

Overview and Learning Objectives

An 11-year-old girl posts her original novel to an online community of writers. A 13-year-old boy creates a parody video using movie clips, and then uploads it to YouTube. A 10-year-old boy is confused about whether he needs permission to use an image he found online for a school project. What’s copyright, and what’s fair use? This can be a confusing topic for adults as well as young people.

Young people today are 21st century creative artists. They live in a digital culture where information is easily and instantly available, inspiring them to participate in it. They are encouraged to build on the ideas of others, create their own videos, blogs, music, artwork, and remixes and publish them online. They are empowered to share their voices with the world.

Although this culture of creation and sharing is exciting, the ease with which young people can access, copy, and distribute digital content means that they often use material they find on the Internet without thinking about where it comes from or who it belongs to. Young people’s notion that “if it’s on the Internet, it’s free for the taking” has led to problems of copyright infringement, plagiarism, piracy, and a general lack of respect for the hard work and creativity of others. Some say that copyright laws are outdated and need to adapt to the “free culture” of digital media. Others argue that we cannot simply disregard copyright law in an age of digital media. The basic fact is this: Even if something is posted on the Internet for all the world to see, someone, somewhere created that picture, song, or article – and it belongs to that person.

In this unit, students learn about their rights and responsibilities as users and owners of creative work in a digital world. They learn how to respect the copyrights of others, as well as how to protect, receive acknowledgement for, and share their own creative work. They consider the ethical issues surrounding plagiarism, piracy, and peer-to-peer file sharing. They learn about their rights as creators to use materials in the public domain and to apply fair use. By focusing on young people’s roles as digital creators, this unit encourages students to think about their behavior in a new light and to take responsibility for positively shaping the creative online culture of which they are a part.

“It’s really easy to take music and make it something different and send it out to the world.”

Henry, age 14

“I wanted to get my work out without having to worry about people stealing it.”

Nicole, age 13

Students will:

- Learn about their rights to their own copyrighted work
- Reflect on their responsibilities as creators when using copyrighted work
- Identify how they can use copyrighted work without permission through public domain and fair use
- Understand that piracy and plagiarism are forms of copyright infringement that are unethical and unlawful

Lessons

- **A Creator’s Rights**
- **A Creator’s Responsibilities**
- **Rework, Reuse, Remix**

Key Unit Resources

For Students

Videos

- [Respecting Creative Work Student Intro Video](#)
- [Respecting Creative Work Student Video Vignette – Nicole’s Story \(6th\)](#)
- [Respecting Creative Work Student Video Vignette – Henry’s Story \(7-8\)](#)

Games/Interactives: Mix and Mash

For Parents

- [Respecting Creative Work Parent Tip Sheet](#)
- [Respecting Creative Work Parent/Teacher Intro Video](#)

Research

- [Creative Commons](#)
- Hobbs, Renee (2010). Copyright Clarity: How fair use supports digital learning. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
- Palfrey, J., Gasser, U., Simun, M., & Barnes, R. (2009). “Youth, creativity, and copyright in the digital age.” International Journal of Learning and Media, 1.2, 79-97.
- [United States Copyright Office](#)

Authors and affiliation: Common Sense Media

Alignment with Standards — National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007): 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2d, 3b, 3d, 4a, 5a, 5b, 5c

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