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As a national media literacy education consultant, I travel the country teaching teachers those standards which include “media literacy.” In my regular workshops, I utilize a number of video examples: commercials, clips from motion pictures and television shows. Having current and relevant examples from current media culture is critically important.

Most state’s teaching standards include having students understand “techniques of persuasion” and showing teachers (and students) actual television commercials is a great way not only to gain their attention, but also help them understand these techniques. I know my own work would not be as effective without using them. An example from my own work includes toy commercials, Super Bowl commercials, etc.

In addition, the National Council of Teachers of English endorses the use of “non-print” sources in the Language Arts classroom. Film makers know how to use tools (camera, lights, sound, editing, set design, etc) to help tell the story. Most teachers and students don’t understand these “languages of film.” Using short, representative clips of popular novels adapted as films, is another important part of media literacy education. Teachers (and their students) need to be exposed to past and current films and need to know that they can also utilize these clips without fear of copyright restrictions. Examples from my own work include: To Kill A Mockingbird, Because of Winn Dixie, E.T. The Extra Terrestrial, Forrest Gump, Tuck Everlasting, I Am David, Flags of Our Fathers.

In all of my workshops, invariably an educator will ask, how did you grab that scene from a film and I will explain my process. (I have been using a device called WINTV2000, which allows me to save clips) They will also ask, is this within copyright rules, and in my opinion, showing a short representative clip, to meet your lesson plan objectives, is perfectly appropriate. At the same time, I am encouraging these teachers not to show an entire film—there is no time.

Teachers need clear direction regarding their intended use of motion picture clips (excerpts) for education/instruction purposes. And at the same time, their supervisors (principals) need confirmation that using films is appropriate and meets national and state teaching standards.

I would be happy to elaborate on any of this if requested.