

Advertising Activities
The Toothpaste Millionaire (2006)
by Jean Merrill

1. Ads, Ads, Ads

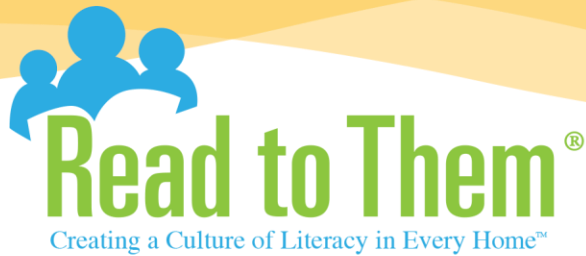
It is reported that we are exposed to 5,000 advertisements a day. Have students brainstorm the possible formats and means of advertisements which they encounter each day. See if they can tally or keep track of one day's advertising input. Remind them to consider newspapers, magazines, internet ads, brand-name logos, mail, radio, and T.V. commercials. Discuss which methods are the most prevalent, obvious, and influential to them.

2. The Art of Ads

Have students watch various commercials. See if they can pinpoint ways companies use persuasion to attract customers. Students can choose their own commercials to watch and report, or the teacher can select prime examples of commercials to demonstrate persuasive techniques. Past Super Bowl commercials (those that are appropriate) are often good examples of advertising strategies. Students will find that companies often use humor, celebrities, emotions, and bandwagon techniques to convince potential customers. Advertisements often have slogans or jingles to capture an audience. Have students work in groups to create and record a commercial for Rufus' Toothpaste using at least one of these strategies. As they perform the commercial for the class, the audience will determine what strategy was used and if it was successful.

Variation:

Advertising is often about persuasive language. Children are already master technicians in persuasive language as they try to convince their parents for a later bedtime, teachers for less homework, and babysitters for more cookies. However, strategies of begging and pleading are less effective than solid advertising strategies. Have them practice their newfound advertising knowledge by creating a commercial to convince someone in their life to do something they want. Encourage them to use reasons and be convincing, using persuasive language. This could also take the form of writing.



3. Write it Right!

It's in the way that you write it. Compare these two advertisements found in the newspaper:

MUST SELL
FRESH LITTER OF MUTTS
OUT OF CONTROL
555-1090
DON'T CALL BEFORE 6PM

Puppies for Sale
Beautiful mixed liter,
Full of energy
555-1090
Please call after 6 pm.

What are the effects of each advertisement? Predict which will elicit more customers? Have students try their hand at selling and being persuasive. Provide each with a picture of an outlandishly awful products (bacon wallet, whoopee cushion, coal, blank mug). Students work together to write the script for a commercial selling these less-than-desirable gifts. They may want to take advantage of catch phrases like, “one-of-a-kind, limited edition, buy one get one free.”

4. AD Eval

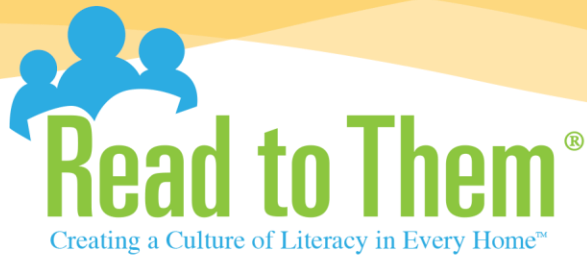
Have students find various forms of print advertising. Have them analyze what makes each advertisement interesting and enticing (spacing, colors, font, pictures, slogans). Have students use these ideas to create their own print advertising for Rufus' Toothpaste (poster, billboard, magazine ad, coupon).

5. Logo Loco

Have students find, cut out, and bring in well-known logos. Create a class or school-wide collage of these symbols (the McDonalds' golden arches, Nike swoosh, Target bullseye). Have students evaluate the importance and meaning of these symbols. Create a logo contest for students to develop a logo for Rufus' Toothpaste.

Variation:

Consider jingles, songs, mottos, and songs as means of advertising.



6. Book Ads

With all this talk about advertising, we'd be remiss not to promote and advertise LITERACY. As an alternative to traditional book reports, have students create a one-minute commercial promoting a recent book they liked and want to share with others.

7. School Ad

Have the student body work together to create a "commercial" representing their awesome school. Different grade levels can be responsible for different components of the video. This could be similar to a tourism video: "Come visit our school!"