***Blackfish* & Media Literacy**

1. **All media are constructions.** Most important concept. Media doesn’t reconstruct reality; instead, it is carefully curated and constructed to reflect the goals, intent, and biases of the creators. Being media literate means being able to deconstruct these constructions (take them apart to show how they are made up).
	* How do the conventions used in *Blackfish* help to convince us that it is representing reality?
	* Who is represented in *Blackfish*? Who is omitted? How might the omissions be significant?
2. **Media constructs versions of reality.** The media are responsible for the majority of the observations and experiences from which we build up our personal understandings of the world and how it works. Thus the media, to a great extent, gives us our sense of reality.
	* What mediums of communication are involved in the construction of *Blackfish*?
	* What are the biases of this media form?
	* How does *Blackfish* utilize these biases to support its agenda?
3. **Audiences negotiate meaning in media.** No two people experience the same thing from interacting with media. Instead, each of us finds or negotiates meaning according to individual factors: personal needs and anxieties, the pleasures or troubles of the day, racial and sexual attitudes, family and cultural background, moral standpoint, and so forth.
	* Is *Blackfish* appealing? To whom? To whom might it NOT be appealing? Why?
	* Which elements are used to attract the audience (visuals, sound, word choice, style, etc.)?
	* What assumptions does *Blackfish* make about its audience?
4. **Media messages have commercial implications.** Media is influenced by commercial considerations that impinge on content, technique, and distribution. Most media production is a business, and so must make a profit. Questions of ownership and control are central: a relatively small number of individuals control what we watch, read, and hear.
	* Who is positively/negatively affected economically by *Blackfish*? How?
	* How was the production of *Blackfish* paid for? If the funders DON’T make a profit, what DO they get from the audience’s consumption of the movie?
	* If *Blackfish* contains NO commercial implications, why was it created?
5. **Media messages contain ideological and value messages.** All media products are advertisements in some sense proclaiming values and ways of life. The mainstream media convey ideological messages about issues explicitly or implicitly. Audiences need to be able to recognize and assess these value messages.
	* Whose values are or are not represented in **Blackfish**?
	* Does *Blackfish* misrepresent any values or assume the audience will agree with its value messages?
	* Are your values/beliefs represented? Are your friends’ values represented?
6. **Media messages contain social and political implications.** The media have great influence in politics and in forming social change. They give us an intimate sense of national and global concerns, so much so that we have become a “global village.” Because media messages are shared, discussed and sometimes emulated, they need to be explored within a sociopolitical context to assess how they influence—or are influenced by—consumers.
	* What assumptions does the producer make about the audience (gender, race, class, interests)?
	* What is *Blackfish’s* political point of view?
	* How might *Blackfish* influence its audience’s political point of view?
7. **Form and content are closely related in media messages.** As Marshall McLuhan noted, each medium has its own grammar and codifies reality in its own particular way. Therefore, each medium influences—and is influenced by—the content of the messages. Different media will report the same event, but create different impressions.
	* How do the documentary form and genre shape the content of *Blackfish*?
	* How does the content of *Blackfish* influence the characteristics of the documentary form?
8. **Each medium has a unique aesthetic form.** Just as we notice the pleasing rhythms of certain pieces of poetry or prose, so we ought to be able to enjoy the p leasing forms and effects of different media. It is often easier to consider aesthetics in media forms or texts that are purposefully artistic or entertaining: music, movies, TV shows.
	* What set of codes and conventions combine the aesthetics of *Blackfish*?
	* What techniques make this a pleasurable/unpleasurable text?

Sources:

aml.ca/category/about-us/what-is-media-literacy

medialit.org/reading-room/canadas-key-concepts-media-literacy