



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 5 and 6
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Advertising All Around Us

Overview

This teaching unit helps students to become more aware of the language and techniques used in print advertising, as well as the impact of advertising on their daily lives. The unit will focus on three key media literacy concepts: construction of reality, representation, and audience.

Objectives

To enable students to:

- analyze the format and structure of advertisements
- differentiate between information and selling
- recognize the codes and conventions of different categories of advertisements
- distinguish between fantasy and reality
- become aware of their own reactions as consumers
- learn about target audiences

Materials

- collect magazines, comics, newspapers, brochures, bulletins, and posters from a variety of sources (including other countries)
- scissors, backing paper, glue, pencils and writing paper

Procedure

What do the students know and feel about Advertising?

Have students write responses to the following questions:

- What is advertising?
- Why do we advertise?
- Is advertising really necessary?



Key Concept 1: Media Construct Reality**Differentiate between a print ad and a photograph accompanying a magazine article**

Present class with a variety of magazine images. Include advertisements in which the words have been covered and photographs from magazine articles. Discuss the images, using the following questions as guidelines:

- Is this image an ad (i.e., selling something) or a photograph?
- Why do you think so?
- What appeals or does not appeal to you in these images?
- Are there differences between ads and non-ads? What are they?

Compare an advertisement that features a product to a lifestyle or image-based ad that doesn't feature a picture of the product.

- What is the difference between these two ads?
- What are the similarities?
- Why would an advertiser create an ad for a product that doesn't feature the product itself?
- What message is the advertiser trying to accomplish?
- Which types of ads do you think would be more effective in reaching consumers? Why?

Constructing reality

Cut out a picture of a product. Paste it on a piece of paper and create a new ad. Discuss the newly-constructed ad.

- How can you recognize that this new image is an ad?
- What changes did you make and why?
- What is the ad saying? Do the words and the pictures say the same thing?

Extended activity

Select ads for five products. Change the names to make humorous new products.

Key Concept 2: Representation**Identifying media forms**

(Whole class, working in small groups)

- Develop a list of different forms of print-based advertising. The list should include leaflets, posters, fashion and technical magazines, newspapers, bulletin boards, clothing logos, travel bulletins, flyers and comics.
- Distribute an assortment of ads to each group. Categorize the ads and discuss the different mediums used.
- What common characteristics do the mediums have?
- Does the choice of medium affect the presentation?
- Who would this medium most appeal to?



- Do some mediums have more impact than others? Find examples to demonstrate this.
- Does an ad change, according to the medium used?
- Does the choice of medium affect the ad's circulation?
- Mix captions from ads. What difference does the change make?
- Take an ad from one medium and place it in a totally different medium. Does that alter the ad in any way?

Pass around an advertorial and a magazine article on a similar topic (i.e. beauty or health). Ask students:

- Is this an article or an ad?
- How can you tell?
- If "advertorial" or "advertising feature" wasn't printed on each page, would you be able to tell the difference?
- Why might advertisers include ads such as these in magazines?

Extended activity

For one day, keep track of all the advertising messages that you see, including those in more unusual places. What is your total?

Analyzing the aesthetics of advertisements

Analyze several ads, using the following questions as guidelines:

- Is it a drawing or a photograph?
- Is it live action or cartoon?
- What headlines, logos or slogans attract attention?

Note the number of words used to present an idea. Analyze the use of colour, position, layout, words (descriptors) and any other elements that make ads more appealing. How does the language help to establish an image?

Extended activity

Demonstrate the importance of aesthetics in advertising by turning a boring, uninteresting ad into something that is pleasing and attention getting.

Identifying the hidden persuaders in advertising

(Whole class working in small groups)

- Distribute several ads from a variety of sources to each group. Discuss the advertising techniques used.
 - Bandwagon:** Join the crowd. Everyone is buying it/using it/doing it.
 - Testimonial:** A famous person or authority claims the product is good.



Image Advertising: A product is associated with certain people, places, activities. The implied message is one of attractiveness, wealth, enjoyment, etc.

Weasel: A promise is implied by using words like "usually" or "chances are."

Omission: Facts about the product are not told.

Repetition: Saying it again and again.

Scale: Making a product bigger or smaller.

Association: Promising adventure, attractiveness, quality.

Name-calling: Making the product seem better by using unpopular terms about the competition.

(For additional techniques, students might like to read the handouts *Common Advertising Strategies* and *Food Advertising Strategies*.)

- Collect ads that use these techniques. Make a display of these ads and tell which technique is used in each example. Discuss your reactions to each ad.

Extended activity

Choose an ad and rewrite it, using one of these techniques.

Key Concept 3: Audience

(Whole class working in small groups. Invite both small group and large group discussion.)

- Provide each group with a selection of ads from around the world. Include ads in foreign languages. Students select one for discussion:
 - Mention one important thing about the ad.
 - What message is being conveyed?
 - What has not been said about the product?
 - What image of our life style is portrayed?
 - Is it a true picture?
 - How would a different audience (culture, language, socio-economic status, etc.) view the ad?
 - If it is in a foreign language, can you tell what the ad is saying?
 - How does it differ from ads in Canada?
- Survey the ads to determine if some products are the same in all countries. Do different countries use different ads for the same product?

Extended activity

Pretend you are from another planet. Collect ten ads. From these, determine all you can about the interest, values, lifestyles and quality of life of the earthling.

Evaluation



Designing our own ads

(Whole class discussion followed by independent activity.)

Students design ads to attract visitors to the school, taking into consideration:

- Construction of reality – what is your message?
- Representation:
 - what medium will you use?
 - what colours, shapes, techniques will you use to create an image?
 - what will attract the interest of the audience?
- Audience – whom are you trying to attract?

Feedback

Students write their personal responses to the unit.

Bibliography

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Common Advertising Strategies

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1. Ideal Kids

The kids in commercials are often a little older and a little more perfect than the target audience of the ad. They are, in other words, role models for what the advertiser wants children in the target audience to think they want to be like. A commercial that is targeting eight year-olds, for instance, will show 11 or 12 year-old models playing with an eight year old's toy.

2. Heart Strings

Commercials often create an emotional ambience that draws you into the advertisement and makes you feel good. The McDonald's commercials featuring father and daughter eating out together, or the AT&T Reach Out and Touch Someone ads are good examples. We are more attracted by products that make us feel good.

3. Amazing Toys

Many toy commercials show their toys in life-like fashion, doing incredible things. Airplanes do loop-the-loops and cars do wheelies, dolls cry and spring-loaded missiles hit gorillas dead in the chest. This would be fine if the toys really did these things.

4. Life-like Settings

Barbie struts her stuff on the beach with waves crashing in the background, space aliens fly through dark outer space and all-terrain vehicles leap over rivers and trenches. The rocks, dirt, sand and water don't come with the toys, however.

5. Sounds Good

Music and other sound effects add to the excitement of commercials. Sound can make toys seem more life-like or less life-like, as in a music video. Either way, they help set the mood advertisers want.

6. Cute Celebrities

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles sell pizza. Spuds McKenzie sells beer. "Joe Cool" camel sells cigarettes. All of these are ways of helping children identify with products either now or for the future.

7. Selective Editing

Selective editing is used in all commercials, but especially in commercials for athletic toys like frisbees or footballs. Commercials show only brilliant catches and perfect throws. Unfortunately, that's not the way most children experience these toys.

8. Family Fun.

"This is something the whole family can do together!" or "This is something Mom will be glad to buy for you." Many commercials show parents enjoying their children's fun as if the toy will bring more family togetherness.



9. Excitement!

Watch the expressions on children's faces. Never a dull moment, never boring. "This toy is the most fun since fried bananas!" they seem to say. How can your child help thinking the toy's great?

10. Star Power.

Sports heroes, movie stars, and teenage heart throbs tell our children what to eat and what to wear. Children listen, not realizing that the star is paid handsomely for the endorsement.



Food Advertising Strategies

Advertisers have many methods to try and get you to buy their products. Lots of times, what they are selling is a life-style, or an image, rather than the product. Here are some tricks of the trade.

Ideal Kids (or families) - always seem perfect. The kids are really hip looking, with the hottest fashions and hair-cuts, and toys. Ideal families are all attractive and pleasant looking - and everyone seems to get along! Ideal kids and families represent the types of people that kids watching the ad would like themselves or their families to be.

Family Fun - a product is shown as something that brings families together, or helps them have fun together; all it takes is for mum or dad to bring home the "right" food, and a ho-hum dinner turns into a family party.

Excitement - who could ever have imagined that food could be so much fun? One bite of a snack food and you're surfing in California, or soaring on your skateboard!

Star Power - your favourite sports star or celebrity is telling you that their product is the best! Kids listen, not realizing that the star is being paid to promote the product.

Bandwagon - join the crowd! Don't be left out! Everyone is buying the latest snack food: aren't you?

Scale - is when advertisers make a product look bigger or smaller than it actually is.

Put Downs - are when you put down your competition's product to make your own product seem better.

Facts and Figures - are when you use facts and statistics to enhance your product's credibility.

Repetition - advertisers hope that if you see a product, or hear it's name over and over again, you will be more likely to buy it. Sometimes the same commercial will be repeated over and over again.

Heart Strings - are ads that draw you into a story and make you feel good, like the McDonalds commercial where the dad and his son are shoveling their driveway and the son treats his poor old dad to lunch at McDonalds when they are done.

Sounds Good - music and other sound effects add to the excitement of commercials, especially commercials aimed at kids. Those little jingles, that you just can't get out of your head, are another type of music used to make you think of a product. Have you ever noticed that the volume of commercials is higher than the sound for the program that follows?

Cartoon Characters- Tony the Tiger sells cereal and the Nestlé's Quick Bunny sells chocolate milk. Cartoon like these make kids identify with products.

Weasel Words - by law, advertisers have to tell the truth, but sometimes, they use words that can mislead viewers. Look for words in commercials like: "Part of..." "The taste of real..." "Natural..." "New, better tasting....." "Because we care..." There are hundreds of these deceptive sayings - how many more can you think of?

Omission - is where advertisers don't give you the full story about their product. For example, when a Pop Tart claims to be "part" of a healthy breakfast, it doesn't mention that the breakfast might still be healthy whether this product is there or not.

Are You Cool Enough? - this is when advertisers try to convince you that if you don't use their products, you are a nerd. Usually advertisers do this by showing people that look uncool trying a product and then suddenly becoming hip looking and doing cool things.

