In this MediaLit Moment, students are encouraged to deconstruct a magazine cover from this season’s presidential campaign. By looking closely at the design and purpose of a message, students discover that most media messages are constructed by professionals who are eager to sell a product or idea. 

Our thanks to Frank Baker for providing the images for this activity.

Ask students about the creative decisions made when designing political magazine covers

AHA! These covers were designed with a message in mind.

Grade Level: 6-9

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?
Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.
Materials: Computer with internet access and projector. Find the magazine covers by using this link:

Activity: Put the covers up on the screen for all to see. Remind students that each cover started out blank—an editorial team working with a graphic designer collaborated to decide what goes on the cover. Have them take a moment to look at headlines, fonts, colors, photography, lighting, etc. Ask students which creative techniques attracted their attention? What did they see first when looking at the covers? Why were these particular photos, illustrations, fonts, headlines chosen? To sell? To entertain? To make a call to action? To encourage -- or discourage -- a vote?

Extended Activity: As a class, agree on a topic and have students create their own magazine covers with image and headline.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, ©2002-2016, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com.