

STUDY GUIDES

The **Chicago Humanities Festival** is committed to creating and fostering interest in the humanities. To this end, the Festival provides study guides to help teachers to bring the humanities into the classroom. Every year, the CHF brings an amazing array of authors, thinkers, and artists to Chicago. We hope you will seize the opportunity to bring the excitement of their works and knowledge to your students.

The lesson plan “*How Advertisers Help Part Consumers From Their Money*” on the following pages was prepared for the 2003 Chicago Humanities Festival: *Saving + Spending*.

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This document and other educational materials are electronically archived as PDF files at:
<http://www.chfestival.org/education.cfm?Action=EdLessons>.



500 North Dearborn Street
suite 1028
Chicago, IL 60610
tel 312.661.1028
fax 312.661.1018
web www.chfestival.org

Saving + Spending and Advertising

Peeling apart an advertisement is an excellent way to begin your examination of *Saving + Spending* with students. The goods promoted in ads often suggest how we should spend money to save time, or how we can save our youth and preserve our bodies by acquiring a specific product. Ads assure us that spending will certainly lead to a better existence than saving will.

The following pages offer one master teacher's approach to analyzing advertisements with her students.

Bring the chf into the Classroom!

How Advertisers Help Part Consumers From Their Money: A Lesson Plan by Mary T. Christel

What is the purpose of advertising? On the most basic level, manufacturers of goods and providers of services place ads to create awareness of their products and services as well as to create a desire in the consumer to purchase a certain brand or prefer a particular service provider.

Many critics of advertising suggest that embedded in all ads is the message that a consumer is “not OK” or somehow inadequate because he or she does not use a particular product or service. Many ads present “simple solutions” through the “magical” power and “salvation” of consumer goods. If one drinks the right brand of soda, he or she will be popular. The right pair of athletic shoes or sports drink allows you to “be like Mike.”

An examination of how ads are created to persuade the customer to be aware of a product, to realize the product’s actual or imagined benefits, and to take action by purchasing the product can empower a consumer of any age to resist the seductive power of advertising.

The analysis of print ads is a useful tool to acquaint students with persuasive strategies that are both visual and verbal. Several examples are archived as “Sample Ads for Comparison.pdf” at <http://www.chfestival.org/education.cfm?Action=EdLessons>, but teachers are encouraged to adapt these teaching tools to any types of print ads that target a particular age, gender or ethnicity.

Mary T. Christel has been a member of the English department at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in the northwest suburbs of Chicago since 1979; she teaches AP literature classes as well as classes in media and film studies. She earned a B.S.S. in theater at Northwestern University, and an M.A. in interdisciplinary arts education at Columbia College. She is the author of the book, *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom*. Christel serves on various committees and boards that promote media literacy in the language arts curriculum—including the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Telemedia Council, and the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. In 1998 she acted as a co-chairperson of the Second International Shakespeare Conference held here in Chicago.

“How Advertisers Help Part Consumers From Their Money” was created for the Chicago Humanities Festival’s 2003 education publication, “Saving + Spending: A Teacher’s Companion to the Festival.”

This lesson plan • by Mary T. Christel 2003.

Concepts and Terminology

What are the different types of print ads?

(Adapted from Bittner, John R. *Mass Communication*, 6th ed. Boston: Simon & Schuster, 1996.)

Standard	appears in all media and is placed by a company or organization that has products or services to sell
Image	creates an ethos, emotional context, or set of values around a product or service
Counter	directed against a product or service (usually the competition)
Corrective	often ordered by regulatory agencies to correct false or misleading advertising
Public Service	supports a nonprofit organization
Social Responsibility	encourages the public to act responsibly (very close to next type)
Advocacy	related to counter advertising; directed at an objectionable product, company or industry; champions preventive action affecting the public welfare

How do ads target particular audiences or markets?

One of the most important aspects of creating an ad is determining what the target audience will be for a particular product, and where that ad will be placed to reach the intended audience. Advertisers consider the demographics of their target audience. Demographers take into account age, gender, ethnicity, education, and income, among other elements, to pin down a very specific segment of consumers. All decisions in designing the ad will be dictated by the demographics.

What kinds of strategies do advertisers use to compose the visual elements of an ad?

framing	All shots exist in a frame. Emphasis can be placed in a shot by an interior frame, e.g. a doorway, a window. A frame is composed by horizontal and vertical lines surrounding a figure or object. A frame can also be circular in nature.
placement	This technique refers to the relationship of the camera to the subject. You would determine the distance (close, medium, long) and the angle (high, low, wide) of the camera.

arrangement Here you are considering the composition of the subject in the shot. You are describing the relationship of people and/or objects to one another. Consider how a shot uses the foreground, middle ground, and background to organize and emphasize its content.

lighting Pools or beams of light are used to emphasize aspects of the content of the shot. Obviously the use of shadow in combination with the light creates even greater emphasis.

color The contrast of or saturation in color can provide emphasis. “Color” is a consideration even in black and white images. Look at the contrasts between the blacks, whites, and grays in that kind of image.

What kinds of verbal strategies do advertisers use to compose the text messages in an ad?

(Adapted from Arens, William F. *Contemporary Advertising*, 6th ed. Chicago: Irwin, 1995.)

Logo special designs that feature company or product name

Headline words in the leading position in the ad—words that will be read first
types of headlines include:

- benefit - use of product/service will be rewarding
- news/info - announce news or promise info.
- provocative - provoke curiosity
- question - encourages search for answer
- command - tells consumer what to do

Slogans begin as successful headlines and through continuous use become standard statements about the company or product: “GE—We bring good things to life”

Body Copy allows the advertiser to tell the whole story on the product/service.
types of copy include:

- straight-sell - immediately explains headline or visual
- institutional - promotes a philosophy or the merits of an organization
- narrative - tells a story
- dialog/monologue - a character speaks in his/her own words
- picture caption - explains visual
- device copy - uses figures of speech as well as humor and exaggeration

How do advertisements use different kinds appeals to persuade consumers to buy a product or service?

Any ad can try to persuade the viewer/reader of an ad with rational or intellectual appeals. These appeals target logic and good sense. Ads that contain rational appeals will provide specific information about the contents of the product that would lead the consumer to understand the products' quality and value. Rational appeals would focus on deductive reasoning and scientific evidence as part of the selling strategy.

Ads that rely on emotional appeals will tend to focus on image rather than information. These ads will strive to make the consumer feel inadequate or they might even court fear.

Most ads will use a combination of rational and emotional appeals.

Applying these principles to the analysis of a specific ad.

Using one of the two sets of ads archived as "Sample Ads for Comparison.pdf" at <http://www.chfestival.org/education.cfm?Action=EdLessons>, answer the following questions about each.

- When you first look at the ad, what element immediately draws your attention or interest? Why is your attention drawn to that aspect of the ad?
- What impression does this element make on you as a potential consumer of the product?
- On second glance, what stands out? What further impression or information do you gain from that element of the ad?
- Who seems to be the target audience for this ad? How can you tell?
- What kind of ad is this (standard, image, etc.)?
- What do you actually learn about the product that would help you determine its ingredients, benefits, nutritional value, cost effectiveness, etc.?
- How is the ad trying position this product within an emotional context or a set of values?
- To what extent does the ad seem deceptive or dishonest in its "selling proposition"?
- After studying both ads for the same or similar products, what are the most important differences in each of the ads? To what extent is one ad more effective in providing the

consumer with essential information to help the consumer make a rational decision to buy the product?

- How does one or both of the ads focus more on creating an image that the consumer of that product can adopt when he or she uses or consumes the product? (Notice that the ads for food aimed at preteens suggest that aggressive behavior is associated with each food product.)

Other activities using print ads

- Find a “bad” ad that is not visually appealing, confusing in its combination of visuals and text, or dishonest in its claims regarding the product and service. Give the ad a makeover by creating new visuals and text messages that remedy the problems that make the ad “bad.”
- Examine a series of ads for the same product that targets a specific demographic to analyze the extent to which ads for the same product use similar or different techniques to appeal to a particular consumer.
- Write an essay or series of journals focusing on specific ads (print, billboards, TV commercials) that have influenced your desire for a product or service and have parted you from your money.
- Examine the types of ads that appear in a single magazine. Create a chart that identifies the type of product or service featured in the ad, the brand, the type of ad represented (standard, image), and the major appeal used to draw in the reader (make him or her stop flipping the pages). Write an analysis of the trends that you notice in the types of ads that dominate the magazine.

Illinois State Goals

1.B.4b Analyze, interpret and compare a variety of texts for purpose, structure, content, detail and effect.

2.B.4a Critique ideas and impressions generated by oral, visual, written and electronic materials.

5.B.2a Determine the accuracy, currency and reliability of materials from various sources.

5.B.4a Choose and evaluate primary and secondary sources (print and nonprint) for a variety of purposes.

14.D.4 Analyze roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current debates on state and national policies.

22.B.2 Describe how individuals and groups influence the health of individuals (e.g., peer pressure, media and advertising).

Resources for Teachers

Videos

The Ad and the Ego. Directed and produced by Harold Boihem. 57 minutes. Parallax Pictures, Inc. Videocassette and DVD. Order from http://www.parallaxpictures.org/AdEgo_bin/AE000.01.html.

Buy Me That: The Kid's Survival Guide to TV Advertising. Three 30-minute segments. HBO and *Consumer Reports*. Videocassette and DVD. Order from <http://gpn.unl.edu>.

New Suits: Profile of an Ad Campaign. 14 min. Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Videocassette and DVD. Order from <http://www.films.com>.

Books

Callow, John, ed. *Image Matters: Visual Texts in the Classroom.* Australia: PETA, 1999. Order from <http://www.peta.edu.au/about/catalog/display.cgi?61+catalogue.db>.

Pratkanis, Anthony and Elliot Aronson. *The Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion.* New York: W.H. Freeman & Co., 2001.

Quart, Alissa. *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers.* Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2003.

Worsnop, Chris. *Screening Images: Ideas for Media Education.* 2nd ed. Canada: Wright Communications, 1999. In U.S., order from <http://gpn.unl.edu>.

Web

Center for Media Literacy: www.medialit.com.