

Analyzing Commercials: Recognizing Methods of Persuasion and Becoming a Critical Consumer

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Introduction

It seems as if every day a new piece of technology emerges to make things more accessible to the everyday American, to the everyday citizen of the world. Phones have the ability to surf the Internet, and there is an “app” (it seems) for everything. The click of a button can figuratively take anyone anywhere. My students are used to this world. This closely-connected, remarkably high-tech world that they have grown up in represents a normal progression of technology for them. And as social media sites overshadow face-to-face conversations, phones offer hours upon hours of entertainment, and TV shows are waiting for the viewer to access, the concept of audience has broadened, and the routes to access this audience have multiplied. In order to be an actively analytical member of this audience and therefore evaluate the effect of every gimmick and ploy, my students need the tools to critically analyze the pervasive and persuasive advertisements that bombard them.

There are many forms of advertisements: television commercials; print advertisements in newspapers and magazines; online advertisements on social networks or on the sidebars of favorite websites; and the list goes on. Advertisements have become more pervasive in other genres of entertainment since it became possible for the intended audiences to fast forward through commercials or buy subscriptions to radio stations that boast “commercial free” music. Therefore, the persuasive techniques of the ads that do make it to the audience must take full advantage of the target.

The overall purpose of this unit is to introduce students to some persuasive techniques utilized by the advertisements they encounter every day. Whether or not they all view the same genre of advertisement is irrelevant; the unit is meant to emphasize whatever current advertisements are available at the time of its implementation. This unit will focus on television advertisements, and I will provide my students with guiding questions and activities for how to analyze rhetoric, logical fallacies, and the language of advertisements within a commercial. At the end of the unit, I want my students to not only better recognize and evaluate the conventions of television advertisements, but also assess whether or not the techniques they have recognized persuade or dissuade them from purchasing the product, service, or idea. After the first part of the unit is implemented, the culminating assessment involves the students’ creating their own advertisement campaigns, effectively displaying their own manipulation of the techniques. They will also evaluate each other’s campaigns by identifying logical

fallacies and the language of advertisement. This two-part assessment will provide me with a way to assess the students' ability to create and utilize the conventions we discuss as well as their progress with identifying techniques as critical consumers.

Rationale

I chose to create this unit because my students seem to consider the viewing process—whether viewing a film, or in this case, viewing an advertisement—to be a passive one. All they have to do is sit back and absorb. This is, as we know, not the case. In fact, this judgment is a dangerous one; those who are passive absorbers of messages will be more likely to be amenable to those messages, to be defined by those messages. To become active analyzers of the world around them, my students need the background to identify the techniques within each advertisement they encounter; this identification can be the first step for their becoming critical consumers—consumers who can actively filter messages so as not to become pawns of those messages. Critical consumers do not necessarily reject messages for their logical fallacies or language of advertisements, but they do recognize techniques and evaluate the effect on their desire to “buy in” to the commercial's product. All advertisements are selling products, ideas, lifestyles, etc., and the techniques employed all support that overall purpose.

One of the ways that this unit will be high interest to my students is that the subject matter will be relatively malleable to the commercials that they have seen and/or enjoy watching. Although I will use particular commercials for acquisition lessons and other such purposes (for example, the Chrysler commercial featuring Eminem from the 2011 Super Bowl)¹, they can choose what commercials we use to transfer that information and those skills. This will increase their interest in the subject matter as well as their control in the unit itself. High interest and relevant material can only augment students' learning during this time.

Demographics

Appoquinimink High School is a relatively new high school in the rural/suburban area of Middletown, DE. The high school itself started in a middle school building, encompassing all freshmen in the Appoquinimink School District. In 2008, AHS opened its doors to freshmen and sophomores. The first graduating class left AHS in the spring of 2011.

Because of its young age, Appoquinimink High School boasts state-of-the-art technology in most classrooms, as well as programs rivaling with the programs at vocational-technical schools. Each classroom has a television that connects to the teacher's computer; many classrooms have projectors and SMART Boards. Teacher accounts have access to YouTube, an invaluable tool for showing things like commercials to the students.

This unit is written mainly for 12th grade English Language Arts students; all of whom would have been introduced to the appeals of rhetoric in 10th grade. Their abilities to identify and analyze the effects of rhetoric, however, stem from analyses of speeches and *Julius Caesar*, not commercials. In addition, their experience with analysis may not have included explicit instruction on *how to qualify* the effect of rhetoric. Many students in high school experience trouble when asked to expand beyond the qualifying terms of “good” or “bad.” The goal of this unit is to build upon the knowledge my students have of rhetoric, introduce them to logical fallacies and the language of advertisements, and emphasize analysis and qualifying terms associated with it. My students will then take their knowledge even further with their advertisements.

My school has implemented the block schedule, and one class period is ninety minutes. This unit is meant to take 5-8 days with block schedules.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify rhetorical appeals in commercials.
2. Students will be able to evaluate the effect of rhetorical appeals.
3. Students will be able to identify logical fallacies in commercials.
4. Students will be able to evaluate the effect of logical fallacies.
5. Students will be able to create a commercial using rhetorical appeals and avoiding logical fallacies in order to persuade.

Unit Terms

Overview

I will review the following rhetorical appeals in my unit in order to build upon student understanding, and I will introduce the following logical fallacies and language of advertisements. Students will focus upon which rhetorical appeal drives each commercial and then they will begin to determine *how* the commercial sells the product other than utilizing rhetorical appeals. Once they identify logical fallacies and language of advertisements, they will analyze the effect of each on the commercial. For some of the terms below, I have provided examples from commercials that I will show to my students. In my lesson activities later in the unit, I have included questions I will ask students and activities I will have them complete in order to monitor their own thinking and identify the following terms while they view commercials on their own (or with less guided practice from me).

Rhetoric

By grade 12, my students will be familiar with the following rhetorical appeals within speeches and literature. The following terms will be re-introduced to my students in this unit through commercials; the “anchor” commercial I will use is Eminem’s Chrysler commercial from the 2011 Super Bowl². Students will identify the following appeals in commercials and employ them when they create their own commercials, which will be based mostly on one of the appeals.

Ethos

Defined as “the appeal based on the character of the speaker, an ethos-driven document relies on the reputation of the author”³. Ethos also refers to the reputation of a brand (more appropriate for commercials) or the association with spokespeople with whom the audience would connect. My students will recognize that Eminem’s association with Chrysler, for example, appeals to his status as a rap superstar, and his being in the commercial transfers that credibility to the product being sold. Also, since Detroit is his hometown, Eminem represents someone who truly knows the ins and outs of a city about which the speaker in the commercial suggests others spread misinformation. Eminem’s ethos as not only a celebrity but also a Detroit native strengthens the ethos of the overall commercial (although the appeal to authority is logically fallacious. See below). The commercial also emphasizes Detroit’s being the “Motor City,” defined just as much by what it is *not* (the “Emerald City,” “the Windy City”) as what it is. The emphasis on “where it’s from” suggests that the Chrysler’s luxury, style, and overall appeal ties closely to Detroit itself⁴.

Logos

Logos refers to reason or logic, or in other words, the reasons why the audience should purchase the product or service in question⁵. Data, statistics, or claims within the commercial are examples of logos. The exploration of possible fallacies within these claims is located below under “logical fallacies.” Logos appears within the Chrysler commercial indirectly. Buy it because the car comes from Detroit, where the “hottest fires make the hardest steel.” It boasts “luxury” from “capable” people who *know how* to make a good car; it’s a party of their “story.”⁶ The commercial does not directly list reasons to buy the car, however, which leads to omissions that critical consumers should find remarkable.

Mythos

Mythos is defined as “the underlying system of beliefs, especially those dealing with supernatural forces, characteristic of a particular cultural group”⁷. In a rhetorical situation, mythos refers to the appeal to the cultural group (mainly, the culture of the audience) and that group’s beliefs. The Chrysler commercial focuses heavily on mythos, not only in statements but also in imagery. The American flag flying against a cloudy

morning, the businessman about to cross the street, the mural of (culturally mixed) individuals performing physical labor, the football team running in the snow, the ice skater practicing her passion all culminate in a subliminal “melting pot” of American ideas and values. The nod from the doorman to the driver of the Chrysler (not yet revealed as Eminem) suggests the respect and admiration the car deserves. The commercial’s narrator juxtaposes Detroit’s individual identity with its being “from America.” The end text boldly furthers the concept of this unique individualism by claiming that the Chrysler is “Imported from Detroit.” Connected to the ethos of the commercial, Eminem’s representing his “hometown” also appeals to Americans’ value of identify and loyalty to their roots as well as their country⁸. The culmination of these examples suggests that this commercial is, in fact, driven by mythos, something I would ask my students to discuss since they, too, will be asked to focus more so on one appeal in their commercials.

Pathos

Pathos appeals to the audience’s emotions⁹. This appeal can be found in abundance in commercials. Any time a commercial appeals to the audience’s emotions—the sadness at seeing an animal in distress (and the need to donate money to that animal’s advocates), the desire to have the latest technology (and therefore purchase the phone that makes the owner feel superior), and the excitement and exhilaration that comes with purchasing a once-in-a-lifetime cruise to somewhere (for a low price, of course!)—the commercial is utilizing pathos. Students may be very familiar with this concept, yet not have explicitly analyzed its effect on their decisions after viewing the commercial. The Chrysler commercial associates the feelings of pride with the car, although most of the pathos within the commercial stems from the steady beat of Eminem’s “Lose Yourself,” a song that ends with the climax of a Detroit chorus singing in harmony. The steady beat of Eminem’s song reflects the rhythm of a fast-paced human heartbeat, intended to associate passion and excitement with the car. The pregnant pause between the song and Eminem’s only speaking lines (“This is the Motor City, and *this* is what we do”) creates suspense and accentuates Eminem’s matter-of-fact conclusion to the commercial¹⁰.

Logical Fallacies

Logical fallacies are “flaws in logic that often involve faulty facts and misrepresentations”¹¹. If students can identify these fallacies within commercials their critical understanding of the information they receive will allow them to be less swayed by every advertisement that comes their way. If my students can identify logical fallacies, they can better discern whether or not those logical fallacies have dissuaded them from “buying in” to the product, service, or idea that the commercial sells them. At least they will be able to evaluate whether or not a logical fallacy in a commercial would deter them from buying that product or service. Below is a list of common fallacies that students

would find within commercials. I have included examples from the Chrysler commercial as well as a few others that introduce the fallacies well.

Ad Hominem

“Ad Hominem” is Latin for “against the man.” This argument attacks the character, credibility, reputation, etc., of another person or company, although it fails to focus on the argument of said person or company¹². This shifts the focus away from what should be addressed and oftentimes emphasizes extraneous information to the advertisement. Comcast Xfinity and Verizon FiOS advertisements have recently employed ad hominem in selling their Internet and television services. They attack each others’ reputations, and in doing so, hope to assert their own dominance in the market. For example, Xfinity, in one ad, narrates no more than “Don’t fall for FiOS” and directs the viewers to a website. Instead of giving reasons why someone should purchase the service, the only claim is that another company’s service should not be purchased¹³.

Ad Populum

This argument has a connection to the term “mythos” above. This “argument to the crowd” appeals to the beliefs shared with the audience, although—like ad hominem—it fails to connect its information with a reason why the audience should purchase the product or service in the commercial¹⁴. Commercials like one for “No! No! Hair Removal” claim that everyone is doing “Now you, too, can discover for yourself why millions of women—and men—around the world have switched to No! No!” The emphasis on “millions” suggests that if all of those people have switched to No! No! then the viewer of the commercial should, too¹⁵. If students are aware of this fallacy, they can recognize that these claims do not support logos for the product. Whether or not the inclusion of this fallacy deters them, they will at least recognize it.

Hasty or Faulty Generalization

This fallacy stems from the “arguer [drawing] a conclusion without sufficient evidence based on too few examples”¹⁶. The audience would need to be very familiar with the product, brand, etc., in order to avoid falling prey to this fallacy. Proactiv skincare commercials suggest that because it worked for this person or that person, the product will work for any member of the audience. Although the commercials will indicate how many have purchased the product, they may claim that *all* who have purchased it have experienced success, which is not necessarily true¹⁷. Just because it worked for one person does not mean it will work for everyone who purchases the product.

False Dilemma

When an advertisement constructs an argument that sets up an either-or situation, it could be implementing a false dilemma¹⁸. This fallacy only discusses two options rather than offering the other options that a consumer would have. For example, “You can either buy this product or your home will never be clean.” This argument fails to credit other options, like buying another product, or cleaning the home in another fashion.

False Analogy

When an arguer “suggests that two situations or things are analogous when they might not be,” that arguer has introduced a false analogy. Although the speaker wants to connect the product or idea to another one with which the audience is familiar, he is guilty of this fallacy if he does not explain/make clear the points of comparison¹⁹. In Kia’s Optima commercial featuring basketball player Blake Griffin, the Kia Optima is compared to a painted work of art in a museum; both are considered to be “impressive.” In reality, the car is not analogous to a painting of flowers in a vase²⁰. Although the incongruity purposes humor in the commercial, it also shows no support for the car itself.

Faulty Use of Authority

Sometimes arguments appeal to the authority of someone or something that is not an expert on the subject/product in question²¹. This connects with “ethos” in that the spokesperson may be popular or an expert in a field but not regarding the subject in question. Eminem is a famous hip hop/rap artist, but he is not an expert on automobiles. The appeal of his authority is not logical. Even if the connection between his expected expertise regarding luxury is the intended connection, the use of authority is still fallacious in nature²².

Slippery Slope

This claim wants to communicate to the audience that if one step happens (or doesn’t happen), it will lead to several more steps. For example, “If we let children spend too much time on the Internet, they will become less intelligent, more prone to suicide and depression, and more likely to commit violent crimes”²³. The evidence for these claims is absent from the claim, and therefore a logical fallacy becomes apparent. A comedic example of this fallacy is apparent in the commercial for the impact smart hard drive from Toshiba. If a man does not say “yes” to include the hard drive, a chain reaction will lead to a Zombie Apocalypse²⁴.

Appeal to Tradition

Sometimes an arguer will insist something has value because it is a tradition, rather than explore the tradition itself for validity²⁵. This idea is often in conjunction with the “mythos” of a commercial. Arm and Hammer advertises as a cat litter tradition that “your

mother” was a part of. Although it might be the best product, its timelessness does not make it better than other similar (and newer) products on the market²⁶.

Appeal to Change

In an appeal to change, the arguer insists, “some change must occur, despite significant costs and substantial evidence to the contrary”²⁷. This is more difficult to find in commercials regarding the entirety of this fallacy, although some commercials will claim that their products (for example, natural gas) are necessary for change, yet the commercial will not examine the cost to switch sources or to change a home’s system. Joe’s Crab Shack commercials suggest that eating at Joe’s is better than the “big boring restaurant chain”²⁸.

Language of Advertisements

The following language used in advertisements can contribute to logical fallacies and represent claims that my students should also recognize and evaluate as critical consumers. Although this language is relevant to the unit, it will not be a focus for mastery. The goal is to expose students to these conventions so that they can take them into considerations in their evaluations. They will use some of the following language in the creation of their commercials

The Weasel Claim

This claim refers to advertisements that use “weasel words” that “practically negate the claims that follow”:

Words or claims that appear substantial upon first look but disintegrate into hollow meaninglessness on analysis are weasels. Commonly used weasel words include "helps" (the champion weasel); "like" (used in a comparative sense); "virtual" or "virtually"; "acts" or "works"; "can be"; "up to"; "as much as"; "refreshes"; "comforts"; "tackles"; "fights"; "come on"; "the feel of"; "the look of"; "looks like"; "fortified"; "enriched"; and "strengthened"²⁹.

These claims, upon analysis, are not as bold as they appear to be. “Virtually pain free” does not mean that a process is painless, and even one example of a weasel word can affect the overall persuasiveness of the commercial.

The Unfinished Claim

This claim indicates that a product is superior to or “something” than (quieter than, softer than, etc.) without finishing the comparison. Ford indicated at one point that its LTD was

“700% quieter. When the FTC asked Ford to substantiate this claim, Ford revealed that they meant the inside of a Ford was 700% quieter than the outside”³⁰.

The “Water is Wet” Claim

This is a claim that is true for any other product in the same category; it may be true but is not necessarily an edge over the competition³¹. For example, the idea that an energy drink will give hours of energy every time does not necessarily mean that another brand of that energy drink will not do the same thing.

The “So What” Claim

This claim is true but has “no real advantage to the product. This is similar to the ‘water is wet’ claim except that it claims an advantage [that] is not shared by most of the other brands in the product category.” For example, a Campbell ad campaign may claim that the soup has “not one, but two chicken stocks,” yet this claim does not necessarily make it a better product than other chicken soups³².

The Vague Claim

This claim is unclear and uses words that are ultimately meaningless. It relies on subjective or emotional opinions that are hard to verify. For example, a lipstick claiming that “lips have never looked so luscious” after its application is a vague claim. “Can you imagine trying to either prove or disprove such a claim?”³³.

The Endorsement or Testimonial

Endorsements and testimonials may not include people who are actually using the product in the advertisements³⁴. Proactiv relies heavily on testimonials from celebrities and non-celebrities. Although the commercials include multiple people who have claimed to use the product, no proof of their having continually used it is offered to the audience. Proactiv does show “before” and “after” photographs, although these are not necessarily proof of this particular product’s effectiveness³⁵.

The Scientific or Statistical Claim

This advertisement includes scientific proof or the result of experiments, specific numbers, or mystery ingredients to make the product more attractive to the audience³⁶. The hoped-for effect is that these numbers and claims appear to be more solid and verifiable because of its scientific or numerical nature. Mighty Putty is a “super-powered epoxy” that can support up to 350 pounds, and a Mac truck can drive over it. This data and the experiment may add attractiveness or interest to the product, but does not

necessarily make it better than other products. Also, its being run over by a Mac truck is not necessarily relevant to the uses some audience members might have for the product³⁷.

The “Compliment the Consumer” Claim

This claim indicates that the consumer himself or herself is “special” enough in some regard to deserve this product, this relying on flattery itself to sell the product³⁸. L’Oreal commercials boast the catchphrase, “Because you’re worth it!”³⁹

Classroom Activities

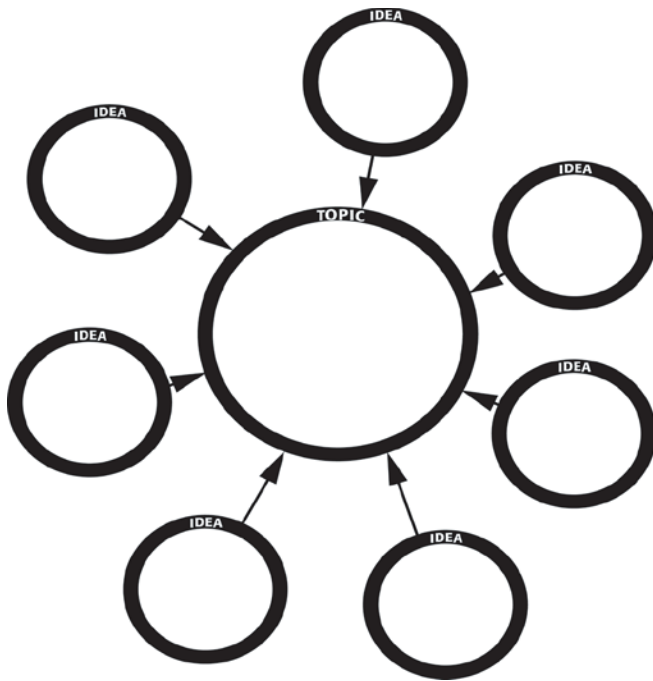
In order to begin the unit, I will need to refresh students’ memories regarding rhetorical appeals. In order for me to be prepared for the unit, I will need to make notes of which commercials would work well to show my students. Usually, I will spend more time analyzing television commercials shortly before I begin the unit, so I can use ones that my students have seen recently. I view commercials on TV stations that my students watch—MTV, VH1, BET, Comedy Central, E!, Bravo—and identify which rhetorical appeals are most apparent in particular commercials in order to prepare before the unit. Students will also choose commercials that we can view, although this gives the lesson a “cushion” so I still have some preparation. After we view commercials, I will build their knowledge by exposing them to logical fallacies and language of advertisements

Activity One: “Words, Ideas, and Phrases in Commercials”

I will begin the unit by showing the Eminem commercial, during which my students will fill out a graphic organizer word web that “splashes” the different words, ideas, or phrases that are associated with the car. For example, “hard work,” “luxury,” “Motor City,” “conviction,” and “know how” are words associated with the car⁴⁰. I have included an example of the word web.

When my students are finished writing the words associated with the commercial, I will ask them to identify which rhetorical appeal each word, idea, or phrase associates most with. For example, “hard work” might mostly associate with mythos; “Motor City” might best associate with ethos⁴¹. This will help my students review the rhetorical appeals as well as identify rhetoric with commercials.

Assessment: I will collect and review students’ graphic organizers



Activity Two: “Rhetoric in Commercials”

After reviewing activity one’s identifications together, I will ask my students which appeal seems to dominate the commercial (ethos). Students will then take each specific example of appeals (mostly ethos) from the commercial and fill out the information identifying the examples of rhetoric, the type of rhetoric, and the evaluation of that rhetoric. I have phrased the evaluation as “How does it add value to the product?” to force my students to qualify their responses. If I had asked them to “evaluate the effect” of each of the rhetorical examples, their responses might be limited in scope. Phrased this way, the answer forces students to identify “hard work” as “mythos” which “associates the car with those who value putting effort into making a quality product”⁴².

After using examples from the Chrysler commercial (see above in ethos, logos, mythos, pathos explanations for more examples), I will show other commercials to my students. These commercials will be those I had seen on the aforementioned TV stations earlier in the week, since my goal is to expose students to examples of commercials that they have seen recently. I will show a commercial and have students—with a partner—fill out another word web, categorize the words, discuss the rhetoric they identified within the commercial and then fill out the rhetoric graphic organizer. Then I will call on students to share their example and discuss the answers they input in the organizer. I expect that students will have a more difficult time with the evaluation of added value than anything else. I will focus on how students can qualify the value added to the product, giving examples of my own for the students. (The Chrysler commercial’s

“imported from Detroit” associates itself with mythos. It adds value to the product by suggesting that the car comes from a place that values individualism as well as its own identity. Since both of these ideas are American values, the car’s value is connected with the idea of being a patriot, yet standing out from the group⁴³.)

Assessment: I will collect and review the students’ graphic organizers.

Rhetoric in Commercials

| Example | Type of Rhetorical Appeal | How does it add value to the product? |
|---------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | |

Activity Three: “Logical Fallacies”

My students will not have prior knowledge regarding specific logical fallacies, so I will begin by reviewing their rhetoric graphic organizers from the day before. I will ask them the question “What in the third column that you wrote adds value to the product *does not* actually give a reason to buy the product?” For example, the fact that the Chrysler commercial refers to the car’s being “Imported from Detroit” does not give a reason to buy the car. It does not indicate if the car has competitive fuel efficiency or any other quality specific to the car’s value⁴⁴.

After my students have identified the above information, I will help them classify their logical fallacies. For example, if a student mentions that Eminem’s driving the car or helping to sell the car does not specifically support the reasons why someone should buy the car, I would help that student identify the fallacy as faulty appeal to authority. After we have discussed and identified each of the fallacies that we found, I will give the students examples (using some commercials in the above logical fallacy descriptions) of fallacies that were not in the anchor commercial. Their homework after the lesson includes viewing commercials (whether on television or online) and identifying any logical fallacies they found⁴⁵.

Assessment: I will collect students’ homework the following day to assess their understanding of logical fallacies.

Logical Fallacy Homework Questions

1. What logical fallacies did you find within the commercial?

2. How might the inclusion of these fallacies encourage a potential customer who is watching the commercial?

3. How might the inclusion of these fallacies dissuade a potential customer who is watching the commercial?

4. Assume you would be interested in purchasing this product or service. Does your identification of these fallacies dissuade or encourage you from purchasing the product or service?

5. Create an additional logical fallacy for this commercial. How might this fallacy persuade or dissuade the audience?

Activity Four: “Language of Commercials”

I will activate this lesson with a clip of George Carlin’s “Advertising,”⁴⁶ which is a presentational and comical list of language heard in commercials. Afterwards, I will ask my students what the relationship between commercial language and logical fallacies is. My goal is for their response to develop into how both drive the purpose of selling products and services, yet language in advertising is not necessarily illogical. Then we will view and discuss the different types of language in advertising. Each time we find an example, we will again discuss the effect that example has on selling the product (how does it add value to or detract from the product?). The students’ homework again is to watch commercials, this time identifying and classifying language in advertisements.

Assessment: I will collect the students’ homework assignment the next day.

Language of Advertisement Notes and Examples

| Example | Type of Language | How does this language add value to (or detract from) the product? |
|---------|------------------|--|
| | | |

Activity Five: “Project Assignment”

Students will be put in groups of three to four in order to create a commercial for a fictional product or service of their choice. Their task is to rely heavily on one (assigned) rhetorical appeal. In doing so, they may use language of advertisements, but they must try to avoid all logical fallacies. Inadvertent inclusion of logical fallacies will be identified

and evaluated by their classmates during their presentations. (I will not deduct points for inadvertent logical fallacies unless students; I am more concerned with whether or not students can identify them than I am that they use them.)

Assessment: group project.

Activity Six: “Presentations and Evaluations”

After a day or two to work with their groups in class, students will present their commercials to their classmates. During the presentations, the “audience” will identify and evaluate the rhetoric and language of advertisements. The audience will also actively look for inadvertent logical fallacies that their classmates included in their presentations. This assignment will allow me not only to assess how well the students create commercials using the conventions we have discussed in the unit, but it will also (and most importantly) allow me to assess how well they can identify and evaluate the conventions we’ve discussed, thus making them “critical consumers.”

Assessment: commercial presentations and evaluations of each others’ presentations.

Commercial Assignment

Your task is to create a commercial for a fictional product of your choice. I will assign your group of 3-4 people a rhetorical appeal that must drive your commercial. (Keep in mind, you will use other appeals, but this will be your main appeal.) Your commercial must be at least 30 seconds in length, and you will perform it in front of your classmates. Although you may use language of advertisements (example: endorsement or testimonial), you **MAY NOT** use logical fallacies. Your classmates will be diligent in identifying any logical fallacies that you inadvertently include. They will also evaluate the effectiveness of your conventions.

As an audience member, your task is to identify and evaluate your classmates’ commercials. Answer the following questions about each commercial presentation.

1. Which appeal drove the commercial? Use textual support.
2. Give an example of each of the other three appeals (and identify appeal).
3. List any language of advertisement examples used in the presentation and identify them.
4. List any logical fallacies your classmates inadvertently included and identify the type of fallacy.

5. Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the commercial: are you a persuaded or dissuaded consumer of this product?

Teacher Resources

Crewell, Dustin, Melissa Draper, and Colin Mitchell. "The Art of Rhetoric: Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles." *Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute (RPI)*. Accessed November 12, 2011.

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/webclass/web/project1/group4/>. This website provides links to other sites about rhetoric. It mainly outlines the three main rhetorical styles: ethos, logos, and pathos. Although the definitions of each are virtually the only information on this page, they are clearly constructed and displayed.

Gray-Rosendale, Laura. *Pop Perspectives: Readings to Critique Contemporary Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2008. This book separates different types of genres in pop culture (only one of which is advertisements) and offers examples, critical thinking questions, and articles and essays about advertisements. It also delves into the messages regarding popular culture as examples of underlying ideologies. These can be applied, if the teacher wished, to advertisements as well.

mythos. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mythos> (accessed: November 13, 2011). This is purely the definition of mythos from an online dictionary. The definition does help set up the meaning of "mythos" to ideas within commercials.

Schrank, Jeffrey. "The Language of Advertising Claims." *University of Mississippi*. Accessed November 13, 2011. <http://home.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/comp/ad-claims.html>. This is an invaluable website for information on fallacies in advertising claims and examples of each. Because the website is so particular to advertisement, it is more relevant than the logical fallacies information above.

YouTube videos. The various YouTube videos in the notes section are accessible ways to show students commercials or have them search for their own.

Appendix A

Common Core Standards

L.11-12.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

RI.11-12.5. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

RI.11-12.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

SL.11-12.6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Notes

¹ "Chrysler Eminem Super Bowl Commercial – Imported from Detroit." YouTube video, 2:03, posted by "Chrysler," February 5, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKL254Y_jtc.

² Ibid.

³ Crewell, Dustin et. al, "The Art of Rhetoric: Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles," *Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute (RPI)*, accessed November 12, 2011, <http://www.ripi.edu/dept/llc/weblacc/web/project1/group4/>.

⁴ "Chrysler Eminem Super Bowl Commercial – Imported form Detroit." Crewell, Dustin et. al., "The Art of Rhetoric: Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles."

⁵ Crewell, Dustin et. al. "The Art of Rhetoric: Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles."

⁶ "Chrysler Eminem Super Bowl Commercial – Imported from Detroit."

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⁸ "Chrysler Eminem Super Bowl Commercial – Imported from Detroit."

⁹ "The Art of Rhetoric: Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles."

¹⁰ "Chrysler Eminem Super Bowl Commercial – Imported from Detroit."

¹¹ Laura Gray-Rosendale, *Pop Perspectives: Readings to Critique Contemporary Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2008) 71-74

¹² Ibid., 71.

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¹⁴ *Pop Perspectives: Readings to Critique Contemporary Culture*, 72.

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Curriculum Unit Title

Analyzing Commercials: Recognizing Methods of Persuasion and Becoming Critical Consumers

Author

Jennifer Abernethy

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

A reader must use a variety of elements when evaluating and interpreting persuasive texts.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

How can viewers identify and analyze elements of persuasion in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a commercial?

CONCEPT A

Rhetorical Appeals

CONCEPT B

Logical Fallacy

CONCEPT C

Language of Advertisements

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

How can I identify rhetorical appeals in commercials?
How can I evaluate rhetorical appeals in commercials?
How can I create a commercial using rhetorical appeals?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How can I identify and classify logical fallacies in commercials?
What effects do logical fallacies have on the audience of commercials?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

What types of language do commercials include?
What is the effect of this language in selling the product?
How can I create a commercial using language of advertisements?

VOCABULARY A

Rhetorical Appeals
Ethos Pathos
Logos Mythos

VOCABULARY B

Hasty/Faulty Generalization Appeal to Tradition
Appeal to Change Faulty Use of Authority
Ad hominem Slippery Slope
False Dilemma
Ad populum

VOCABULARY C

Weasel Claim Unfinished Claim
"Water is Wet" Claim "So What" Claim
Compliment the Consumer Claim Scientific Claim
Endorsement/Testimonial
Vague Claim

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

Access various commercials from YouTube in order to view examples.