)
 - c. Toucan Sam is a fan of what cereal? (Fruit Loops)Discuss what it means that our heads are filled with these slogans and spokescharacters. Does it mean that marketing works? How can we challenge marketing in our lives?