

BREAK-A-THON
IN A BOX

SOTU EDITION



www.thelamp.org

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INTRODUCTION

CALL TO ACTION/OBJECTIVES

Millions of viewers tune in for political events like party conventions, inaugurations, and the State of the Union. The SOTU in particular is significant, annual chance to get some insight into a president's policy plans. Events like the SOTU are often a mix of substance and spectacle, and understanding the blend of history, substantive policy suggestions, and rhetorical performance in these events can be tricky, particularly for young people who may not have a lot of experience either watching or dissecting an event like the SOTU

The 22x20 Campaign is focused on activating and facilitating youth voice and leadership in the democratic process. And one thread of this work involves empowering youth with the critical media literacy skills they need to consume, critique, and respond to political media.

A break-a-thon is like a high-powered antidote to passive consumption habits and can be a way for youth to build their media literacy skills. By remixing (or 'breaking') any media event such as the SOTU, movie trailers, commercials, music videos and more with our MediaBreaker remix tool, young people get to pull back the curtain on how media communicate to us, and uncover the subtle messages that otherwise go unnoticed. Break-a-thon events focus on a live event or a theme, with teens breaking media related to that event.

For example, one of our more successful Break-a-thon is during our annual Break the Super Bowl event, when teens come together to watch the big game. We provide wings, pizza, soda and snacks, and it looks like any other Super Bowl party - except that teens are on laptops, breaking commercials and talking back to the stereotypes,

misinformation and hype that are such a big part of Super Bowl ads. . For an event like the SOTU, teens can take on the role of professional journalists and fact-checkers and critically respond to the SOTU as it is airing.

The LAMP designed this Break-a-thon in a Box so that you have everything you need to host your own break-a-thon. You'll find templates and suggestions for planning, publicizing and documenting your break-a-thon based on our years of producing these events in a variety of settings, and we're here to help if you need it. This guide is organized chronologically, walking you through what you need to do from four weeks prior to your event. Let's get started!

Plan on organizing a live Break-a-thon event outside of the classroom? [Read this section for tips and a timeline on planning and logistics.](#)

RESOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR A SOTU BREAK-A-THON

PREP FOR THE SOTU

Content prep:

- News media (i.e spin on what is expected in the speech)
- Fact checking - See examples of fact-checking, annotation, and media responses from the following:
 - [PolitiFact fact checking](#)
 - [PolitiFact annotation](#)
 - [The Washington Post](#)
 - [Fact Check.org](#)
 - [538 Live Chat](#)
- Watch past SOTUs on YouTube. You can search for full addresses dating back to the 1970s.
 - discuss how policy areas are presented and what kinds of policies are presented

- Examine rhetorical strategies, symbols, and performance aspects
- Consider how media outlets responded to past SOTUs

5 curriculum resources to review, remix or implement:

- [Bush SOTU - 2007 \(WORD CHOICE\)](#)
- [Break down the State of the Union](#)
- [Predictions \(Obama SOTU\) - CSPAN](#)
- [KQED: SOTU explained in four visualizations](#)
- [KQED news analysis and edited version of SOTU](#) (this might be a good example of remix)

Deconstruct the SOTU

Analyze the form and function of the SOTU (rhetorical devices)

- [NAMLE Key Questions When Analyzing Media](#)
- [Republican response to 2014 SOTU](#)
- [Democratic response to 2003 SOTU](#)

GET READY TO BREAK

CHOOSE YOUR REMIX TOOL

If you've never made a remix before, you should try it yourself before you lead a group. The LAMP's own [MediaBreaker](#)



is a great tool for remixing; we designed it for people who are new to editing video, and you can submit completed videos directly to us for review. If the video meets fair use compliance as determined by our legal team, then we'll post the video publicly on our [MediaBreaker YouTube channel](#).

In addition, we also have MediaBreaker/Studios, an online learning environment, where you can upload content ahead of time for your students to choose from. Submitting a video for publication is optional when using Studios. Please visit: <https://mbstudios.thelamp.org/> to get started.

However, you can use virtually any video editor to create a remix. If you and your students are comfortable using something like iMovie, Adobe Premiere or Final Cut, go for it!

PRODUCE PROGRAM MATERIALS

[You can find samples and templates for these items in the appendix.](#)

- Lesson Plans
- Presentation
- Release Forms, Attendance Sheets, etc.
- Activity Materials
- Examples of Breaks: Try choosing some from our MediaBreaker YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/mediabreaker>
- Program Supplies
- Documentation Plan
 - Photos
 - Interviews
 - Shot List
 - etc...

GET READY TO BREAK

GATHER SOURCE MEDIA

- Commercials
- Music Videos
- Trailers
- TV Clips

Make sure to gather any media that may have come out about the SOTU in the final week before the challenge!) Bush/Obama - 1st SOTU and their last SOTU.



Tips on Curating, Downloading, Storing and Distributing Media

The media you choose for your Break-a-thon will vary greatly according to the topic or event you've selected. However, you will always need to factor in the following:

Deconstruct the SOTU: Is it ok for your students to hear strong language or work with graphic images?

Length: We find shorter media pieces tend to be best for breaking. The smaller file size is easier to manage, and it's easier for a student to work with in a short amount of time.

Interest: Would this piece be interesting to students? For example, if you're breaking music videos, don't offer up videos that are twenty years old; choose something your students are already enjoying.

Here are some other suggested resources for choosing and managing source media:

Source for Current Media

- YouTube (best source),
- Vimeo, Vevo
- DailyMotion

Conversion site options:

- YouTubetomp4s.com
- DETUrl.com
- Clipconverter.cc
- Keepvid.org
- Onlinevideoconverter.com

Storage of Media options:

- Cloud-Based
 - Dropbox
 - Google Drive
 - ShareFile
- External Drives

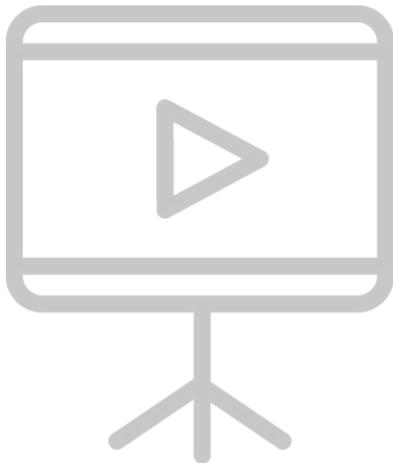
Challenges and Best Tips

GET READY TO BREAK

A/V NEEDS

Equipment

- Laptops/Mobile Devices for Participant Use
- Editing Software (iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, Final Cut, Adobe Premiere, etc.) - unless using MediaBreaker
- Facilitator/Presenter Station
 - Laptop
 - Projector/Screen or Monitor (see below)
 - VGA/HDMI Dongle (Adaptors)



- Internet connection (for research, streaming, and MediaBreaker)
 - Wi-Fi
 - Mobile Hotspots?
- Headphones/ Splitters
- Speakers
- Extension Cords, Power Strips
-

Live Event Source

- Cable/Satellite
- Network Online Streaming Site

TV Monitor / Projector/SmartBoard

- Would this piece be interesting to students? For example, if you're breaking music videos, don't offer up videos that are twenty years old; choose something your students are already enjoying.

PRIMER SESSION: DECONSTRUCTING MEDIA

The following resources and lesson plans can help you design ways to give your students an introduction to media literacy and media deconstruction.

[12 Basic Ways to Integrate Media Literacy and Critical Thinking into Any Curriculum](#)

Deconstruct Political Rhetoric

Activity - Games are a great way to practice some of the basic concepts you've gone over in the primer session. We typically do a Bingo game, where the boxes represent various topics we've discussed and ask students to find them in the library of media available for them to break. Check out our ideas and resources for [BREAK THE SOTU BINGO](#).

You can run this activity during the primer session, or at the opening of your Break-a-thon event. It's up to you and what you think will work best with your schedule and students

PREPARE AND BREAK

INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL REMIX, OR BREAKS

Examples of Breaks

- [Break the Election](#)
- [Dr. Pepper Ten: Revisited](#)
- [KIA Hamster Commercial](#)
- [State Farm Insurance](#)
- [The Rule of Action Films](#)

Copyright and Fair Use



GUIDELINES FOR FAIR USE

Important Definitions

Fair Use: is the part of U.S. copyright law which says that parts of movies, commercials, music, and books can be used without breaking any copyright laws, and you don't need permission from the owner. If you are making money off of the material, it does not constitute as fair use.

Note: In order to use copyrighted work you must be fair. Please see below for the guidelines for Fair Use and how it applies to remixing copyrighted content.

1. Transform It!

You can transform the media creatively and make it your own by:

- Clipping desired media
- Inserting text
- Adding voice over
- Adding sound effects/music
- Implementing facts & figures
- Using visual transitions

2. Be Critical, Not Just Observational

It is very important to make critical/fair statements and not just observations when transforming media. The more critical/fair the statement, the easier it is to make a better remix. Check out

[The Lamp's Guide to Critical Commentary.](#)

PREPARE AND BREAK

GUIDELINES FOR FAIR USE (cont'd.)

Written Commentary Examples:

NOT FAIR: “ I don’t think what he is saying about the state of access to healthcare is true” (Observational)

FAIR: “According to the National Institutes of health x% of Americans have access to basic healthcare .” (Critical commentary)

NOT FAIR: “I think having the mother of a fallen soldier at the SOTU seems to be manipulative.” (personal view that lacks analysis)

FAIR: “Presidents use personal stories to push their particular agenda..”

NOT FAIR: “People kept standing and applauding during the SOTU” (General, observational statement)

FAIR: “Senators and Representatives often stand and applaud during the SOTU to indicate support for the President’s ideas.

The standing ovations can break down by party lines.” (More detailed, critical commentary)

NOT FAIR: “Why does the camera cut to certain people for reaction shots?” (Good questions, but is observational)

FAIR: “Why does the camera cut to certain people for reaction shots? These cuts seem timed to what the president is mentioning.” (A more critical approach)

Critical commentary is a detailed and analytical statement that further connects a piece of work to a larger audience. When creating a remix or a break remember that you can use written, audio and visual commentary. Visual commentary is where a person inserts photos or video clips that could serve as comparison or contrast of images. An example of visual commentary would be this critical remix where a student

compares a contemporary commercial to 1940’s animations, while referencing its comparison. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KauKNsOGQHM&index=4&list=PL07E209DCED895CBB>

The student used the original content first then inserted the 1940s animation that served as a visual comparison to the main commercial to further enforce the students’ point. Reviewing political opposition remarks after SOTU included under Lesson Plans and Resources can also provide additional ideas and strategies for a remixed visual commentary.

3. Only use the amount you need

If you have a 5-minute clip, you must edit the clip to only what you intend to use for your break or remix.

PREPARE AND BREAK

FAIR USE WORKSHEET

1. What part of the SOTU speech are you breaking?

2. Why did you choose that particular segment?

3. Have you transformed the original segment into something significantly different? (For example, is it now unrecognizable as the original message?)

Yes No

4. Did you use any of the following transformative tools?

Text Yes No
Visual Transitions Yes No
Video Effects Yes No
Sound Effects Yes No
Music Samples Yes No

5. Does your media break contain commentary and not just observational statements? Example:

Critical Commentary: “The speech contained incorrect data on the economic impact of immigration in the United States.”

Observational Statement: “The president made some negative comments about immigrants in the United States.”

Yes No

6. Did you use comments and critiques throughout the entire media text, and not just at the beginning or the end?

Yes No

7. Did you make your critiques obvious and specific instead of vague and general? Example:

Specific: “Showing veterans in the audience was effective.”

General: “There were some people in the audience.”

Yes No

Planning a live event? [GO HERE](#)

APPENDIX A: FAQs

Who is The LAMP?

The LAMP is a nonprofit organization based in New York City, teaching youth, parents and educators how to comprehend, create and challenge media messages. Learn more at thelamp.org.

What's the MediaBreaker and MediaBreaker/Studios?

MediaBreaker is an online video remix editor we created to make it easy for people to talk back to media, even if they have little or no experience with media. MediaBreaker/Studios is a learning environment we designed that connects with MediaBreaker. With Studios, educators can upload content in advance for students to remix, and students can view each other's work in a safe, closed environment. Access

MediaBreaker directly at mediabreaker.org and check out MediaBreaker/Studios at mbstudios.thelamp.org.

What if the event we want to focus on takes place on a Sunday, when it can be hard for us to get staff and students together?

You can work around this! Try holding your event during the week before or the week following the Super Bowl, awards show or whatever. Dozens of Super Bowl commercials are released online far ahead of the game itself, and once nominations are announced for an awards show, that will give you a guide of what media your students should break. Sure, you'll lose some of the excitement that comes with having a live event unfold in the background, but you can still have a great event.

Do I need to let you know I'm hosting my own Break-a-thon?

You don't have to, but we'd love to hear from you about how it went and get your ideas! We plan to keep updating Break-a-thon in a Box with your tips and feedback.

I still have other questions. Can you help?

We'll try! Drop us a line at info@thelamp.org. You can also reach us on Twitter ([@thelamp](https://twitter.com/thelamp)) or on Facebook (facebook.com/thelampnyc).

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES, SAMPLES & TEMPLATES

RESOURCES WE THINK MIGHT BE HELPFUL

The LAMP's Guide to Fair Use:

<https://youtu.be/hzqNKQbWTWc>

The LAMP's Guide to Critical Commentary:

<https://youtu.be/GcMXSsXbLfE>

RESOURCES WE THINK MIGHT BE HELPFUL

You will find the following templates and sample documents in our digital appendix:

<http://bit.ly/bthonbox>

- Lesson Plans and Curriculum Resources
- Blank Budget Template
- Sample Release Form
- Sample Web Landing Page: Break the Super Bowl 2015
- Sample Break the Super Bowl flyer
- In-Kind Donation Form Template
- Sample In-Kind Donation Acknowledgment/Thank You Letter
- Sample Press Release
- Sample Bingo Game
- Sample Shot List
- Blank Shot List Template
- Sample Presentation on Deconstructing Media
- Sample Event Agenda (with supplies list)
- Fair Use Worksheet