

Analyzing TV Commercials

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Background:

Unit: Persuasive Writing and Media

Lesson Topic: Analyzing TV Commercials

Length of Lesson: 90 minute Language Arts block.

Background to Lesson: This lesson introduces the second half of a unit on persuasion in writing and advertising. During the first part of the unit, students analyzed persuasive essays to identify the different techniques writers use to persuade their audiences (expert opinions, data, moral arguments, etc). They also wrote two persuasive essays; the first one as a class, and the second one individually. During the second part of the unit, they will analyze visual and aural techniques that the creators of TV commercials utilize to persuade their target audience(s) to buy a particular product. As their culminating activity for the unit, students will work in teams to create a TV commercial using several of the visual and aural techniques they learned.

English proficiency levels: Mixed class of native English speakers and English language learners. English language learners range in their level of proficiency from low intermediate to advanced.

Grade: 8

Standards: Massachusetts English Language Arts Standards:

26.1: Identify techniques used in television (*animation, close-ups, wide-angle shots, sound effects, music, graphics*) and use knowledge of these techniques to distinguish between facts and misleading information.

26.5: Analyze visual or aural techniques used in a media message for a particular audience and evaluate their effectiveness.

Preparation

Content Objectives: Students will be able to

- identify the forms, audiences, topics and purposes of TV commercials
- analyze TV commercials' target audiences, messages, and visual and aural techniques.

Language Objectives: Students will be able to

- discuss in pairs the form, audience, topic and purpose of their favorite TV commercials.
- Discuss and answer questions, orally and in writing, about TV commercials.

Key Vocabulary

Review vocabulary:

- Form Audience
- Topic
- Purpose
- Describe
- Analyze

New vocabulary

- Target audience
- Message
- Visual techniques
- Aural techniques
- Logo
- Slogan
- Celebrity endorsement
- Testimonial

Materials

Teacher Materials

- Two large FAT-P graphic organizers (a completed one from a previous lesson, and an empty one)
- Overhead of commercial analysis sheet
- Three TV commercials for different products and audiences that utilize a number of visual and aural techniques.
- TV and DVD player OR computer and large screen to play commercials

Student Materials

- FAT-P Graphic organizer
- Commercial analysis sheet

Motivation/Building Background

- Think/Write/Pair/Share: Ask students to think about the TV commercials they have watched lately and to select their favorite commercial. Ask them to write in their journals about this favorite commercial. Give lower proficiency

students questions and/or sentence steps to support their writing (For example: “What product or service is your favorite commercial trying to sell? What happens in your favorite commercial? Why is this your favorite commercial?”) After about five minutes, ask students to share what they wrote with a partner. Select a few students to share what they wrote with the whole class.

- Explain to students that they did the Think/Write/Pair/Share activity to get them thinking about commercials. Have students read content and language objectives written on the board. Explain objectives. Underline key words in objectives and explain that these words will be the focus of today’s lesson.
- Review with students the FAT-P reading and pre-writing strategy they learned in a previous lesson. Revisit the fact that each piece or creation (whether is literary, audio-visual, or artistic), has a particular form (F), audience (A), topic (T) and purpose (P). Ask students to help you explain each of these words:
 - **F = Form.** What kind of piece is it? What does it look like?
 - **A = Audience.** To whom is the author addressing the piece?
 - **T = Topic** or subject. What is the piece mainly about?
 - **P = Purpose.** What is the author trying to accomplish with the piece? What is the objective of the piece?
- Display the large FAT-P organizer they created as a class in a prior lesson and go over a couple of examples to activate their prior knowledge.

FAT-P Organizer

F = Form	A = Audience	T = Topic	P = Purpose
friendly letter	A good friend	Recent funny events in the writer’s personal life	Entertain and inform
a folktale	Young people in a particular community	The adventures of Anansi the spider	Entertain and teach about the origin of things in nature
a business letter	potential employer	Professional experience and assets	Persuade potential employer that you are the right person for the job
a documentary about MLK	high school students	Life challenges and accomplishment of MLK	Teach about and honor MLK

- Remind students that the FAT-P strategy could be used to analyze any piece of work or to plan before writing or creating a piece. Provide examples.

Presentation

- Explain how the FAT-P strategy works when analyzing TV Commercials:
 - **Form** is TV commercial - a short clip of video that uses both visual (what you see) and aural (what you hear) input.
 - **Audience** is the group of consumers the commercial was targeted to convince to buy a particular product. It is also called **target audience**.
 - **Topic** is the attributes and qualities of the product or service the commercial is trying to sell.
 - **Purpose** is to convince the target audience to buy a product.
- Pass out FAT-P graphic organizers and ask students to work in pairs to apply the FAT-P strategy to their favorite TV commercials and then share with each other. Ask a few students to share their partner's FAT-Ps with the class and write their answers on a second large FAT-P graphic organizer. Ask students to look at the second FAT-P and discuss with their partners the question: "What is the purpose of most TV commercials?" By now, students should be able to explain that most TV commercials are created to persuade people to buy products or services.
- Pre-teach the new vocabulary that students will see in the Commercial Analysis Sheet: message, logo (Nike sign), slogan ("It is all inside"), visual techniques, aural techniques, etc. First, ask students what they know about each word based on their TV viewing experiences. Provide examples using commercial and products they know to help them understand the meaning of each word. After discussing each word, have students use a 3 column table to write down a student friendly definition they create or that you provide, along with a sentence or picture that helps them remember the word. See sample vocabulary table below.

Practice

- Give two TV Commercial Analysis Sheets to each student. This sheet contains a series of questions that use the pre-taught vocabulary. The questions are scaffolded so that students start answering literal questions first and progressively move on to more analytical questions about the commercial. See TV Commercial Analysis Sheet below.

- Display the TV Commercial Analysis Sheet transparency. Explain that this sheet will help them to analyze TV commercials and to plan before they write an essay about a commercial. Preview questions and then have students watch the first TV commercial. Discuss and fill out the TV Commercial Analysis Sheet as a class.
- Use pair talk throughout the discussion so that everyone gets a chance to process and participate. Have students answer the easier questions on their own, but provide more support through think-alouds and modeling when they are tackling the higher order thinking questions about the message(s) of the commercial or techniques used in the commercial. Students might need to watch the TV commercial a couple of times in order to be able to answer all the questions.

Application

- Have students watch one more TV commercial and work in pairs to fill out a second TV Commercial Analysis Sheet. Ask students to use their vocabulary notes as a resource. Move around the class to monitor student understanding and provide feedback and support as needed. When students finish, explain that they will use their complete TV Commercial Analysis Sheets to write a TV commercial analysis essay during the next class.


Review/Assessment

- At the end of the lesson, review key vocabulary by throwing a plastic ball around to students. The student who catches the ball must provide a definition, an example or a sentence that uses one of the new key words in the lesson. Review the lesson objectives with students to determine if each was met.
- Collect and assess students' "TV Commercial Analysis Sheets." Use assessment data in order to review and/or re-teach certain concepts or key vocabulary at the beginning of the next lesson.

Homework:

Ask students to watch one hour of commercial TV during the weekend. During the commercials, ask them to write down or draw as many logos and slogans as possible. Have students share their findings in class. As a class, discuss the explicit and implicit messages of some of logos and slogans students collected.

TV Commercials Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Picture or examples that will help me remember the word
Target audience or target group	The main group of people that the commercial is trying to reach and convince. A target audience can be people of a certain age group, gender, marital status, etc.	<p>White women in their 30s</p> <p>Single and divorced males</p> <p>Senior citizens</p> <p>African-American teenagers</p>
Message	The central idea that the creators of a commercial want the target audience to believe.	<p>“This face cream will make you look younger and feel more attractive”</p> <p>“If you shop at our supermarket you will save a lot of money”</p>
Logo	A mark or symbol that represents a company or product. Logos can include visuals or letters or both.	
Slogan	Short and memorable phrase used to promote a product.	<p>“Just do it”</p> <p>“You are worth it”</p> <p>“Better ingredients, better pizza”</p>
Celebrity endorsement	When a famous person talks about the good qualities of a product to promote it.	Michael Jordan talking about how he loves to wear Hanes T-shirt because they are soft.
Testimonials	When a private citizen (regular person) talks about the good qualities of a product to promote it.	A real consumer who talks about how much money he is saving with his new car insurance.
Aural techniques	What you hear in the commercial that helps promote the message and sell the product.	Examples: dialogue, slogan, jingle, music, testimonial, celebrity endorsement, sound effects, etc.
Visual techniques	What you see/read in the commercial that helps promote the message and sell the product.	Examples: facial expressions and gestures the actors use, animation (cartoons), logos, written slogans, use of color and light, close-ups of the product, special effects, etc.

TV Commercial Analysis Sheets

Directions: Answer the following questions about the TV commercial that we watched in class. Write in complete sentences. Your answers will help you write an essay about the commercial.

I. Describe the commercial:

1. What product or service is the commercial trying to sell?
2. Where was the commercial set? Describe the setting(s).
3. Who was in the commercial? Describe the people in the commercial.
4. What objects were in the commercial? Describe the objects.
5. What happened in the commercial? Provide as much detail as you can.

II. Analyze the purpose of the commercial:

1. Who is the target audience of the commercial? Explain how you know.
2. What is the message of the TV commercial? In other words, what do the commercial's creators want the target audience to believe about the product?

III. Analyze the techniques the commercial's creators used

1. What visuals techniques do the commercial creators' use to convince us of their message? Pick two and explain how they help support the message.
2. What aural techniques do the commercial creator's use to convince us of their message? Pick two and explain how they help support the message.