

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Advertisers use subtle, powerful techniques to influence and manipulate the public to buy their products, ideas, and philosophies.
2. Seeing through and avoiding friends' attempts to pull us away from our life dreams will move us toward freedom and achieving our goals.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate examples of current advertisements.
2. Tell what is being used to sell a product.
3. Recognize the subtle messages that accompany the overt message of an advertisement.
4. Evaluate an advertisement's validity and develop an advertisement for a common product.
5. Warn a friend about a manipulative advertisement.
6. Be aware of attempted persuasive manipulation by peers.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

In the Box: The Grandmothers' Letter and magazine advertisements.

- Clean shampoo bottle filled with water or other liquid that the teacher can drink.
- You may want to have a stack of magazines and newspapers on hand for students who forgot or were unable to bring examples of their favorite ads. Before this class, at the end of Lesson 23, students were to be assigned to bring examples of ads. They should have brought magazine ads, newspaper ads, food labels, or something they've gotten from the Internet, or have written down something they've heard on the radio or seen on television.
- You need to be prepared for your reaction to possible risqué ads your students may bring in. It is important that you handle them and the student with a non-judgmental response and, as privately and personally as possible, explore with them why they may distract from the very lesson being taught if you decide they should not be used in class.
- If you are uncomfortable with students bringing in ads, you may bring your own selected group of ads for this lesson to make it more pre-structured for you as the teacher.

- You should bring examples of different types of media that are representative of media propaganda. It is helpful to include current examples from popular music and movies.
- Assemble six items to be used in student commercials. The following is a list of possible items and some suggested uses other than their original function.
 1. Chalkboard eraser — cleans shoes, removes make-up.
 2. Chalk — nail polish, lipstick, freckle remover, teeth whitener.
 3. Pen or pencil — spaghetti twirler.
 4. Book — a tray, seat, hat.
 5. Shoe — planter, ice cream bowl, cup.
 6. Comb — key holder, letter opener, toothbrush, musical instrument.

Note: In the latter part of this lesson, you will need to choose one of two activities. If your time is limited, you will need to carefully review these options in advance and decide which would be more appropriate and helpful for your students. If you have more than 50 minutes or if you can spend two class periods covering this subject, you may want to use both activities.

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES


1. Kilbourne, J. (1987). *Still Killing Us Softly*. Cambridge Documentary Films.
2. Winn, M. (1977). *The Plug-In Drug*. New York: Viking.

Optional Activities

- Take the same approach used to analyze advertisements and apply them to popular movie themes and TV situations.
- Give students the opportunity to evaluate their favorite music by analyzing the lyrics for messages to which they are unwittingly subjecting themselves.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

	<i>[Enter the room with the shampoo bottle for the illustration that follows the story.]</i>
INTRODUCTION	As you probably recall, last time we read the story about the “Candy Wars” and learned about delayed gratification. Today, we’re going to learn the life skill of unmasking the media. I see you’ve brought some interesting examples of media persuasion. We’ll be using those in a few minutes. But first, let’s check in with the three students in our story.
 STORY ABOUT 4 MINUTES	<i>[Read the following story.]</i>

A folder of newsprint and magazine pages awaited the three on that Monday afternoon. Mondays were bad. Five days until the weekend. Too little sleep the night before. Sasha yawned and half-heartedly covered his mouth.

“Stop that! You’ll have us all yawning in a minute,” teased Dima.

“This better be good,” said Sasha. “I’m way too tired for any long, drawn-out letters from our grandmothers. Who decided Mondays would be a good day for exploring our grandmothers’ box? Mondays ought to be for sleeping off the weekend.”

Just as Sasha finished his editorial about Mondays, Tatyana Alexandrovna walked in. “Sorry I’m late – Monday, you know.”

All three nodded.

“Took me awhile to set up this week’s lesson from your grandmothers,” she continued. “Natasha, your grandmother, Yelena, is a real stickler about how to do things, isn’t she?”

“Yes, she has some pretty set ideas about life and, well, everything,” said Natasha.

“That’s true, but your grandmothers are nobody’s fools. And they don’t want you to be either. Here, let me read today’s instructions to you.” With that, she opened the box and pulled out the following note:

I, Yelena, once saw a magician do an amazing bit of magic. When I asked him, “Do it again!” he smiled and said, “Once is magic; twice is an education. You have to pay for an education.” Funny little comment I’ve never forgotten. Obviously, once you know the secret, it isn’t magic any more. Much of the wonder and much of the power of the trick are gone. The masked and mysterious are always more interesting than the unmasked. Today, we want to unmask one of the costliest bits of magic you’ll ever pay for. And we won’t charge you so much as a kopek!

Your teacher, we trust, has graciously gathered the equipment for this bit of trickery. The magic

involved can make you dissatisfied when you were satisfied, turn curiosity into a ravaging hunger, create a need where one didn't exist, and make an otherwise bright young person into a gullible rube. We know! It has happened to each of us, and we grew up in a time when this particular piece of deception was rare. It is called "advertising". Many people in the business world would tell you advertising is what makes the world go around.

Your teacher has the instructions for this exercise, so we'll let you get on with it – this is a slice of education that will pay for itself the first time you use it.

Your Grandmothers

You may consider choosing a student before class to volunteer to join in this skit.

Explain to students that this is an example of the kinds of media propaganda that will be discussed in class today.

Instead of just reading about the exercise the grandmothers cooked up, let's do it instead!

[The teacher picks up the empty, clean shampoo bottle filled with water (or some other liquid) that he or she drinks in front of the students. The teacher raves about the benefits of drinking shampoo on a daily basis. He or she mentions the many benefits, which include whiter teeth, glowing skin, and shiny nails, and you don't have to wash your hair again because it works from the inside out. The teacher can "ham it up" as much as he or she wants. Ask students for their comments, and ask whether anyone wants to try it.]

Although you know that shampoo is used to clean hair, I have attempted to convince you that there are several other benefits of shampoo. Advertisers use media such as television commercials, billboards, radio commercials, and magazine and newspaper ads to sell us more than just the product you see. They often sell a lifestyle, an idea, or a philosophy designed to benefit the advertiser, not the consumer. Or they may use an inappropriate way to market the product you see.

 = 8 minutes

EXPLORING THE LESSON



ANALYZE ADS ACTIVITY

ABOUT 25 MINUTES

Option A

***Choose Option A or B**

Let's take a look at the ads you have brought in today and list on the board what message is being communicated and whether the message is fact or fiction. Look for the subtle messages that are being given, not just through words, but also through the body language of the models in the picture and the images portrayed.

[On the board, make three columns. Under column 1, write the product name; under column 2, FACT; under column 3 write FICTION. Have students tell you what the message is from their ad and, as a group, decide whether the message is fact or fiction. Write it under the appropriate column. Your chart may look like the one below. Example:]

PRODUCT	FACT	FICTION
Shampoo	It will make your hair clean.	It will make someone ask you out on a date.
Toothpaste	Toothpaste cleans away bacteria caused by food particles.	Using a certain brand of toothpaste will make more people want to kiss you.
Hair brush	It will take tangles out of your hair.	Using a certain hair brush will cause many people to want to run their fingers through your hair.
Cereal	Cereal can give your body energy.	You will have a wonderful sex life if you eat a certain cereal.
Jeans	They are comfortable to work in.	You will be popular if you wear a certain brand of jeans.
Car	A car is useful for transportation, especially to distant places.	A car will make people love you.
Vodka	It is a strong alcoholic beverage with little taste and inhibits perception and thinking.	A strong alcoholic beverage makes a man look and feel strong.

 = 33 minutes



DESIGN A COMMERCIAL

ABOUT 25 MINUTES

OPTION B

[For this option you will want to do a shortened version of the above activity to identify some of the methods used by advertisers.]

Now that we have taken a few minutes to identify some of the methods used by advertisers to influence us and, in some cases, to cause us to feel pressured to make unhealthy choices, I'd like you to make your own commercial and answer some questions as you do.

[Arrange the class into six groups. Give each group one of the items you have prepared for them to use to make their own commercial that will be presented orally before the class. The commercial should be for a use other than the obvious use of the item. Do this in 10 minutes.]

Allow three minutes for each group to share their commercial in class. If time allows, you can lengthen this portion of the lesson. Each group should be able to answer the following questions about their product. The teacher can then randomly ask some of the same following questions of students viewing class commercials.]

- 1. What is the product being sold?**
- 2. Is the message obvious, or is it presented subtly?**

3. Is the message selling an idea, a philosophy, or a product?
4. Who is the target audience?
5. Why do you think this product is being sold in the way that it is being presented?
6. How would you market this product?
7. Would you market this product? Why or why not?
8. Is the product being presented honestly? What are the fictions or facts presented in each advertisement?
9. How does this ad make you feel after watching, listening to, or reading it?

[After the presentations, discuss with the class how the messages portrayed in the advertisements brought in and those created in class have a powerful effect on the choices that we make.]

It is important to know how powerful the effects are so we can recognize when our peers attempt to manipulate us, just as they may have been manipulated by the media.

 = 33 minutes



MEDIA TRUE/ FALSE QUIZ

ABOUT 8 MINUTES

[Ask students to record their responses in their notebook. Once students have had time to write, ask them to raise their hands if they agree with each of the following statements. After the students have voted, have them put their hands down and discuss the truthfulness of each statement.]

1. **Teens in some industrialized countries are exposed to more than 10,000 sexual references on television annually. (True)**

[In the United States, teens are exposed to 14,000 sexual references annually. (Facing Reality, James Coughlin.)]

2. **Most television dramas give an accurate picture of reality. (False)**

[The truth: Television entertainment is just that – entertainment. Think about it: How many families do you know that can solve deep-seated problems in only an hour?]

3. **Repeated exposure to erotic images through advertising has no effect on a person. (False)**

[The truth: Repeated exposure to erotic images through advertising does have an effect on a person. Our minds absorb words and images, and these begin to influence our choices, often without us even realizing that they are connected to the images we saw.]

Advertising can create a false level of expectations in life by promoting the “high life”. Teachers need to help students do critical analyses of ads to give them skills in remaining connected to the reality of everyday life and what is really normal.

Television ads can have a “zombie” effect on people as they cease their normal critical assessment of incoming information.

 = 41 minutes

ENDING THE LESSON



**WRITE IN
NOTEBOOKS**
ABOUT 4 MINUTES

4. Advertising images have no effect on behavior. (False)

[The truth: Corporations invest hundreds of millions of marks, dollars, euros, rupees, rubles, and yen in advertising. Do you think they would do this if it weren't working? (Kilbourne, J. (1987). Still Killing Us Softly. Cambridge Documentary Films.)]

5. Television viewing influences personality. (True)

[It suppresses active attention, confines imagination, inhibits our ability to think clearly, and takes us away from vital social interaction. (Winn, M. 1977. The Plug-In Drug. New York: Viking.)]

Today, we have looked at the messages in the ads we reviewed. Some were obvious; others were subtle and hidden. Now, I would like you to go a step further and consider how you might apply what you have learned today. Please record in your notebooks answers to the following questions:

1. What did you notice about the ads we looked at today?
2. Did you see anything in the ads that you might not have noticed before we had this class? If so, what?
3. How might your ability to see what ads are really trying to do help you avoid drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex?

Here is your homework assignment:

With a parent or other family member, examine at least three television, magazine, or newspaper advertisements. For each of them, write in your notebook what item or service is being sold. For each commercial, also decide and write down whether the ad is putting more emphasis on the features of the item itself or on how much better your life would be with the item.

Today, we took some steps toward unmasking the media. Next time, we'll explore another crucial life skill: the power of saying “no”.

Before dismissing your students, remember to dictate the Parent-Teacher questions to them.

 = 45 minutes

RESOURCES

GOING DEEPER

Now we're going to look at three statements in Proverbs.

[Read Proverbs 14:15-16.]

These verses mention three undesirable qualities that we need to avoid:

1. Naïveté (inexperienced, easily fooled).
2. Arrogance (overly self-confident, inappropriately proud).
3. Carelessness (rash, reckless, incautious).

NAÏVE, ARROGANT, CARELESS SKIT

[Arrange the class into three or more groups and have each group design a skit that illustrates one or more of these qualities. Make sure that the skits also include an inappropriate response to some kind of media. Some examples: a young woman who believes that a certain perfume makes her irresistible to men (naïveté); an athlete who had his picture in the local paper and now brags about how great he is (arrogance); a student who just bought a highly advertised new grammar-checker for his computer and thus did not proofread his paper before he turned it in (carelessness). Circulate while the groups are working and help any who are stuck or getting off track. When they seem ready, have the groups present their skits.]

FOCUS POINT

Be sure to leave time for discussion at the end of the learning activity so your students can discuss the connection between the learning activity and the lesson. Listen to see whether they seemed to understand the key points listed. If you sense that one or more of these points may have been lost, be sure to guide the discussion to make sure they get these main ideas.

1. Adolescents sometimes excuse or even encourage such traits as naïveté, arrogance, and carelessness as “funny” or “cool”, but really they are sad and pitiful.
2. We need to be alert constantly in order to not be deceived by the media.

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

For Family Discussion:

1. As we watch TV this week, let's look carefully at the ads and point out as many ads we can find that try to trick us into buying their products by presenting a false picture.
2. Together, evaluate three ads for the homework assignment.

