

Messages, Choices, Impacts

A JusticexDesign Thinking Routine for supporting learners
to develop a critical sensitivity to design.

Messages

What do you think the messages are?

Choices

What design choices did the maker of this content make? How do these design choices connect to the messages?

Impacts

What impacts do the messages have on you and/or your community?

Some Suggested Practices for Using the *Messages, Choices, Impacts* routine

Begin by looking closely

Begin by inviting learners to look closely and make a lot of observations. To do some slow looking, you might use Project Zero Thinking Routines e.g. [See, Think, Wonder](#) or [Looking: Ten Times Two](#). Perhaps you also begin this routine by creating a definition of message as a class. One example of a definition is: a message is a story, idea, perspective or stance amplified by a piece of content. A message can be intentional or unintentional. You might also begin with a routine that encourages looking at multiple stories in a piece of content like the Project Zero Thinking Routine [Unveiling Stories](#).

Explore the complexity of messages

When you invite learners to consider the Messages in the content, here are some additional provocations to encourage further critical reflection: *What messages are being shouted at you? What messages are being whispered to you? Who/what do you think is sending the message(s)? Who/what do you think is receiving the message(s)? Who/what do you think is not hearing the message?* A message may be sent, received, or heard by a person, multiple people, a community, a system, etc.

Switch the order of the steps

Depending on what you are looking at/discussing, and for how long, you might consider beginning with the step Choices to reflect on the design choices prior to thinking about the Messages. However you begin, it is likely you will revisit the Messages and the Choices more than once.

Explore power

After discussing the Messages, perhaps spend some time reflecting with your students on what evidence they see of different types of power. For information on the different types of power explore the suggested practices in [People, Systems, Power, Participation](#).

Consider design choices

Here is an additional provocation to encourage further reflection when considering design Choices: How do the design choices help express the messages?

Reflect on shifts in thinking

As an alternative—or in addition—to Impacts, invite students to reflect on **Shifts** in their thinking or ways their perspectives have expanded: *Now that you have reflected on the messages and design choices, how, if at all, has your thinking shifted/changed? What new ideas do you have?*

Make

Another way you might encourage a critical sensitivity to design is engaging learners in a **making** experience. Maybe they make a scene, sculpture, drawing, or an arrangement of objects. Ask: *What can you make/design to share your new thinking? What messages are you intending to convey? How do your design choices convey these messages? What impact do you hope your making might have on others?* Invite learners to share what they made with their peers. They might ask similar questions when looking at what their peers' made: *What are the messages? What design choices did the maker make? What impact do the messages have on you?*