

# Carnegie Corporation of New York

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Program Chair  
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February 11, 1991

Jennifer Norwood  
Executive Director  
Parents' Music Resource Center  
1500 Arlington Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Ms. Norwood:

I am replying to the proposal sent with your letter of September 24, 1990. I do apologize for taking so long to reply. As you know the foundation receives thousands of proposals each year and it takes some time for our small staff to review and adjudicate among all of them.

The proposal was discussed at a foundation staff meeting in November and, because the topic is very important, was sent out to several outside reviewers who are expert in children's learning and behavior, media usage by children and other media literacy efforts.

The reviewers raised a number of questions about the efficacy of a video on media literacy compared with other approaches and about the specific treatment proposed in "Media Mania." In general the reviewers felt that the approach in Media Mania with its depiction of television as a monster was not likely to be credible to most children. Also, while viewers are exhorted to "think" and to think critically, very little content or analytic and decisionmaking skills (the how tos) are actually provided. We know from previous efforts to teach media literacy that just mentioning terms like "media literacy" and "critical thinking" does not work. Teaching of critical media literacy skills has to be adapted to the age, developmental characteristics, and interpretive powers of viewers in order to be effective; it is therefore not clear that one video could do the job across the whole age span proposed.

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Alternative approaches suggested by the reviewers as likely to have more impact on children included:

- 1) Trying to incorporate material about critical viewing of media, how shows and records are made, etc. into programs that are watched by large numbers of children such as Sesame Street on public television and a number of the commercial family-oriented shows.
- 2) Exploring with television networks and cable companies whether they would be willing to air spots about "responsible viewing" or "decisionmaking about media choices" as part of their public service activities. The spots could perhaps be based on ideas sent in by young people themselves (in the way that the Partnership for a Drug-Free America developed its PSAs) to help make them authentic for those audiences.
- 3) Because development of decisionmaking and critical thinking skills takes time and is best done in the context of discussion with peers and adults skilled in the facilitation of such discussions, incorporation of critical viewing/media literacy ideas into school-based curricula is a key approach. I enclose a copy of a staff memo written a few years ago about school-based efforts at that point. A recent *New York Times* article (enclosed) suggests that such efforts and programs in youth-serving organizations are increasing and we are seeking to commission a review of current efforts to examine their effectiveness and see what might give the whole field a boost.

It is undoubtedly the case that many different kinds of efforts are needed, whether video- or school-based or inserted into ongoing programing. At this point, I regret, the Corporation is not able to offer support for the Media Mania video. I hope you will appreciate that this is in the context of the foundation having funds to support only a small fraction of proposals submitted to it. With its active programs in the expansion of early childhood services, the reform of teaching and science education, and the education and health of young adolescents, the foundation budget has little leeway for other grants.

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Although the foundation is not able to help in this instance, Dr. Hamburg and I do come to Washington fairly regularly and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and the organization's founders to explore the mutual interests of the Parents' Music Resource Center and the Corporation in the well-being of America's children and youth.

Sincerely,



Vivien Stewart

VS/bm

CC: Mrs. Susan Baker  
Mrs. Tipper Gore  
Dr. David Hamburg

**CARNEGIE COUNCIL ON ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

**CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK**

**MEDIA AND ADOLESCENCE**

**A Briefing Prepared for the Council  
Teaching Critical Television Viewing Skills**

During the past 40 years, television has become a pervasive part of our culture and can be considered a major instructional force in the lives of young people. Television is a powerful tool for influencing cognitive, emotional, and social development. Because children and adolescents watch so many hours of television, teaching them critical television viewing skills may enable them to use television in active, discriminating, and constructive ways.

At the second meeting of the Council in June 1987, a suggestion was made to explore the role and effectiveness of programs aimed at fostering critical television skills and their potential adoption as part of a school curriculum. This brief summary is based on a staff review of selected key documents, which are listed in the bibliography.

**Federal Initiatives**

In the early 1980s, the U.S. Department of Education awarded four contracts for the creation of critical television skills programs aimed toward elementary, middle school, high school, and post-secondary levels. Awards were initially given to Southwest Education Development Laboratory, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, WNET/Thirteen in New York, and Boston University.

The WNET/Thirteen project received federal funds to complete a number of specific tasks at the elementary school level. They developed a student work text; developed a teacher's annotated edition to the student work text; developed a family guide; developed a training manual for teacher trainers; developed a training manual for community leaders; and conducted training sessions for teachers and community leaders. The approach was to concentrate on what the viewer sees and hears on television as opposed to developing background knowledge or technical expertise

about television production. In the workshops, children and adults were asked to analyze, evaluate, and discuss what they saw and heard on the television program.

WNET tested its curriculum materials and conducted workshops around the country (Palo Alto, Newark, Stanford (CT), Nashville, Salt Lake City, and Lafayette Parish (LA)). As a result of this field testing, developers found that children can transfer their critical television viewing skills to books (before the program, the children had been unable to discuss those books in literary terms). Children could also grasp critical television viewing skills fairly quickly, leading the researchers to observe that perhaps the program was not teaching the children anything new, but helping them to organize and express their thoughts (Bilowit in Ploghoft and Anderson, Eds. 1981).

The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in San Francisco worked with WGBH (public television) in Boston to develop the program for the high school level. The materials, including the book, Inside Television: A Guide to Critical Viewing, focuses on students' relationship to television to help them make their own decisions about its uses. The Far West Laboratory also prepared a Family Guide to Television (distributed by the Consumer Information Center in Pueblo, Colorado) and conducted critical television viewing skills workshops throughout the nation for parents and educators to assist them to teach critical viewing skills effectively (Lloyd-Kolkin in Ploghoft and Anderson, Eds. 1981). No evaluation research was mentioned in the report of this program.

### Local Initiatives

In addition to these federally initiated projects, a number of local school districts--Idaho Falls (Idaho), Eugene (Oregon), and East Syracuse (New York)--inaugurated critical television viewing skills programs in the early 1970s. The Idaho Falls project, entitled "The Way We See It," attempted to teach critical television viewing skills to students in Grades 3 through 6. The project was integrated into the existing Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum and taught students to understand, analyze, and evaluate televised messages. This program had very strong parental involvement that probably increased the impact of the program upon the students. The program also was seen as a method of increasing communication between children and parents.

The national PTA, through its TV Action Center, also developed a curriculum--Family Awareness Curriculum--with the

support of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, to help parents and teachers evaluate programs aired on television. In the early 1980s, they were also developing a curriculum designed to foster the viewing skills of children from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. (Young in Ploghoft and Anderson, Eds. 1981). Evaluation, if any, was not reported.

In 1979, the American Broadcasting Companies, Inc. awarded the Yale Family Television Research and Consultation Center a grant to develop and systematically assess the impact of a critical television viewing skills curriculum on third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade children (Singer, Zuckerman, and Singer in Ploghoft and Anderson, Eds. 1981). The two main goals of the study were (1) to develop, implement, and evaluate a series of eight lesson plans that would teach children to understand the television medium and to use their interest in the medium in conjunction with reading, writing, and discussion skills, and (2) to evaluate the relationship between family background and children's viewing habits. Pretests, posttests, and follow-up tests were conducted in experimental and control schools.

Researchers found that the materials developed were effective in teaching children about television production techniques, and were also useful as a means of teaching vocabulary words, writing skills, mathematics, and critical thinking skills. Parents were found to be very influential role models for their children's television viewing patterns and for their attitudes towards television. Although it was not possible to assess whether the program created more discriminating consumers of television, there was considerable interest on the part of the students in, for example, homework assignments, where the students were asked to rewrite commercials, to propose alternatives to aggressive solutions to conflicts on programs, or to record the incidence of violent acts.

Milton Ploghoft and James Anderson have developed a set of instructional objectives and activities for critically viewing TV commercials, entertainment programs, TV news and information programs, and for determining one's personal uses of television (Ploghoft and Anderson 1982). The Television Viewer Skills Project was originally piloted in 1970. In their book, Teaching Critical Television Viewing Skills: An Integrated Approach, Ploghoft and Anderson (1982) provide directions for the integration of critical viewing skills into the regular school curriculum. After working with many schools in the creation and testing of critical viewing skills curricula, they observed that the traditional skills of language arts and social studies formed the foundations for the specific skills appropriate to the analysis and evaluation of television program content. These skills include: listening skills; use and comprehension of figurative speech as a modifier of meaning; comprehending the plot of a story, identifying subplots, conflicts, and resolutions

in plots; identifying relationships among the characters; distinguishing between fantasy and reality; and using and analyzing persuasive language, stereotyping, propagandizing, creative expression, role playing, and writing for specific purposes--to entertain, to persuade, and to inform.

### Preliminary Assessment

During the past decade there have been reports of privately and publicly supported critical television viewing skills programs in the nation's schools. However, there apparently has not been systematic and critical evaluation of these efforts. These programs do not appear to have been widely disseminated, nor have they become an integral part of the school curriculum nationwide.

There are a number of forces necessary to support a school program in critical television viewing skills. These include a commitment from the state school officials, a commitment from textbook companies that must produce and market the instructional materials, pre-service and in-service training for teachers (including familiarity with the operation of video equipment), and the active participation of parents, consumer groups, and the television industry, especially broadcasters (Berry 1980).

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Prepared by Lyn Mortimer  
January 1988

# Latest Lesson: Turn On The Mind and TV Both

Continued From Page A1

many school districts were not content just to teach students how to produce programs and began showing their students how to "read" television and other communications media.

American schools are following the lead of several other countries. Since 1986, all students from the seventh through the 12th grades in Ontario have been required to study the conventions and messages of television. This year, media studies became a required part of the national curriculum in Britain.

One common thread runs through the new media literacy programs: all were created in response to specific local needs. In Minneapolis, a teachers' contract granting elementary school teachers daily preparation periods away from class led to the hiring of media specialists to keep children occupied and, later, to a formal curriculum, said Lyn Lacy, an elementary school media specialist there.

Today, she said, students are taught the differences between news reports, editorials and commercials in the first and second grades. The school system's media curriculum, adopted in 1987, also calls for fourth, fifth and sixth graders to study how color, focus and camera angle influence the appeal of television messages, and how the length of a presentation and the type of information included can distort a viewer's understanding of an event.

## From Game Shows to Talk Shows

In Norman, the home of the University of Oklahoma, negotiations between the town and the local cable television company resulted in the building of a sophisticated television production studio for the school district. In high school, this has meant elective courses in television production — but only after the youngsters take mandatory media courses in their elementary and middle schools, said Gary M. Kramer, the studio's director.

In the seventh grade, for example, all students in Norman take a three-week course in communication and research skills, which includes a segment on television. Students are taught about various television formats, among them, soap operas, situation comedies, game shows, talk shows and news programs. They are also introduced to the concept of target audiences, which they are told include yuppies, retired people, pre-schoolers, housewives and new parents. After homework assignments that include matching real programs, like "Wall Street Week," to real audiences, like business people, the youngsters break into small groups, pick a subject, a format and a target audience, and then write and produce a television program.

This year, students at the Whittier Middle School in Norman who were studying the environment did a fictional television news report with an anchor person and live reports from the field, where they covered the destruction of a tree in a rain forest.

"In this course, the kids become aware that they are consumers of television, which they've been all their lives without realizing it," Mr. Kramer said. "It's supposed to make them less susceptible to manipulation by the media, because they know what's going on."

In several cities, including New York and Washington, media studies are taught at special public high schools, which combine production classes with media literacy courses.

With support from the Scripps-Howard Foundation, Cincinnati opened a High School for the Communication Professions in September 1989. The school's aim is to teach professional skills in print journalism, television news, advertising and public relations and photography. But it is also integrating media studies into other parts of the curriculum, including seminars on contemporary issues.

"In our first seminar," said Jene M. Galvin, the school's dean, "we are going to pair the Pulitzer-Prize-winning news photo of the South Vietnamese general, with his arm outstretched, shooting the suspected Viet Cong guy, with another photo of a homeless man from Cincinnati, a bum, who was killed under a bridge."

"That picture never ran," he continued. "The editor of the local paper said no. But the Vietnam picture, as we all know, ran worldwide. Both are violent; both have blood and gore. The kids will be challenged to analyze a core question, about why one ran and the other didn't."

## Almed at Potential Dropouts

In Oakland, educators are looking to media studies as a way of keeping potential dropouts in school. In 1985, the district started a "media academy" at the John C. Fremont High School, which combines vocational training in print and broadcast journal-

**'You don't have to believe everything you hear or see.'**

ism with classes that use the media as an avenue to teach basic skills. In their language-arts classes, for example, sophomores write and videotape their own commercials to help teach writing and speaking.

"You base it on what they know, and these kids know commercials," said Steve O'Donoghue, the academy's director. "Having to sell something is a real good way to develop verbal skills. They have to be real specific about the language they use and the images they're portraying. We also want them to be conscious that this is an artifice, that it's a skill you learn, not magic, and that you don't have to believe everything you hear or see."

Sixty-six of the 70 students in its first two classes, in 1989 and 1990, graduated from the academy, and the remaining four received their equivalency diplomas, Mr. O'Donoghue said.

## 'What Are We Displacing?'

Media literacy education is not being welcomed by all. Many educators see media literacy courses as a capitulation to popular tastes that steals valuable time from teaching literature and other important subjects.

"Do we teach it instead of or in addition to books and literature?" asked Chester E. Finn Jr., a former assistant Secretary of Education in the Reagan Administration who now teaches education at Vanderbilt University. "If it's in addition, then we need to add to the time schools have. If it's instead of, what are we displacing? Shakespeare or Dickens?"

Dr. Finn went on: "I don't object to this as part of the mission of schools. I just have a hesitancy to replacing other important content."

# For Students in an Electronic Age, Lessons on Watching Television

By RANDALL ROTHENBERG

John Sivert was surprised recently when his 7-year-old daughter, Laura, returned home from her second-grade class at the Fulton School in Minneapolis and announced, "You shouldn't accept everything you see on television commercials as truth."

But Mr. Sivert should not have wondered at his child's precociousness. Like all public school students in Minneapolis, she is learning to be "media literate."

Long the bane of teachers who denounced its hypnotic allure and saw it competing with books for children's time, television is slowly but surely entering American classrooms as a subject. In courses that bear the unwieldy names "Media Literacy," "Visual Literacy" or "Critical Viewing," students from kindergarten through high school, from Oakland, Calif. to Norman, Okla., are learning to analyze television and the other media that pervade their lives.

## Understand What They See

Children are learning to distinguish between political commercials and news stories, writing their own television scripts and reviews, even studying how television programs are aimed at different demographic groups.

Advocates argue that media literacy courses help children, who watch television at home and at school anyway, understand that everything they see is not true. Moreover, these educators contend that the courses are another way of reaching students who are bored by traditional methods of teaching.

The A. C. Nielsen Company says American children watch an average of four hours of television at home each day. In addition, by dangling the lure of free video equipment, Whittle Communications, a Tennessee marketing

and media company, says it has persuaded 5,761 schools in 45 states to show its daily, advertiser-sponsored news programs in their classrooms.

But many educators believe that media literacy is merely a fad that will take time from teaching more important subjects. Even Bill Honig, California's Superintendent of Education, who believes that children should be taught about "propaganda techniques," shies from recommending a media literacy requirement.

"We're still struggling through math, history and science," he said.

Most media literacy courses originated as television-production classes when schools, with Government aid or through negotiations with local cable television companies, were given video cameras and other equipment. But

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Treatment: MEDIA MANIA

by Dan Taylor and John Ellis

We FADE IN and DISSOLVE through a series of shots gliding through a typical grade-school's corridors which are devoid of any signs of human activity. We finally begin hearing voices as we glide up to and stop at a door marked, "School Principal". Now inside the office, we see two parents having a conference with the principal, who says that their son, ELLIOT PORTER, has been having trouble concentrating in class. His teachers have expressed concern about his short attention span, lack of focus, and feel he has an undue fascination with media and entertainment. The principal suggests that the parents hire a tutor to help him focus on his studies and learn to think more critically about his choices. The Porters agree to hire a tutor to help Elliot over the summer months while school is in recess. We FADE OUT.

We FADE IN on the school exterior, it is now autumn: the start of 6th grade. Inside the school, as we move down the halls, we see the hustle and bustle of many kids finding their lockers. We settle on eleven year old ELLIOT PORTER and his little brother MICHAEL (age 6, who is just entering first grade). A very attentive and self-assured Elliot helps Michael first find his locker, and then his classroom. As Elliot says goodbye, he says, "Race you home after school, Michael?"

Elliot then goes off to find his own locker and classroom. On the way, he encounters his friends JACK, MISSY, ROGER, COLIN, DEBBIE and PETER, and

we learn a little bit about their characters on the way to class. Once Elliot finds his classroom and seat assignment, the teacher (whose face we do not see in this sequence) enters, and the class begins. They are given an assignment to write an essay on, "How I spent my summer vacation", to be done in class, which will help them all to get to know each other better. Although there are some grumblings about the assignment, Elliot, who is obviously glad to see the teacher and eager to begin, jumps right in and starts writing. He writes, "My summer vacation began exactly the same time as everyone else's, on the last day of school...", and as we see the words on the paper form (and hear his voiceover), we dissolve again to the front of the school as it was at the beginning of summer. Suddenly kids come pouring out of the main doors and stream off in all directions.

As the camera moves in, Elliot steps into view (a closeup), and smiles. He sees Michael, who is waiting on his bike, saying, "Race you home, dude!". Elliot unlocks his own bike from the rack, and they race for home. On the way they pass the TV station and other key geographical locations that figure prominently in his story. Suddenly Michael takes a short cut in which he almost runs over Colin. Colin starts to bully Michael, but before any real harm can be done, Elliot appears and effectively defuses the situation. He reminds Colin of the video party later that day. They continue on home.

We now find Elliot in the family living room. The room is full of the current generation of boys and girls of varying races, their clothing representative of their entertainment idols. They are bathed in the shifting pale-blue light that emanates from the television set.

The sounds of a rock video fill the room, the scene of this group of kids' frequent video parties. We see that some of the kids are wearing headsets, listening at an obviously increased volume, and are pretending to play guitars. The cables to the headsets create a spiderweb entanglement, in which the kids maneuver with ease.

We get to know Elliot's friends: COLIN, a twelve year old bully who fancies himself as some kind of "Rambo Commando". He is insulting to many of his friends and is known to pick on ROGER, an overweight child who Colin refers to as, "that couch potato". Colin excludes MISSY, a "Madonna-wanna-be", from many of the activities, telling her she isn't "smart" enough to play with the boys, and should go play with her Barbie dolls instead. JACK, a boy they call "Metal Head", is a loner who seldom joins in. He always wears the T-shirts advertising his favorite metal group, prompting some of the other kids to get into a screaming match about which is better, rap or metal. PETER is a soft-spoken, bespectacled black boy who often mediates the arguments Colin causes. He therefore often becomes a target of Colin's sarcastic humor.

Colin jumps up and grabs the remote control away and starts switching through the channels quickly. Jack, who had been watching the rock video with interest, grabs his Walkman and goes to the corner to listen to his music and study the album cover to his favorite metal group. He seems to be searching the lyrics for some hidden meaning. Colin's channel switcher stops on a cooking show. "Ugh, that stuff's for girls." Colin chortles contemptuously, throwing a glance at Missy. He switches some more channels and pauses at a commercial for expensive athletic

shoes, featuring Magic Johnson. "Peter, why don't you own a pair of these shoes?" says Colin. "Come to think of it, you don't even play basketball."

Colin changes the channel to the opening credits of "The Captain Liberty Show", then turns back to Peter, and says "Are you sure you're really black?". Peter turns calmly to Colin and replies, "Just because I'm black doesn't mean I have to play sports. Missy doesn't have to play with dolls just because she's a girl. You're such a jerk!

Colin jumps up menacingly and grabs Peter, flipping him in a manner imitating the introduction to "The Captain Liberty Show". We juxtapose similar shots of the tv cartoon show and Peter hitting the floor. Elliot intervenes to defend Peter just as Elliot's mother enters the room. Mom notices the friction between the kids, suggests they have "cabin fever", and urges them to go play outside instead of watching and listening to so much television and music on such a beautiful day. Elliot's mom watches as Michael remains glued to the television, watching a scene where two people are locked in physical combat. "Really, Elliot! You and Michael shouldn't watch so much junk T.V. Some of these shows are way too violent!", she says. "Aw, Mom!", replies Elliot, joining Michael in front of the T.V. "It doesn't scare us! We don't even think about it. We just watch it for the fights and car chases anyway!".

Mom calls to Michael again. There's still no reaction as he is engrossed in the tv show. Mom then directs her attention to the entire group of kids, saying "Ok kiddoes, time to go outside and play!". None react, as the entire group is suddenly tuned into their entertainment, tuning her out. "Earth to kids!", she says hopefully. We hear the noise

level from the TV, stereo, and other sources growing to the point of audio noise. Mrs. Porter continues to request the kids' attention, but to no avail amid the static and noise.

We dissolve to the exterior of Elliot's house. The sounds of Mrs. Porter, the kids and the entertainment noise continue. We dissolve again to a high altitude view of Elliot's neighborhood. The sounds from Elliot's house are joined by various sounds from the other homes.

Through a series of dissolves we continue to move up and away from earth, until we see the planet rotating fully. The sound has built to a crescendo of totally confusing noise. We pull away as the earth disappears into the blackness, the noise growing fainter as the stillness of space envelopes it.

Out of the depths of deep space appears a rotating planet, ZORK. We take in the wondrous vista of this alien planet, and see that it is a futuristic variation of our own Earth. We finally settle on two alien companions, RAY GAMMA, and his little friend ZAP [an animated creature]. The pair are tuning in the planet Earth which is slowly turning on their television screen. A noise is emanating from their screen: the sounds of Earth. The sound becomes a cacophony, totally unintelligible.

Gamma and Zap become extremely excited and concerned about their discovery. They leave their laboratory in search of their superior, THE BRAIN. As they pixilate down a long hallway, we become aware of massive doors at the far end, Ala "The Wizard of Oz". Gamma and Zap enter the "Throne Room". The Brain materializes and hovers above them. He is a big, friendly, pulsating alien entity, who is always ready to assimilate their

data.

Gamma and Zap are breathless with their discovery. "I think this is it!", says Gamma ominously. "A planet so full of electronic sound and picture signals that we fear it's future may be heading in the direction of Zork's past!", he adds.

In a dazzling display of pixilation and animation effects, Gamma and Zap demonstrate a rapid representation of Earth's music, sounds and images. There are a variety of stereotypical representations of people from Earth. A music video shows women as identical sexual objects. Movie action scenes depict glamorized violence. Commercials show stereotypical blacks and elderly. We recognize our own popular TV shows, music videos, and entertainment stars, from the opening theme music of well-known sitcoms, to the "Heeere's Johany" introduction of the Tonight Show. The Brain suddenly calls the display to a halt, and in order to settle down the overly excited duo, he creates a "calm zone" in the center of the room.

"You must be careful," warns Brain. "It is important to keep these most powerful transmissions under control, and not let them overpower us the way they once did on Zork. We must never forget THE FORMULA that Zap brought to us in our most desperate hour."

A more serious, attentive and quieter atmosphere now exists. The Brain pauses, taking a deep, meditative breath (which is imitated by Gamma and Zap) and observes that, "These earthlings describe themselves as "humans". However, their own transmission equipment presents a very narrow view of their humanity!". He then produces a holographic projection in the

center of the room, adjusting the images to feature ones of children. They are candid shots of them talking about their favorite music, and television programs. We hear them describe their favorite scary shows, without commenting on the sadness of violence. We hear them discuss their favorite stars, without realizing that the images they portray are not real. These interviews are intercut with shots from TV shows and other appropriate images, as well as shots of trance-like kids and family members watching television. We finish with a view of a TV show reflected on a child's eye.

The Brain then says, "You 'The Galactic Guardians of Media Literacy', must go to Earth and teach these Earthlings the skills of critical thinking. You must teach them THE FORMULA!". He takes another meditative breath, then produces a lone holographic image of Elliot Porter in the center of the room. "Start your mission with the one named Elliot," Brain commands. "Go now, and may ' THE FORMULA' be with you!", says Brain, who then salutes them with a clever hand sign visualizing THE FORMULA. Gamma and Zap return the salute, then exit the room.

We DISSOLVE Gamma and Zap's flying saucer zooming through space. We CUT to them inside their ship. They find Earth without mishap, but once in our atmosphere, Zap bumps the controls and causes their navigation to become a thing of the past. Out of control, the ship barely avoids colliding with a variety of Earth's landmarks. We see the ship fly over the Statue of Liberty and dip down into the Grand Canyon. It finally makes an extremely low pass over Washington DC, flying zanily past the Capitol building and the Washington monument. They fly past a huge sign

advertising "Satellite Parking" which causes them to do a double-take! They then fly down a city street right over a variety of people who are so wrapped up in their portable headphones and other entertainment distractions that they don't notice the spaceship at all.

The ship finally crashes through the side of a huge television station into a large bay filled with paraphernalia marked 'Prop Room'. The ship comes to rest upon a pile of used props, tv monitors, electronic appliances, and even old outdated toys and merchandise, such as hula hoops, transformers, cabbage patch dolls, and Batman and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle products.

In the TV station's security office a large SECURITY GUARD is snoring in front of a television set with its picture rolling. The remains of a junk food fest litter the room and his rotund belly. The sound of the crash awakens him. He turns on his flashlight and starts to investigate.

Gamma and Zap spill out of their open hatch onto a sea of objects. Zap curiously scans the pile of strange objects and scratches his head. Gamma sees the huge crash-hole they made in the side of the building and gasps! He frantically instructs Zap to give him the "Reconstruction Generator". Zap picks up a toy ray gun and hands it to his flustered friend. Gamma tries to use it to no avail. Once aware of the prank, he admonishes Zap, who darts into the ship and back with the alien device. With the security guard getting nearer, Gamma activates the device, putting the wall back to its original undamaged condition.

The guard is now fumbling with his keys to unlock the prop room. Gamma uses the reconstruction generator to put the objects back where they

belong. Suddenly the door behind them starts to open. They look at their huge ship, clearly visible, then at each other, and gasp! The burly guard enters the room, his flashlight sweeping the shelves and aisles. All is as it should be! There is no sign of the ship or our alien friends. The confused yet still suspicious guard scratches his head as he scans with the light. Finally his beam falls on a trio of toys: a tiny spaceship, a stuffed Zap doll, and a Gamma action figure. The guard does a double-take and exits with a less than satisfied expression.

Gamma returns to normal size. Gamma and Zap begin to discuss their plans as we DISSOLVE to Elliot's neighborhood. The morning sky serenely illuminates a neatly kept community of middle class homes. In Elliot's house, there is the normal domestic hustle and bustle. His mother is vacuuming, Michael yells (over the din) that there is someone at the door. She opens the door to find Gamma in a nice business suit.

He identifies himself as Mr. Raymond, Elliot's summer tutor. When she becomes confused about a lack of appointment, Gamma points out that it wasn't scheduled, but since Elliot is due to meet him at his the school later that day, he thought he would drop in and remind him. He adds that he will leave if it's not a good time, but she assures him it's fine.

Mrs. Porter calls out to Elliot: he doesn't answer. She asks Michael where Elliot is, and he doesn't know, so she leaves Mr. Raymond with Michael and goes off to find him. Michael tells Mr. Raymond that, "Sometimes Elliot's got his Walkman on and can't hear you!". Hearing this, Gamma looks concerned, as Michael goes into the kitchen for a drink.

Mrs. Porter finds Elliot sitting, though asleep, in front of the tv.

While she is waking him, Gamma takes note of all of the entertainment-related effluvia in the living room. As Gamma is quietly pointing out items to an invisible Zap, Michael reenters the room, asking "Who're you talking to?". Gamma squats down to his level, and explains that he is "eccentric" and sometimes talks to himself. After a few moments, Elliot appears, and he and "Mr. Raymond" are introduced to each other. On the front porch they have a talk. Raymond says to come to school later that day for his first lesson. A still groggy Elliot asks what subject they will study, and to his amazement, the teacher replies, "Whatever you want! It's up to you. What do you like?". Elliot thinks, then says, "TV and music?". The teacher says, "Then tv and music it is. Meet me at 1 pm at the school.". As he leaves, we focus past Elliot to Michael and mom. Michael tells mom, "Mr. Ray-man said he was extra-centric! That means he talks to himself!".

Later, we find an empty school, except for Mr. Raymond, who is sitting at his desk in the classroom. The room contains a large screen tv, giant speakers up in front, and a variety of other stereo and tv hardware. Elliot enters and looks around in amazement, after all, it has only been a short time since he indicated his "media study" preference. Elliot takes a seat.

Mr. Raymond asks, "So, what's your favorite movie, Elliot?". "Star Wars", exclaims Elliot. "Ah, Star Wars!" says Mr. Raymond, as the famous title appears on the large screen and other televisions in the room. The familiar theme music resonates from the speakers, as Elliot looks around astonished. Raymond continues with, "A superbly crafted film by some

excellent practitioners of the cinematic arts." Various sights and sounds of the famous movie appear on the screens and from the speakers. "Elliot, where do you think Star Wars began?", asks the teacher. Elliot confidently says, "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away!". "No Elliot," Mr. Raymond says, placing his finger to his head, "It began here, in the mind! it is the result of many, many hours of critical thinking. Thoughts and ideas documented through the power of the written word."

The tv screens show an image of a hand writing the words "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away". Mr. Raymond continues, "The words, the story, then translated to the screen through the technology and artistry of the filmmaking process." The tv's then display behind the scene images of Star Wars being made. "Things like this don't just happen Elliot, someone takes control and makes it happen". Elliot is very attentive.

"Elliot, I have a story to tell you that you may enjoy!". He goes to the chalk board and begins to write as he speaks, "Not too long ago, and not very far away, there was a planet called Zork!". As the teacher writes these words, they also trace out on the tv screen, and music swells from the speakers. We then see the tale acted out on the tv screens as he continues speaking. "Zork was a planet very much like Earth, so similar it was, in fact, that it could almost be the same world.[We see Zork turning in space] The people that lived there were wonderful and vibrant, like a flame, their spirits burned so brightly.[We see a happy Zorkoid on the screen] But one day a sad thing began to happen.[The Zorkoid frowns] Their brilliance was threatened to be extinguished forever.[The Zorkoid looks fearful] They were on the very brink of destruction, but they neither knew

this fact nor cared. [We see a typical Zorkoid City, teeming with TV antennas and microwave dishes] For it wasn't anything as obvious as a global war, or starvation, or disease. [We see a Zorkoid home] No, they simply had lost control of their entertainment: it controlled them! [We see a Zorkoid watching a TV, surrounded by electronic doodads, which suddenly begin to writhe and dance around him, forming a cage] Zork was about to become an empty shell of a world, drifting through space forever. [We see the planet in space again] But then, just before the end, help arrived. [Zap dissolves into view, wearing a Superman-type costume, standing arms akimbo, straddling the planet Zork, ala the beginning credits to the old Superman TV show] His name was Zap!, strange visitor from another planet who came to Zork with powers and ideas well within the understanding of mortal men. ZAP!, Who could change the course of Zork's history, open minds with his MIGHTY FORMULA, and who fights a never ending battle for truth, critical thinking, and media literacy throughout the universe. Zap taught first one Zorkoid, called Ray Gamma, his AMAZING FORMULA. [We see Zap teaching Gamma. When Elliot sees Gamma on the TV, he looks with mild suspicion at Mr. Raymond] Together they taught another. [They teach the Brain] Then another. Soon, critical thinking and media literacy spread like wildfire over the planet. The spark that was Zork was born anew from the ashes of the old! Gamma, Brain, and Zap then pledged to help spread the formula to other worlds. And to this day, they appear wherever and whenever they are needed. THE END!", finishes Mr. Raymond.

Elliot looks a little confused. The teacher goes on, "The moral to this story is that Entertainment should be used by you -- you shouldn't be

used by it. YOU are in control. If you think about the things you watch and hear, you can still be entertained without being manipulated. There is a simple formula that I would like to teach you. It is called "ZAP + THINK = MEDIA LITERACY.". Elliot asks, "What is media literacy?". The teacher answers, "Literacy means knowledge, media is your entertainment. Media literacy is being knowledgeable about your entertainment." Mr. Raymond continues, "In this equation, ZAP means to detach yourself from what you are viewing or hearing. Take a step back and pause a moment. Then you add THINK. When you put the two actions together, "ZAP + THINK" equals a process that gives you control over what you are viewing. It allows you to accept the ideas that come across or to reject them. It puts you in the driver's seat."

Elliot looks confused. Whatever Mr. Raymond is talking about appears on the large screen TV to help illustrate his point. This begins to make Elliot think more about how Mr. Raymond is doing that, rather than his formula. He asks Mr. Raymond who he is really, and how it is done. At this point, Mr. Raymond explains that he is a teacher from the planet Zork, and Elliot refuses to believe it. Gamma then adds that the answer to his second question will be found on today's field trip. "A field trip?", says Elliot excitedly. "Yes, a field trip!", responds Mr. Raymond. "All right!", adds Elliot. They both exit the classroom.

They arrive at the TV station. Once inside, they disguise themselves as janitors in order to observe the situation inconspicuously. They enter Studio #1 just as a TV commercial is being shot. A "Rambo" like character with muscular arms is holding up a box of Ram-O's breakfast cereal. He

says, "It would be your worst nightmare if you don't try my new breakfast cereal!". At this point ADRIAN, a high-strung ad exec type charges in and starts complaining loudly about the lighting being wrong. Mr. Raymond, with a less than graceful move, accidentally knocks over the product setup, spilling the contents of the cereal box around Rambo's feet. Adrian screams, "You idiot! Do you know how long it took to set that up? No, of course you don't! Hours and hours! Dollars and dollars! Do you know what this means?". Adrian, clenching his fists and moving toward Gamma, says, "It means we lose dollars and dollars!".

Rambo grabs Adrian's arm, saying, "Take it easy, Adrian! You take this stuff too seriously!". Adrian, pursuing Mr. Raymond and Elliot, says, "If I don't get this commercial done, the children won't see it! If the children don't see it, the parents won't buy it! If the parents don't buy it, the Ram-O's Breakfast food people will lose dollars and dollars and dollars!".

Rambo says, "Yo! Adrian! Calm down!". Adrian says to Mr. Raymond and Elliot, "If the Ram-O's Breakfast food people lose dollars and dollars then I'll lose my job and dollars and dollars and dollars!". Adrian drops to his knees, repeating, "Dollars and dollars and dollars!", over and over again. Rambo says, "Adrian. Stop it! Don't do that, Adrian!".

Mr. Raymond and Elliot beat a hasty retreat out of the studio door. Rambo loudly yells, "ADRIAN!", which echoes through the building as Mr. Raymond and Elliot run down a hallway.

After they are sure of being a safe distance from the crazed madman, they slow to a fast walk. Talking to Mr. Raymond, Elliot says, "Dollars

and dollars and dollars!" mockingly. Mr. Raymond laughs.

Elliot and Mr. Raymond round a corner and find themselves at a set of double doors: Studio #2. Not noticing the red flashing "Shooting in process" light over the door, they peek into the studio, and see a talk show in progress.

From behind the talk show host, we can see the guests, the cameras, and the control booth. The host says, "Welcome back to "Is Too, Is Not". Our guests tonight are superstar BUDGE KRUNCH of the heavy metal supergroup BURNIN' CHROME; and I.M. FRESH and the HOMEBOYS rap group, who's hit song, "Scullery Maid Baby", is based on the "Cinderella fairytale."

I.M. Fresh, the rap musician, with his Homeboys adding rap symphonics in the background, raps, "Cinderella, met her fella, dissed the dude, 'cause he was yella!". Budge Krunch argues, "No way, man! She ditched her bogus stepsisters and went drag with that weird dude to the headbangers' ball!".

Meanwhile, in the control room, we see the switching control panel and monitors, with I.M. Fresh visible on them. He says, "They danced to RAP in the STREET!". Budge Krunch says, "No way! It was a bodacious HEAVY METAL gig!". "It's RAP!", says I.M. Fresh. "It's METAL!", says Budge. "It's RAP!", says I.M. Fresh. "No way!", says Budge. "It is too!", says I.M. Fresh. "It is not!", says Budge. The dialogue degenerates into the "Is too, is not" of the show's title. The DIRECTOR says, "Take wide shot, Camera 2.". On the monitor we see Mr. Raymond and Elliot, obviously ruining the show. The director says, "What's going on? Bobby, who are

those guys? Get them out of there. Cut! This show's a bust!!".

The two intruders dart out the door. As they flee down the hall, the door to Studio #3 opens, and a grey-suited man bustles out, running into Elliot without apology. Through the open door, Elliot and Mr. Raymond can see a bewildered group of black-clad, aging rockers in the midst of shooting a music video. The stage is set with symbols reminiscent of pentagrams and goats' heads. The obviously older rock group is bewildered because they're clutching new costumes consisting of sneakers and baseball caps. Mr. Raymond overhears the record executive on his portable phone as he moves down the hall: "Yeah, Stan!" he says excitedly. "I've got this great new concept for the group. Nobody wants to hear those old depressing songs anymore - that whole devil thing went out in the seventies. The kids today want clean, wholesome entertainment like that 'New Kids' group. They're selling like crazy. So, I figured, we just remake the image for Skuzzy and the gang. You know, like 'New Kids Over The Hill.' we'll make a fortune! The kids'll eat it up!". His voice fades as he rounds a corner. Elliot and Mr. Raymond look back into the studio to see the lead singer in long hair, T-shirt and baseball cap shaking his head, saying "I don't think this is gonna work.

Mr. Raymond shuts the door to the studio and turns to Elliot. "We've got to find the computer core, which is a central corridor of many banks of electronic circuit panels. We can study how a TV station works from there."

When they reach the "Central Core", they pass by a TV monitor as an image of The Brain appears on the screen. Brain explains that the lack of

critical thinking on Earth appears to be more widespread than he first believed. Brain suggests that Mr. Raymond does whatever possible to expedite the mission. As they sign off, The Brain says, "May the formula be with you!", and they exchange the "formula salute."

Elliot looks intently at Mr. Raymond, and once again asks, "Who are you really?". Mr. Raymond replies, "I told you, I'm a ...". Elliot interrupts sarcastically, "I know, a spaceman". "No, not a spaceman", replies Mr. Raymond, "I'm Ray Gamma, a Zorkoid from the planet Zork. I'm one of the 'Galactic Guardians of Media Literacy'. I've been sent to Earth to help your people save your planet!". Elliot doesn't believe a word of it, until Gamma reveals Zap, who appears dramatically. Elliot is taken aback. Zap hovers in front of him and gives him the formula salute. Elliot turns to Gamma and says, "Your story, it's true! You are a spaceman! You're the guys in the story!" Gamma nods and smiles, as Zap orbits and giggles.

Now that Elliot is a true believer, they can use their powers to show him even more. The trio will enter the computer core system, locate and interface with the transmission carrying programming to neighborhood homes, and travel into the TV sets and radios of Elliot's friends to observe them. They will be able to observe the victims from the inside looking out.

Zap spins around playfully and transforms Gamma and Elliot into a comet of electrical impulses. Transforming himself, he flies into the circuit panel, causing a beautiful display of electrical sparks and "Disney-dust drippy-downs". Outside the TV station, the three little

comets fly straight up out of the microwave dish, bounce off a satellite, and head back down towards Earth.

We now find ourselves at a microwave relay station. The three suddenly fly down and hit the relay station's microwave dish. They travel into the dish, and then into the above-ground cables. We see the cables light up as they quickly fly through dozens of them. They stop momentarily, and we see Zap materialize, consult a map, and then continue down the cables.

They travel down a cable into a house and materialize inside a television set (they are very tiny). They look up to see the (to them) giant tv screen displaying a violent action show in reverse. On the other side of the screen they see Colin, who is playing war, imitating the violent acts of combat. He is decked out in khaki combat clothing and has a variety of toy weapons at his disposal. Elliot shakes his head in amazement and they journey back the way they came.

We now see our three heroes shooting down another above ground cable, and into a house. Once inside the tv set (bouncing around), they shrink down to tiny size, and enter the electron gun on their way to the picture tube. They dodge the electron-projectiles as they impact the back of the tv screen, creating an image of a Madonna. Inside the house we see MISSY and two of her friends (DEBBIE and MOLLY) dressed up like a parade of Madonnas, dancing and singing along with their video idol, a take-off of "Papa Don't Preach" (early Madonna song\*), "Teacher don't preach/I'm in trouble deep/I'm makin' all "F's"/I've been losin' sleep/But I made up my mind/Ain't goin' to summer school!". They throw their schoolbooks in the air and dance around. One of the girls, Debbie, who is black, turns to

watch herself in a full-length mirror. The reflection she sees in the mirror is not herself as she really is, but a fantasized view of herself as a blonde and bangled Madonna. Our three heroes exchange worried looks!

Once again, the three fly down a cable into another house, ending up looking through the television's vibrating phosphor-dots into the living room of ROGER, the overweight child from the video party. They see Roger rapidly, like in a silent movie, stuffing his face with junk food. Elliot rubs his eyes, and looks, to see Roger looking larger. He rubs his eyes again, in disbelief, and looks to see Roger even larger still. This continues until Roger becomes so incredibly huge, that he achieves "critical mass", and suddenly vibrates, changing himself into, literally, a giant potato! The giant "couch-potato's" many "eyes" (visual pun) all turn toward the television set to watch. Elliot looks horrified, gasps "Oh, no!!!". Elliot turns to the two space adventurers and says, "Well, maybe my friends do have a problem, but that doesn't affect me, does it?". In response, Gamma and Zap take him on a more serious trip: to the playground. Gamma says, as they prepare to exit Roger's TV, "But this time we do it without "wires", and they turn into a radio wave, and broadcast themselves out through the TV's antenna! They arrive in a Walkman (lying on a bench) which belongs to Elliot's brother Michael.

We now see Elliot's little brother Michael playing on a playground see-saw with a friend. Other kids are playing on various slides, jungle gyms, etc. "Why, there's Michael," exclaims Elliot. "What are we doing watching him?". "Your friends are not the only ones who are affected by this!", replies Gamma.

Then a group of older kids arrive: Commando Colin and his "Army Task Force". Colin puts his foot on the low end of the teeter-totter and pushes Michael's friend off, leaving Michael way up in the air. He tells Michael that he warned him to stay out of his territory. Michael protests, so Colin bounces the see-saw with his foot, making it hard for Michael to keep his balance. Gamma holds Elliot back, advising that they still can't hear or see him. Michael finally gives in, addressing his tormentor as "Commando Colin, SIR". Colin and his friends then start blasting Michael with their big, battery powered, automatic (1 quart backpack reservoir) squirt guns. Michael loses his grip on the wet teeter-totter handle and falls to the ground. Colin kicks the low end of the teeter-totter up in the air, causing it to come crashing down, barely missing Michael. The task force continues to blast him with water as they mouth the sounds of real gunfire. Michael finds his glasses on the ground. They are broken. He cannot hold back any longer, and begins to cry. We see Elliot, wide eyed, breathing heavy and extremely concerned.

They return to the tv station and go to the prop room, where the spaceship is stored. Gamma and Elliot discuss everything they have seen. Elliot is beginning to understand the problem but is still not sure about the solution. Gamma grabs Elliot's cap from him, and Zap magically writes "ZAP + THINK!" on it. Gamma points out again that the FORMULA tells him what to do, detach and think about it. Elliot says that his brother and friends have the problems, not him. Gamma points to Elliot's Batman watch, and it disappears. He then points to Elliot's Bart Simpson logo on his T-shirt, and that too vanishes. He then grabs Elliot's dogtags, saying

"What about you, G.I. Joe?". Elliot looks at the dogtags, and sees "ZAP + THINK" magically appear on them.

Gamma says, "One more journey is necessary!". Tiny Elliot, Gamma and Zap appear in a stereo in Elliot's living room. They see a very small Michael plugged into headphones, sitting in front of a number of televisions, all playing different shows. Suddenly a "dial 900" number commercial comes on, inviting viewers to "talk to Captain Liberty". Without asking his parents, Michael picks up the phone and dials the number. With the TVs droning, the stereo blaring, and the telephone delivering its message to him, Michael becomes oblivious to all of the electronics around him beginning to move. The wires, screens and other equipment snake around him, forming a sort of cage. It all begins to swirl and dance around him, as the sound grows louder and louder, in a manner similar to the image of the afflicted Zorkoid that Gamma showed to Elliot in the classroom.

Elliot is mortified. He says, "Don't just stand there, do something!". Gamma says, "He must be taught "ZAP + THINK", only then will he be truly safe." Elliot panics, and says "I've got to save him!", as he starts to push through the phosphor-dots separating him from his brother. "No!", cries Gamma. "You can't do it for him. He must learn the formula and rescue himself! You must become the teacher!". But it is too late. Elliot suddenly is in the living room with a whoosh back to full size. He grabs and pulls at the electronic cage around Michael until it lies lifelessly scattered around the room. "Are you okay?", Elliot asks. "Sure!", says Michael. "What's the problem? Why did you throw everything around like

that?"

Elliot then becomes a little confused. He looks closely into the TV screen, and calls out to Gamma and Zap, who are not there. He is not sure if this is real or not. "ZAP + THINK!", he says. He distances himself from the situation for a moment, then thinks. He pulls out his dogtags and looks at THE FORMULA on them: this is real! He thinks for a moment, then realizes something. "I know where they'll be!", he says to Michael. "Who?", says Michael. "Come with me," says Elliot. "There's something I want to show you!"

They arrive on their bikes at the tv station, and sneak in through a side door. As Elliot leads Michael to the prop room, he tells him that he is going to meet "a real spaceman". In the prop room, Elliot calls out, "Ray? Zap? Where are you?". Suddenly the large loading dock door starts to open, with shafts of intense light streaming in. A figure moves in the bright mist. We think it is Gamma, but it is the burly Security guard, who says, "Hey! You kids! What are you doing in here?!". He starts walking towards Elliot, saying "You're in big trouble, gentlemen!"

The guard moves closer, very threatening, but suddenly in a flash of Disney dust, he freezes in mid-stride. The boys watch in amazement, and then turn quickly as the miniature spaceship on a storage rack begins to move. The tiny ship takes off, and flies around the warehouse, leaving a trail of sparkling Disney dust. Then the ship lands in the open center of the room, and in a swirl of Disney dust flourish, it grows to its full size. The hatch on top opens, and Gamma rises up in a formal version of his spacesuit, making a grand entrance. Zap appears on his shoulder.

Elliot introduces Michael, who says, "Hey, it's the Ray-man!". Elliot then realizes that Gamma and Zap are leaving. "But what about Michael! I don't think we're finished yet, Ray! You can't leave!", says Elliot. Gamma says, "You're right. We're not done yet. Sit down, and pay attention! Ahem!". Gamma produces a "magic blackboard pointer", and taps it on Zap's head three times.

They then begin to teach the FORMULA in a brief musical number that involves pixilation and stop-motion animation. Objects dance and assist in clarifying the information contained in Gamma's song. Gamma sings, "Don't be controlled by your sensory stimulation equipment!". "Huh?", says Michael. "Your TV, stereo, music and entertainment," continues Gamma, "You must learn to discern, use it wisely, and not consume mindlessly. It can show you wonderful things. The power of music and television on the human species is a strange thing to behold. It can make you laugh, it can make you cry, it can sometimes teach, and sometimes lie. Use it, don't let it use you!".

The dancing objects number will involve stereos, TV's, Cabbage patch dolls, transformers and movie props coming to life. Words will form on a blackboard, illustrating "ZAP + THINK", and "Patterns of thought = Patterns of action."

Then the whole room starts to shake. The dancing props flee in all directions, as a black swirling cloud begins to form in the center of the prop room. Gamma says, "There is one more thing . . .!".

Rapidly, in the center of the cloud, all of the tv and sound equipment from the station comes together to form a huge robot-like monster! Gamma

steps up to face-off with the dark creature and they begin to do battle. "Stop him!", cries Elliot. "I can't!", cries Gamma, as the "media monster" imprisons him in a force field. Zap, in his "superhero outfit" flies around the juggernaut's head to confuse him, but the beast just grabs him, and squashes him between his huge hands, leaving only a little cloud of "Disney dust drippy-downs". Gamma shouts, "Elliot! YOU have the power to defeat it! Think!". Elliot, distressed says "But I need a weapon!". Gamma shouts, "No, Elliot, you must think for yourself! That's what it's all about!". Elliot is looking around for a weapon, when he remembers something. He adjusts his thinking cap, and grabs his dogtags, and thinks hard. The monster, noticing this, reaches down and plucks the cap and dogtags from Elliot, and swallows them with an thundering evil laugh. The juggernaut then makes his move to get Michael. "Run Michael!", yells Elliot. "I can't stop it now!". As Michael runs behind some props, and the monster is trying to grab him, Gamma yells, "Yes you can, Elliot! You don't need the cap or dogtags, they're just props! Use the FORMULA! "ZAP + THINK"!".

Elliot stops for a moment. He looks and sees that Gamma is just "play acting", and is in fact, creating the monster as a test! A look of cognition appears on his face. At this moment, Elliot has a fantastic revelation: he understands that he can make his own choices, and that thinking critically about things won't take the fun away. He looks at the creature, and says matter-of-factly, "I'm in charge here!". The monster looks back at him (with it's TV monitor face) for a moment and laughs. Elliot then holds out his hand and says, "ZAP!", and a remote-control

device appears in his hand. He then says, "THINK!", and changes his own program! "I've decided to watch a different program!", he says. The media monster looks worried suddenly. Elliot presses a button on his remote control. With this the creature collapses back into it's component parts, defeated, never to bother Elliot again.

Gamma is now free, and Elliot and Michael are now safe. Elliot will teach Michael what he has learned. But poor Zap, he didn't make it. Elliot and Gamma are sad for a moment. But just then, Michael jumps out and says, "ZAP + THINK!", and out of the sparking remains of the monster robot, appears our little friend Zap!

Then Gamma and Zap make Elliot an official "Galactic Guardian of Media Literacy". Zap magically creates "ZAP + THINK" T-shirts on Elliot and Michael. Michael says, "Too bad Elliot had to lose his hat and dogtags, though!". With this, Gamma has the Media Monster step back into the scene. It returns the hat and dogtags that were taken from Elliot, and sheepishly apologizes for scaring them. Gamma tells Elliot to go forth and spread the FORMULA across the planet. They say their goodbyes, and give each other the "FORMULA SALUTE". As the flying saucer takes off, we find ourselves back in the classroom, on the first day of 6th grade, with Elliot just finishing reading his essay, saying, "And that's how I learned THE FORMULA and am in control of my entertainment. The end.". Elliot waits for a reaction, but we hear only silence.

Just then we hear the teacher speak (but we still do not see him). "Class! Well, do we have any comments? What does Elliot's story mean to you?". The students then briefly discuss his story and relate some

concepts that allow us to tie up our learning armatures, and after. The dismissal bell rings, and the children all file out, except for Elliot.

After the other kids are gone, Elliot steps up to the teacher, and asks him what he thought of his story. We hear the teacher laugh and tell Elliot how pleased he is to see that their summer tutoring sessions paid off. At the very end, we see him clearly for the very first time: Surprise! It is Mr. Raymond (Gamma)! With a twinkle in his eye, he looks at Elliot, winks and says, "But you know, with an imagination like that, you should be working in Hollywood!".

Just then, we hear the director yell, "Cut! Print! That's a wrap!". From the shadow of a camera, we pull back to see the schoolroom set, actors and technicians start shaking hands, congratulating each other. We roll our end credits over a behind-the-scenes montage of this production, which reveals many of the tricks and illusions that were used in the show's creation.

Following the credits, we flash on the word "ZAP + THINK," with highlights and Disney Dust. Fade out.

The End.