

English: The Construction of Public Figures

Madame Tussauds Sydney — Schools Resource

NSW Syllabus: English K–10 (2022) | **Stage:** Stage 5 (Years 9–10)

About this resource

This resource develops critical media literacy and analytical writing skills, examining how public figures are represented, constructed and mediated for audiences.

Curriculum outcomes addressed

- **EN5-URA-01** — analyses how meaning is created through the use and interpretation of increasingly complex language forms, features and structures
- **EN5-RVL-01** — uses a range of personal, creative and critical strategies to interpret complex texts

Key inquiry question

Whose choices shape how a public figure is represented — and what's at stake in those choices?

Exercise 1: Constructed Personas (Classroom — Pre-Visit)

Format: Classroom-based | 25 minutes

1. Discuss: celebrities, politicians and public figures rarely control their own image entirely — who else shapes it? (Media, publicists, photographers, institutions.)
2. As a class, analyse a current media image or headline about a public figure, identifying the framing choices being made.
3. Introduce the idea that a wax figure is also a constructed representation, made by artists and curators.

Exercise 2: Critical Analysis in the Gallery (Excursion — In-Venue)

Format: Excursion-based | Individual worksheet

Choose two figures whose public image you think is contested or complex.

1. Analyse the representational choices made in each display — styling, setting, positioning, accompanying text.
2. Identify whose interests these choices might serve (the figure's own image, the venue's audience appeal, public expectation).
3. Consider: what would a different, more critical representation of this person look like?

Exercise 3: Analytical Response (Classroom — Post-Visit)

Format: Classroom-based | Extended task

Write an analytical response (400–500 words) examining how one public figure's image has been constructed and mediated — drawing on your excursion observations and at least one additional media source. Address how language, visual choices and context shape audience perception.

Teacher note: This task supports EN5-URA-01 and EN5-RVL-01 and can be extended into a comparative study of the same figure's representation across different media forms.

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Exercise 1: Constructed Personas (Classroom — Pre-Visit)

Format: Classroom-based | 25 minutes

In this exercise, you will explore how public figures' images are constructed and shaped by various people and institutions. Remember: celebrities, politicians and public figures rarely control their own image entirely.

Part 1: Class Discussion

Who shapes the image of public figures besides the figures themselves? List at least three groups or individuals:

Part 2: Media Analysis

Your teacher will show you a current media image or headline about a public figure. Analyse the framing choices being made.

What public figure is being represented?

What framing choices can you identify? (Consider: camera angle, headline wording, context provided, what's included/excluded)

What impression or message do these choices create about this person?

Part 3: Reflection

A wax figure is also a constructed representation, made by artists and curators. **How might a wax figure be similar to or different from a media representation?**

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Exercise 2: Critical Analysis in the Gallery (Excursion — In-Venue)

Format: Excursion-based | Individual worksheet

During your visit to Madame Tussauds, you will critically analyse how public figures are represented through wax figures. Choose two figures whose public image you think is contested or complex.

Figure 1 Analysis

Name of public figure: _____

What representational choices have been made in this display? Consider styling, setting, positioning, and accompanying text.

Whose interests might these choices serve? (The figure's own image? The venue's audience appeal? Public expectation?)

What would a different, more critical representation of this person look like?

Figure 2 Analysis

Name of public figure: _____

What representational choices have been made in this display? Consider styling, setting, positioning, and accompanying text.

Whose interests might these choices serve? (The figure's own image? The venue's audience appeal? Public expectation?)

What would a different, more critical representation of this person look like?

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Exercise 3: Analytical Response (Classroom — Post-Visit)

Format: Classroom-based | Extended task

Task Instructions

Write an analytical response (400–500 words) examining how one public figure's image has been constructed and mediated — drawing on your excursion observations and at least one additional media source. Address how language, visual choices and context shape audience perception.

Planning Space

Which public figure will you analyse? _____

Key observations from your excursion visit:

Additional media source(s) you will reference:

Main argument/thesis:

Your Analytical Response

(Write your 400–500 word response below)

[illegible]

[illegible]

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