The Maker Movement as we know it today is generally held to have coalesced around the launch of MAKE: Magazine in 2005. MAKE: was created by Dale Dougherty, co-founder of O’Reilly Media (a publishing company focused on computer language handbooks), and creator of the first-ever commercial website on the Internet in 1993. He had initially intended to call the magazine HACK, after the original meaning of the word “hacker”—not someone who breaks into computers, but someone who takes things apart to make them better. However, his daughter Katie, then in her early 20s, was adamant that he call it something else. Hacking didn’t sound good, she said, she didn’t like it. She suggested he call it MAKE, because “everyone likes making things.” [i]

From the start, Making was meant to spread beyond expert hackers to “everyone.” In this MediaLit Moment, students will discover the values that Makers identify with and promote, by examining a “crappy robots competition” that started in Japan and became popular with Makers worldwide.

AHA!: Makers have values and they want me to share them!

Grade Level: 6-8

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are created for profit and/or power.
How to Make a Maker

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Materials: Computer with high speed internet access, data projector, projection screen Crappy Robot Competition Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOi-pvVQokk.
Printouts of “What is Hekobon?” (sic) PDF

Activity: Start by asking the students to describe their image of someone who makes robots—a roboticist. What education would they have? How old would they be? How smart would they have to be? Do the students think they could be roboticists? Why or why not?

Then, view the video with students. There will probably be a lot of laughing as the crappy robots fight each other and fail. Ask the students if this video matches up with their idea of a roboticist from earlier. It probably doesn’t. However, this silly idea has become very popular in the Maker community and now Hebocons are held all over the world. Why? What is so appealing about Hebocon? Those elements tell us about what the Maker community values.

Next, hand out the “What is Hekobon?” (sic) PDF listed above [ii]. Let the students know it has been translated from Japanese by Google Translate—i.e. It’s a crappy translation like the crappy robots.

Have the students break into 3 groups, one for each section of “What is Hebocon?”: 1. “Heavy,”/“First, Heavy Robot”/“Second, Heavy Creator;” 2. “Can I make a robot without technology?”/“Hebocon for everyone;” and 3. “Knowledge of the Hebocon.”

Ask each group to answer Key Question #4 for their group’s section.

Rejoin and have each group report the values they discovered. Once there is a consensus, have them apply Core Concept #5: “Most media messages are created for profit and/or power.” Since no one makes money off of Hebocon, what kind of “power” might its creators and organizers be seeking? If they reach the conclusion “the power to spread their values to be shared by others,” ask the students which of their own values they would want the power to spread, and how they might go about doing so.
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Extended Activity: Have the students plan and promote a Hebocon for their class or school. When producing their rules and promotional materials, direct the students’ attention to Key Question #5 for producers, “Have I communicated my purpose effectively?”

This MediaLit Moment was created by Mya Stark, Executive Director, LA Maker Space,[1] http://lamakerspace.org


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