Literacy Guide for Photosharing Apps

Photosharing apps such as Snapchat and Instagram require some different considerations from educators when in comes to literacy instruction. Whether or not we are using these social media applications within our classrooms, the reality is that students are using these on a regular basis to communicate both within their own social circles and with the digital world at large. I have not focused not on the obvious considerations of digital and information literacy, but on other literacies and skills that should be considered when using these photosharing apps.

"Traditional text is stable, it is composed by the producer and interpreted by the reader. Text has a sequential, linear order. It is underpinned by authority and authorship and is a site of knowledge…Text is now radically unstable. Text is designed by producer and redesigned by reader. Text has spatial ordering. Its value is in its potential usefulness and Text is site of information." (O'Mara and Laidlaw, p. 156)

Communication Tool or Method Used in Apps	Literacy Skills Required for Comprehension and/or Communication
Emojis, Emoticons - symbols that can have multiple meanings - used in texts, posts and emails	Socio-emotional literacy - May need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message. - They are replacing the "characteristics" of human communication that are missing from the digital world. (adds personality) - Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts. Inferring - Many emojis have more than one meaning. These are even being challenged and used as courtroom evidence. - Can have different cultural implications and can be ambiguous. Author's purpose - What is the intent of the message and the emoji used? - Can have different cultural implications and can be ambiguous. - Who is the audience? Does this effect the choice and meaning of those used? Visual Literacy - These are often replacing words as they are fast and convenient. - Need to make meaning from the symbols.

Captions - titles or brief explanations to accompany photos	Writing - Understand differences between formal and informal (or casual) writing. - How can students learn to "code switch" between the two? - Identify situations when each would be required. Inferring - Sometimes length or vague wording leaves comprehension open to interpretation. - Wording combined with photos may be used to infer the author's meaning. Author's purpose - Sometimes the reasons behind the caption are very clear while other times, there are skills needed to interpret the purpose of the message. - Who is the intended audience? Does that change the meaning of the caption or how it should be written? Questioning/Skepticism - Reading captions with a critical eye. - Considering validity - opinion/fact, real/fake, purpose and intent.
Photos - pictures posted on social media - can be of faces, people, objects, animals, scenery…	Visual Literacy/Inferring - Readers need to make meaning from pictures. Learn to look at all aspects and interpret different elements and possible reasons for its being chosen. - Senders need to consider how their photos will be viewed and interpreted. What was the purpose or message being conveyed? Socio-emotional literacy/Inferring - Readers may need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message. (ie: facial photos) - Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts. Questioning/Skepticism - Reading pictures with a critical eye. - Considering validity - opinion/fact, real/fake, purpose and intent.

Filters - processes or layers to add effects to a photo	Socio-emotional literacy/Inferring - Readers may need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message. - Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts. Visual Literacy/Inferring - Readers need to make meaning from pictures. Is the chosen filter just to add drama or for fun? Does it hold more significance? - Senders need to consider how their photos will be viewed and interpreted. What was the purpose or message being conveyed?
Stickers - images, cartoons, sayings… added to photos	Socio-emotional literacy/Inferring - Readers may need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message. - Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts. Visual Literacy/Inferring - Readers need to make meaning from pictures. Are the chosen stickers just to add drama or for fun? Do they hold more significance? - Senders need to consider how their photos will be viewed and interpreted. What was the purpose or message being conveyed?
Snaps - multimedia messages on Snapchat set to disappear within a very short time frame	Real-time Thinking - Comprehending and thinking critically about content and messaging in real-time, right as it is happening. - There is no activating background knowledge, perhaps no context, and no extended time to ponder over possible meanings Visual Literacy/Inferring - Readers need to make meaning from pictures, but they may only see it for a few seconds. - Senders need to consider how their photos will be viewed and interpreted. What was the purpose or message being conveyed?

	Socio-emotional literacy/Inferring
	- Readers may need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message.
	- Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts.
	Author's purpose
	- Sometimes the reasons behind the pictures or captions are very clear while other times, there are skills needed to interpret the purpose of the message.
	- Who is the intended audience? Does that change the meaning of the caption or how it should be written? How long does the audience get to view it – what determines that?
	Writing (If text or captions used)
	- Understand differences between formal and informal (or casual) writing.
	- How can students learn to "code switch" between the two?
	- Identify situations when each would be required.
	- What can be read quickly and have impact to get the message across?
	Questioning/Skepticism
	- Reading pictures with a fast and critical eye.
	- Should consider validity - opinion/fact, real/fake, purpose and intent – but will be challenging in a Snap.
Stories - allow Snaps (Snapchat) or pictures (Instagram) to be compiled into a chronological storyline	Visual Literacy/Inferring
	- Readers may need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message.
	- Senders need to consider how their photos will be viewed and interpreted. What was the purpose or message being conveyed?
	Socio-emotional literacy/Inferring
	- Readers may need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message.
	- Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts.

	Author's purpose
	- Sometimes the reasons behind the pictures or captions are very clear while other times, there are skills needed to interpret the purpose of the message. - Who is the intended audience? Does that change the meaning of the caption or how it should be written? This will be gone after a day, so what is the purpose? Writing (If text or captions used) - Understand differences between formal and informal (or casual) writing. - How can students learn to "code switch" between the two? - Identify situations when each would be required. - What can be read quickly and have impact to get the message across? Questioning/Skepticism - Reading pictures with a critical eye. - Should consider validity - opinion/fact, real/fake, purpose and intent.
Likes - ability to like/approve of someone's post	Socio-emotional literacy - Do we automatically feel we need to like all posts? What prompts us to like a post from people we know? From strangers online? - Senders consider how it feels when our posts are or are not liked my many people? Was that the purpose for posting? Questioning/Skepticism - Be critical about what is liked and why. - Should consider validity - opinion/fact, real/fake, purpose and intent – and how what we like reflects on our digital identity.
Chats - short, informal messages sent over social media	Real-time Thinking - Comprehending and thinking critically about content and messaging in real-time, right as it is happening. - There is no activating background knowledge, perhaps no context, and no extended time to ponder over possible meanings.

	Socio-emotional literacy - May need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message. - May be missing the "characteristics" of human communication in the digital world, so may use emojis. - Senders consider the emotions they want to convey in their posts and how that can be done. Inferring - A lot of chat language is short and abbreviated (words and sentences) and sometimes may require readers to make inferences about meaning – both literally and interpretively. Author's purpose - What is the intent of the message? - Who is the audience? Does this effect the choice and meaning of the words used? Writing - Understand differences between formal and informal (or casual) writing. - How can students learn to "code switch" between the two? - Identify situations when each would be required. Visual Literacy - Emojis are often replacing words as they are fast and convenient. - Need to make meaning from the symbols.
Comments - short responses to someone's post	Writing - Understand differences between formal and informal (or casual) writing. - How can students learn to "code switch" between the two? - Identify situations when each would be required. Socio-emotional literacy - What makes us feel compelled to comment on someone's post? A post from people we know? From strangers online?

	- Senders consider how it feels when they receive comments. What types of comments are positive, and do they appreciate receiving on their posts? What emotions/reactions do negative posts invoke? Questioning/Skepticism - Be critical about what they comment on, what they say and why they say it. The comments they make will all become part of their digital identity.
Punctuation - punctuation now used in chat messages to show emotion (ie: a period may mean anger)	Inferring - Is punctuation being used in traditional sense or for emotion? - If for emotions, which ones? Some have multiple meanings. Socio-emotional literacy - May need to interpret mood and emotion of sender to comprehend full meaning of message.

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