**An Internet WebQuest**

**EVALUATING BIAS IN ADVERTISEMENTS**

**Introduction**

Media literacy is the ability to analyze and evaluate the messages we see in movies, television shows, magazines, newspapers, online, and in other forms of media. One part of media literacy is developing the ability to take a critical look at advertisements, so you can understand how advertisements are constructed as well as how to interpret their messages. What are some of the strategies used to create advertisements? How do professionals use these techniques to persuade you? Is there an element of bias in an advertisement you've recently seen? In this WebQuest, you will explore advertising strategies, understand how they are used to get their messages across, and evaluate how bias can play a role in advertising.

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**Task**

Your job in the WebQuest is to expand your media literacy. You will learn about advertising techniques and investigate their use. You'll take a look at stereotyping as one type of bias in advertising. Once you've conducted some research to increase your knowledge of advertising and bias, select a print advertisement to evaluate. Using a worksheet, you'll describe the elements of the print ad and describe biases you observe. The purpose of this evaluation is to help you become more informed about advertising techniques and bias in order to make you a better consumer of advertising and the products and services they promote.

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**Time**

2 days to answer the questions and evaluate a product advertisement

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**Process**

First, read through the following set of questions before you begin your Internet research. As you explore each site, look for answers to the questions.

**Questions about Evaluating Bias in Consumer Product Advertisements**

1. What are some strategies that professional groups use to create “good ads?” Which strategies have the potential to introduce bias? Why?
2. What is a strategy that advertisers use to gain your attention? Think of an example of an advertisement that uses this strategy. Describe the ad and its strategy.
3. What are the elements of a magazine advertisement? How do they work to persuade the reader?
4. What is stereotyping? Why is stereotyping a problem?
5. Some types of advertising contain the ad creator’s perspective. What is propaganda? What is the difference between information and propaganda?

Next, use the [Print Advertisement Analysis worksheet](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/webquest/content/pdfs/unit1worksheet.pdf) to evaluate a print ad for bias. (Requires [Adobe Acrobat Reader®](http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html))

Select a printed advertisement from one of these sources:

* Local or national newspapers
* Magazines
* Periodicals
* Organization newsletters

Use the worksheet to evaluate the information in the advertisement. Describe the techniques included in the ad and address the biases that are specifically represented.

Review the rubric to understand how your worksheet will be evaluated.

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**Resources**

Look at these web sites to find the information that will help you answer questions about bias in product advertising and to gather information to use for your advertisement evaluation.

* [**http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/index.cfm**](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/cgi-bin/splitwindow.cgi?top=http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/top2.html&link=http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/index.cfm)
Read about media stereotyping at the Media Awareness Network's Web site to understand why this type of bias poses possible negative outcomes for different groups of people.
* [**http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/
handouts/advertising\_marketing/common\_ad\_strats.cfm**](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/cgi-bin/splitwindow.cgi?top=http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/top2.html&link=http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/advertising_marketing/common_ad_strats.cfm)
Visit the Media Awareness Network to read about different types of strategies that advertisers use to persuade buyers to look at the products being displayed.
* [**http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/advertisingtricks/
betheaddetective\_1.html**](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/cgi-bin/splitwindow.cgi?top=http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/top2.html&link=http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/advertisingtricks/betheaddetective_1.html)
Visit the Don't Buy It pages at PBSKids.com to investigate where and why companies place advertisements.
* [**http://www.cheney268.com/UbDUnits/chs/JustFacts.htm**](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/cgi-bin/splitwindow.cgi?top=http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/top2.html&link=http://www.cheney268.com/UbDUnits/chs/JustFacts.htm)
Review this page to understand the differences between fact, opinion, and bias.
* [**http://www.ced.appstate.edu/departments/ci/programs/edmedia/medialit/article.html#What%20is%20Media%20Literacy**](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/cgi-bin/splitwindow.cgi?top=http://www.glencoe.com/sec/science/top2.html&link=http://www.ced.appstate.edu/departments/ci/programs/edmedia/medialit/article.html#What%20is%20Media%20Literacy)
Read this page to explore the idea of media literacy.

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**Conclusion**

In the process of completing this WebQuest, you've become informed about the techniques of advertising as well as evaluating bias in advertising. You have read information to answer questions about this topic, and have increased your media literacy. You've also used your evaluation skills to take a critical look at a print advertisement. By expanding your media literacy, you will become more aware of advertising techniques, how they are used to persuade you, and how to be observant of the different messages advertisements present.

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| ***Print Advertisement Analysis*** | ***Points Possible\**** | ***Self-Assessment*** | ***TeacherAssessment*** |
| Identify and describe the subject of the advertisement and its purpose.  | 10 |   |   |
| Identify and describe the advertising techniques used in the ad's design. | 10 |   |   |
| Describe bias included in the ad, how it is demonstrated, and why the need for including bias. | 10 |   |   |
| Provide clear explanation for the believability of the advertisement. | 10 |   |   |
| Provide clear explanation for agreement or disagreement with the advertisement. | 10 |   |   |

\**Rate each category according to the following scale: Excellent – 9-10 points; Very Good – 7-8 points; Good – 5-6 points; Satisfactory – 3-4 points; Poor – 1-2 points; and Unsatisfactory – 0 points*