

ADVERTISING, THE MEDIA AND YOUR HEALTH

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ADVERTISING, THE MEDIA AND YOUR HEALTH

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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ADVERTISING, THE MEDIA AND YOUR HEALTH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Learning Objectives	3
Program Summary	4
Student Activities	
1. Pre/Post Test	7
2. Worth a Thousand Words	9
3. King Bunny Cereal Puffs	11
4. Deconstruct This	12
5. The Healthy or Not Quite Quiz	13
6. Truth in Advertising	17
7. Crumby & Fletch Clothing Co.	18
8. Don't Count on Violence	19
9. Self-Image and the Media	20
10. Plan a Presentation	21
Fact Sheets	
1. Reading Between the Cartoons	22
2. Media Awareness	23
3. Top Ten Truths of Media Literacy	24
4. Youth and Media Violence: Facts/Effects	25
5. Learning More	27
6. Bibliography	28
Other Programs from Human Relations Media	30

For many of the current generation of teens, multitasking has taken on a whole new meaning. Gone are the days when their access to media was limited to an eight-track tape and a few hours of TV after school once the homework was done. Today's teens are not only watching more TV than ever, they are also texting, Googling, podcasting, blogging and IM-ing while doing so. They are spending more time with various forms of media than they are sleeping. This trend has not gone unnoticed by the advertising industry.

Money talks—now more than ever. Advertising today has enormous influence and is more far-reaching than ever. It's a 100 billion-dollar-a-year industry whose goal is to get inside both our wallets and our heads. Employing specific time-proven strategies, ads make us want what we don't need and need what we don't want. The hooks have been around since time immemorial: A desire to belong, our need to fit in, and the laws of attraction are all played upon. Adults know that a shampoo is not going to solve their relationship woes, yet we still fall prey to advertising tactics. Most of us know that a beer or fast food burger, though enjoyable in moderation, is not going to make us the life of the party. As adults, we're able to make educated choices. Ultimately, we're responsible for our own ever-increasing waistlines or the fallout that results when drinking too much beer.

But how are the youngest among us faring when faced with this advertising jungle? After all, on an average Saturday, children will view about 100 ads directed at them. These ads are produced with their dollars, present and future, and the dollars of their parents in mind. Many of the ads that children view are for products whose use does not promote a healthy lifestyle. In 2007, the cereal manufacturer Kellogg Company announced that it would begin phasing out advertising foods to children under age 12 that don't meet specific nutritional guidelines. Other companies have not been so sensitive to the needs of young people.

But the problem goes beyond ads for sugary cereal. Studies have shown that violence in the media has profound negative effects on young people, desensitizing them to the suffering of others. When we think of violence in the media, our minds tend to go to the latest gory thriller or popular teen video game. The truth is, though, that some of the most damaging violence that children view is much less obvious, yet is still right under the noses of their parents. It's found where it might be least expected—in cartoons and other “benign” daytime programming. With so many cable channels available these days, some of which play cartoons around the clock, it is no surprise that adults are oblivious to the violence found in some of them.

The influence of the media on teens, girls in particular, reaches new heights—or depths—when it comes to the issue of body image. Remember all of those ads for junk foods and sugary sodas? In addition to those pressures, teen girls are also faced with ads presenting unrealistic images—super-skinny is presented as popular and desirable. One Chicago area study even showed that the bulk of fourth grade girls considered themselves to be overweight, and many were on a diet.

Studies show that children are unable to critically view and interpret advertising. However, they can be trained to become more media savvy and to recognize that most media images are created with one goal in mind: to make money. *Advertising, the Media and Your Health* takes a look at the power of the media and advertising in young people's lives. Special emphasis is given to understanding how common advertising strategies may affect children's self-image, influence their attitudes and directly conflict with reasonable health choices such as choosing not to have risky sex, use alcohol or eat junk food.

After watching the video *Advertising, the Media and Your Health* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- understand how pervasive various forms of media are in their lives
- identify unhealthy consequences of media
- list ways that advertising targets specific areas of the brain
- talk about how advertising negatively affects their choices as a consumer
- understand the link between body image—particularly for girls—and the media
- debunk popular myths perpetuated in the media concerning health
- deconstruct advertisements
- make more informed choices as consumers of media
- verbalize the risks associated with being uninformed consumers of media

Advertising, the Media and Your Health begins with media images—from TV, video games, movies and ads—swirling around the head of a bewildered teen. This sets the stage for the program’s discussion of how chaotic and confusing media messages can be for a young person. The female host asks, “How does the media affect the way we live? Does it influence how we feel about ourselves?”

The scene changes to a behind-the-scenes shot of a TV studio. We see our teenage host having her makeup applied. “We live in a media age,” she says. “That’s not new.” What is new, however, is how saturated today’s teens are by the presence of media in their lives. The term *Generation M* is one indicator—the *M* being for *media*. To illustrate this idea, viewers see a typical teen’s day: teens are shown text-messaging, talking on cell phones, listening to music on iPods, watching TV and surfing the Internet. Adding to the saturation, most teens actually use several types of media simultaneously.

Recent studies suggest that we spend more time daily using various forms of media than we spend sleeping. Advertisers who target teens through these media are shrewdly following good business practices, the host explains. Advertisers bombard teens daily with 3,000 commercial messages promoting goods and services—many of them not in line with healthy living. In addition to the myriad of fast food, soda and snack ads that are ever-present on television and radio and in movies and print media, teens are also exposed to alcohol and tobacco ads—a very unhealthy mix of messages, to say the least.

The host tells viewers, “Right now I’m targeting you! I’m sending you a message, trying to provide information... trying, in fact, to persuade you.” But this doesn’t mean that all media is negative. Media can keep us informed, entertained and connected to the world around us. The host explains that we must all be mindful of the effect that media can have on us. We should ask ourselves if media has influenced our habits and activities—for better or for worse.

Because teens and their awareness are such a crucial part of this equation, viewers next hear from some young people who discuss the role of media in their lives. The first speaker admits that media has an impact on everything that she does—what she eats, what she wears and how she socializes. The second speaker insists that the media doesn’t affect her at all. She explains that she has been taught to recognize false or unhealthy messages in the media. Obviously, media messages affect people differently. “The fact is,” the host says, “that there is a lot that even the experts don’t know about how media affects how we live and the decisions we make.”

The video introduces a new aspect of the media’s influence on young people. As the title *Violence* appears on screen, we see two teens playing a video game. The host explains that many teens believe the violence portrayed in video games has no effect on their behavior.

After all, it's just make believe—it doesn't involve real people. A boy explains that he doesn't believe that playing violent video games has any effect on him personally, but he admits that it may numb others and cause them to be indifferent to real violence.

“So what's the story?” our host asks. Dr. Vincent Mathews of the Indiana University School of Medicine offers a scientific view of the issue. Dr. Mathews is involved in studies of the short-term effects of playing violent video games. By scanning the brains of adolescents who have recently been playing violent video games, Dr. Mathews and his team were able to come to some conclusions about their effect on the brain. His research suggests that areas of the brain involved in self-control and inhibition showed less activity in youth who play these type of video games. “Does this prove conclusively that violent video games cause people to be violent?” the host asks. The answer is no, but it is a troubling piece of information. Violent video games are clearly not as harmless as people might assume.

Other shocking facts about violence in the media are presented. For instance, a national study found that young people view an estimated 10,000 acts of violence a year in the media. Another study indicates that a whopping 61 percent of television programming contains violence—with children's programming being the most violent.

The words *Body Image* appear on screen as the video begins to explore this area of media influence. The facts concerning the effects of media on body image, especially for girls, are sobering. One in three teen magazine articles is focused upon how to improve one's personal appearance. Considering the plethora of impossibly thin and beautiful models who represent all sorts of products (from lipstick to laminated floors), it should come as no surprise that most women in the United States are unhappy with how they look.

Next we meet Natasha Motola, a young woman whose perception of her own body image was greatly distorted by what she saw in the media. Natasha is battling an eating disorder. Viewers learn that one in five college-aged girls in the United States has struggled with an eating disorder. Natasha poignantly explains how the images that she saw in the media led her to take increasingly drastic measures in an effort to conform to what she thought she was supposed to look like. Now in recovery from her eating disorder, she has developed a healthier self-image.

The portrayal and volume of sex in the media is a huge concern. The fact that sexual imagery and content are everywhere is not earth-shattering news. “The real issues,” our host says, “are how accurately they reflect real life.” Here, a series of myths perpetuated in the media appear as text on screen—such as “Everybody is having sex,” and “If you are in a relationship, you have to have sex.” After each, a teen reacts and provides feedback to debunk these myths for their peers. Additionally, the video host tells viewers, “Each year, almost 800,000 teenage girls get pregnant unintentionally.”

Media myths and inaccuracies extend far beyond the portrayal of sex, however. The program next addresses the glaring falsehoods represented in a vintage cigarette ad. We see the ad on screen; it actually claims that a particular brand of cigarette is good for you—a healthy choice when compared with competing brands. The host points out that such an ad would not work today, given all that we know about how deadly smoking is. Still, we learn, since cigarette advertising is such big business, it is no wonder that young people are the prime target of Big Tobacco.

The program now visits Boston’s Youth Voice Collaborative where, we learn, teens are studying many of the techniques used by advertisers to sell their products. We meet several of the teens involved in the initiative. They explain to viewers what they have learned, using a recent cigarette ad as their example. “Like any company, their motive is to make money,” observes one teen girl. We hear from several teens who deconstruct various ads and identify some common techniques that advertisers frequently use.

Techniques used by advertisers are a big component of the video’s next section. Because many of the products targeted to teens today are unhealthy, advertisers have to work hard to convince people to buy a product—like fast food, alcohol and cigarettes—that is essentially harmful to them. To do so, our host explains, advertisers often leave out essential facts and information. They are not required to reveal all the potential problems that can arise from using their products. In the case of alcohol ads, advertisers portray their product as the key to good times or fitting into any social situation. Simply put, they sell a lifestyle. But in selling this lifestyle, they create a whole other group of dangerous myths.

Learning about the power of media may leave one feeling pretty powerless, but the next segment, titled *Creating Media*, reminds teens that there is a great deal that young people can do to change how things work. We meet Jamal Hamilton, of Youth Voice Collaborative, who creates media messages that incorporate thoughts and ideas that are meaningful to him. His efforts help viewers realize that there is a way for individuals to make a difference.

Viewers also learn tools that they can use to be active consumers of the media around them. The program concludes with this list of simple questions that teens can ask themselves when faced with a media message.

- Who created the message?
- Why is the message being sent?
- What do they want from me?
- What techniques are used to persuade?
- What values and points of view are in the message?
- What is being left out?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. TRUE or FALSE: Teens are exposed to more than 3,000 commercial messages daily. _____
2. TRUE or FALSE: One in five college-aged girls in the United States has struggled with an eating disorder. _____
3. TRUE or FALSE: There is no scientific proof that violent video games may affect adolescent behavior. _____
4. TRUE or FALSE: Most magazines for teens focus on issues of personal appearance. _____
5. TRUE or FALSE: Most television shows do not contain sexual content. _____
6. TRUE or FALSE: One goal of advertising is to sell a lifestyle to viewers. _____
7. TRUE or FALSE: Advertisers are required by law to present all the necessary details about their products in their publicity. _____
8. TRUE or FALSE: Less than 50 percent of television programming contains violence. _____
9. TRUE or FALSE: Individuals can't do very much to change the effect of media on their daily lives. _____
10. TRUE or FALSE: Being media savvy means asking questions about media messages. _____

The Answer Key to this activity appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. TRUE or FALSE: Teens are exposed to more than 3,000 commercial messages daily. | TRUE |
| 2. TRUE or FALSE: One in five college-aged girls in the United States has struggled with an eating disorder. | TRUE |
| 3. TRUE or FALSE: There is no scientific proof that violent video games may affect adolescent behavior. | FALSE |
| 4. TRUE or FALSE: Most magazines for teens focus on issues of personal appearance. | TRUE |
| 5. TRUE or FALSE: Most television shows do not contain sexual content. | FALSE |
| 6. TRUE or FALSE: One goal of advertising is to sell a lifestyle to viewers. | TRUE |
| 7. TRUE or FALSE: Advertisers are required by law to present all the necessary details about their products in their publicity. | FALSE |
| 8. TRUE or FALSE: Less than 50 percent of television programming contains violence. | FALSE |
| 9. TRUE or FALSE: Individuals can't do very much to change the effect of media on their daily lives. | FALSE |
| 10. TRUE or FALSE: Being media savvy means asking questions about media messages. | TRUE |

Name: _____

Have you ever heard the expression, *A picture is worth a thousand words*? This is definitely true where advertising is concerned. For this activity, choose a print ad from a magazine or newspaper. Make sure that your ad is very visual—full of pictures, photos, various kinds of graphics. Tape over the text in the ad—everything that indicates exactly what product is being sold.

Part One: Working in pairs, trade ads and try to guess what your partner’s ad is selling. Remember what you have learned about advertisers’ tactics. This might be trickier than you think. Write a few sentences explaining your guess. Then trade your ads with two other students, charting the information below.

Advertisement 1

Student’s name:	
Brief description of the ad:	
What do you think this ad is selling?	
Explain your guess:	

Advertisement 2

Student’s name:	
Brief description of the ad:	
What do you think this ad is selling?	
Explain your guess:	

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

Advertisement 3

Student's name:	
Brief description of the ad:	
What do you think this ad is selling?	
Explain your guess:	

Part Two: Reveal what your advertisement was actually selling. Then answer the questions below and discuss them as a class.

1. How often did you correctly guess what your classmates' ads were selling (circle one)?

- always* *usually* *rarely* *never*
(3 out of 3) (2 out of 3) (1 out of 3) (0 out of 3)

2. In the cases where you were wrong, what led you to guess incorrectly?

3. What tactics did the advertisers employ to sell the products?

Name: _____

Congratulations! You've just been hired at ACME Advertising, Inc. and now you have your first assignment. King Bunny Cereal Puffs are a new breakfast food on the market. You must create an exciting TV ad that will grab kids' attention and have them begging their parents to buy King Bunny Cereal Puffs. Pay no attention to the fact that these puffs are packed with sugar, food coloring and additives—they're a sure bet because King Bunny is a Saturday morning cartoon character.

Working in small groups, write a script for a cereal commercial to be shown during King Bunny's Saturday morning episodes. Incorporate what you've learned about common tactics that advertisers use to target young people. Consult the *Media Awareness* fact sheet for more information. Indicate each tactic you use in parentheses.

We've started an example for you below.

A giant, pink cartoon bunny hops onto the screen. (ANIMATION)

The bunny has a crown on his head and speaks directly to the audience.

King Bunny says: (USE OF CHARACTER FROM KIDS' PROGRAMMING)

"My cereal puffs will give you kids the energy you need to conquer kingdoms!"
(MAGICAL PROMISES)

Write your script on a separate sheet of paper.

Name: _____

Part of becoming a savvy media consumer involves being able to deconstruct the images and messages that you receive. This means being able to ask the right questions. As the video showed, we're all bombarded with ads and messages every day. Using what you've learned and the information on the *Media Awareness* fact sheet, answer the questions below to deconstruct a television ad you've recently seen. This can be an ad that your teacher shows the class or one that you remember seeing at home. Share your observations with the class.

1. Who created this media message and why?

2. Who is the target audience? What text, images or sounds suggest this?

3. What is the literal meaning of the message ("text")?

4. What is the hidden message ("subtext")?

5. What tools of persuasion are used?

6. What healthy and unhealthy messages are communicated?

7. What part of the story is not being told?

Name: _____

**THE HEALTHY OR
NOT QUITE QUIZ**

Next to each advertising blurb below, circle “Healthy” or “Not Quite” to indicate the impact it might have on you and your peer group. Write a sentence explaining your answer.

1. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “Our new, improved *Just for Teens* lip balms will give your lips the same glow as Lisa Logan’s luscious smackers, seen here leaving a hot Hollywood nightspot.”

WHY? _____

2. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “The *Final Frontier: Mission X* video game will have you kicking butt, leaving a pile of dead aliens in your wake with each successful mission.”

WHY? _____

3. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “Nobody’s perfect. We could all use a little ‘lift’ now and then. Fruit Tree Shampoo will help give your hair the body it needs.”

WHY? _____

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

**THE HEALTHY OR
NOT QUITE QUIZ**

4. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “Brell Beer will give you that superhero feeling we all secretly crave. Fly high with Brell Beer.”

WHY? _____

5. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “Daisy Dairy’s organic milkshakes are the perfect indulgent treat for that hot summer day. Made with all-natural, organic ingredients, they’ll leave you feeling cool and refreshed. Available at Daisy Dairy Milkshake Shacks nationwide.”

WHY? _____

6. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “Tired of being on the outside looking in? ClearSkin’s acne treatment for teens will clear up even the spottiest face and give you the confidence you need.”

WHY? _____

The Answer Key to this activity appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

1. NOT QUITE. “Our new, improved *Just for Teens* lip balms will give your lips the same glow as Lisa Logan’s luscious smackers, seen here leaving a hot Hollywood nightspot.”

WHY? Many young celebrities are not the best role model for teens. Also, the ad may lead you to believe that using Just for Teens lip balms will make you popular and get you into nightclubs, something teens shouldn’t be doing in the first place.

2. NOT QUITE. “The *Final Frontier: Mission X* video game will have you kicking butt, leaving a pile of dead aliens in your wake with each successful mission.”

WHY? This is the type of violent video game that tends to desensitize teens to violence.

3. HEALTHY. “Nobody’s perfect. We could all use a little ‘lift’ now and then. Fruit Tree Shampoo will help give your hair the body it needs.”

WHY? The ad promotes the idea that no one is perfect, and it doesn’t suggest that using the product will magically solve problems or make one popular.

4. NOT QUITE. “Brell Beer will give you that superhero feeling we all secretly crave. Fly high with Brell Beer.”

WHY? This ad is clearly designed to appeal to young people, as evidenced by the use of the term “superhero,” and it might make them think that underage drinking is cool.

This Answer Key is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

THE HEALTHY OR
NOT QUITE QUIZ

5. HEALTHY. “Daisy Dairy’s organic milkshakes are the perfect indulgent treat for that hot summer day. Made with all-natural, organic ingredients, they’ll leave you feeling cool and refreshed. Available at Daisy Dairy Milkshake Shacks nationwide.”

WHY? Though milkshakes are probably not the healthiest choice if you have too many of them, the ad does state that they are an “indulgent treat,” so they are not trying to give the impression that the milkshakes are healthy or suitable to drink all of the time.

6. HEALTHY OR NOT QUITE? “Tired of being on the outside looking in? ClearSkin’s acne treatment for teens will clear up even the spottiest face and give you the confidence you need.”

WHY? This ad suggests that self-esteem and popularity will follow if teens use this product. It also appeals to teens who might be depressed or desperate because of their acne problems.

Name: _____

What if the information in deceptive ads were turned upside-down and the ads, instead of trying to deceive, put the truth right out there for all to see? Sales would likely plummet, right? Working individually or in small groups, choose an ad from a magazine or newspaper that you find to be particularly deceptive. Then rewrite it, creating a “counter ad” that presents the product in a whole new light.

Follow the steps below.

1. Attach the original ad to your counter ad.
2. Describe why you think the original ad is deceptive.
3. Design your counter ad individually or in a small group. You may choose to turn your counter ad into a television commercial instead of a print advertisement.
4. Illustrate your counter ad or describe the visual presentation.
5. Write the text of your counter ad.
6. Present your counter ad to the class.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 8

DON'T COUNT ON VIOLENCE

Violent behavior is often rewarded in the media, specifically on TV and in video games. It's seen as a quick and easy solution to conflict or a great way to rack up points. Stop and think about the violent images that you are exposed to in the media around you. For this activity, count the violent images or scenarios that you see in various media over a two-day period, either accidentally or by choice, and log them in below. Discuss your list with the class.

How many violent images/scenarios did you see over the two-day period? _____

	Where did you see the violence? <i>(name of show, movie, book, game, etc.)</i>	What happened in this scene/image? <i>(briefly describe the scene and participants)</i>	What was the consequence of the violence? <i>(briefly describe the outcome of the violent behavior)</i>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Name: _____

Beauty and fashion magazines, television shows, music videos, movies, street billboards and even health and fitness magazines give us false ideas about what we should look like. Incredibly thin models and actresses and super-muscular men send the message that this is how you have to look to be popular, attractive, confident and happy.

Consider this: 20 years ago, the average model weighed eight percent less than the average woman, but today's models weigh 23 percent less. That's almost three times skinnier! It puts a lot of pressure on young people to have to cope with unrealistic images. These media images are driving teens to diet constantly and become obsessed with weight, body shape and size. What can you do about it?

For this activity, choose one of the following:

1

Clip magazine pictures of very thin or pumped-up models. Discuss whether these are attractive body types in real life and if they are factors in being popular and happy. Write a letter to the magazine. Ask the publisher to use different models who look like real people with more realistic bodies.

2

Find a magazine advertisement that you believe promotes an unhealthy self-image. Write a letter of complaint to the advertiser about the harmful messages it is sending.

3

Identify a particular television program that sends out damaging messages about body image. Write to the network to express how you feel.

4

Write an article to help other students separate fantasy from reality in terms of the images presented in magazines and on television. Advise the students on how to tune out media messages that might make them feel bad about themselves. Let them know what they should focus on instead.

5

Create your own cartoon book in which the characters look healthy and normal, instead of looking like superheroes or idealized "perfect" body types.

Name: _____

What could you do to increase awareness of the media's effect on young people's physical, mental and emotional health? Working in groups, plan a presentation to teach other students about deceptive advertising and the importance of making healthy choices in terms of how we spend our time and money.

- Decide who your presentation would target. Would it be suitable for all students in your school? A particular grade level? Elementary school children? All members of the community?
- Make up a slogan that will help people remember your message.
- Create a poster to advertise the presentation and encourage people to attend.
- Decide what your main message will be. You should focus on at least three important points that you want others to learn.
- Present your plan to the rest of the class, along with your poster and slogan.

OUR MAIN POINTS WILL BE:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

**READING BETWEEN
THE CARTOONS**

Saturday mornings are prime TV-viewing time for most kids. But what are children really seeing on an average Saturday morning? Facts include:

- Children who watch the full stretch of Saturday morning programming see 100 ads directed at them during this time.
- Up to one-fourth of broadcast time is devoted to commercials.
- Food is the largest advertisement category.
- Food advertisements are not reflective of dietary recommendations. Fewer than two percent of the food ads are for items that promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Produce, protein-rich foods and dairy products were rarely advertised.
- 90 percent of Saturday morning TV ads are for sugary cereals, candy bars, salty canned foods, fatty foods and other junk food. Advertisements for sugary breakfast cereals and large fast-food portions predominate.
- Advertising directed at children leads to poor food choices. One study found that watching commercials led children aged 12 and under to request and consume high-calorie, low-nutrient products.

Sources: American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

Campaign for Kids' TV, Center for Media Education, Washington, D.C.

Sommer, Ralph. "TV Food Messages and Children's Diets." Center for Media Literacy <http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article145.html>

Food & Drink Weekly, Dec 12, 2005. "Study Finds Advertising Leads Children to Poor Food Choices."

Common Strategies

The strategies that advertisers use to target young people are pretty standard. By knowing more about how they try to suck you in you, it's possible to make more informed choices.

- magical promises
- music and dancing
- superheroes
- animation
- peer group acceptance
- depictions of children outperforming adults
- selling by characters who also appear in the programming
- the use of “ideal kids,” usually a little older and a little more “perfect” than the kids in the target audience

Good Questions to Ask When Viewing Ads

The next time you find yourself being romanced by the promises offered by a product in an ad, stop and ask yourself some simple questions:

- Who created this media message and why?
- Who is the target audience? What text, images or sounds suggest this?
- What is the literal meaning of the message (“text”)?
- What is the hidden message (“subtext”)?
- What tools of persuasion are used?
- What healthy and unhealthy messages are communicated?
- What part of the story is not being told?

Name: _____

TOP TEN TRUTHS
OF MEDIA LITERACY

1. Media construct our culture. In other words, many of our common beliefs and values—all that stuff we hold dearly—are influenced by the media.
2. Media messages affect our thoughts and actions. As you saw in the video, what we are exposed to in the media can influence how we think and what we do.
3. Media effects are complex. Sorting through the media maze is no easy task. How media affects us isn't easy to figure out either. Simply put, we're all different, so we react differently to what we see and hear.
4. Media use the language of persuasion. Ever find yourself using a whole different way of speaking when trying to convince Mom or Dad to get you something? Well, the media do this, too. They often use language designed to persuade.
5. Media construct fantasy worlds. One of the best ways to sell something is to link it with a fantasy. After all, we all want to escape now and then. The media lead us to believe that this is possible if we just fork over the cash.
6. No one tells the whole story. Often the most important information in an ad or other media message is what's left out. Side effects and financial risks don't exactly fit with the "good life" being sold to you.
7. Media messages contain texts and subtexts. The *text* is the words, sounds and pictures contained in a media message. It's your favorite celebrity, looking deliriously happy and radiant, telling you that her skin cream works wonders. The *subtext* is the actual meaning of the message. For example, if you use the celebrity's skin cream, you'll be deliriously happy and radiant.
8. Media convey value messages. Ads often make statements relating to values. For example, most support the importance of consumerism in our society. That *Buy, buy, buy!* mentality we seem to have "bought into" is one such example.
9. Media messages can be manipulated to enhance emotional impact. Messages that you receive through the media are easily reinforced and heightened through a variety of techniques. Whether it's the sad refrain of a violin solo or a dramatic camera angle, your emotions are constantly under assault.
10. Media-literate youth are active consumers of media. Don't lose sight of your own power! Learning media literacy is a way to take back control and make informed decisions about how and where you spend your money.

Name: _____

**YOUTH AND MEDIA VIOLENCE:
FACTS/EFFECTS**

Facts about Youth and Media Violence

You may not realize it, but violence is an almost ever-present force in the media that young people are viewing. The facts are pretty shocking, as are the effects that follow.

- By age eighteen, individuals witness on average 200,000 acts of violence, including 400,000 murders.
- Children aged 8 to 18 spend about 44.5 hours per week in front of computer, television and video game screens. The only activity that takes up more time in their lives is sleeping.
- Studies show that children who watch significant amounts of TV and movie violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior.
- The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry all agree that media violence affects children's behaviors.

Effects of Media Violence on Youth

The effects of media violence on young people may best be described by the saying, "garbage in, garbage out." Research has long shown that violence, such as that seen—yes—on Saturday morning cartoons, has many negative effects on young people. Here are just a few of the ways that media violence influences young people.

- **Increase in antisocial and aggressive behavior.** Violent video games can cause individuals to experience aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviors. In fact, that bully who terrorizes you and your friends might be getting some of his aggressive tendencies from the types of TV programs and ads he's watching—or from violent video games.
- **Desensitization to violence and those who suffer from it.** It may just seem like a fun video game or entertaining program, but exposure to violence in the media makes us less sympathetic to those suffering from it.

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

**YOUTH AND MEDIA VIOLENCE:
FACTS/EFFECTS**

- **Feeling that the world is “mean” and a heightened fear of becoming a victim of violence.** When you spend all your time watching others suffer from violence on TV, it’s easy to believe that the world is a terrible place and that violence is lurking around every corner. Why go through life like that?

- **Desire to see more violence—not only in entertainment, but in real life.** Sometimes a violent stunt on a favorite TV show might seem tempting to re-create. It’s surprisingly easy to want the violence we see on TV or in the media around us to jump off the page or screen and into our everyday lives.

- **Viewing violence as an acceptable way to solve conflicts.** Let’s face it: conflicts are solved all the time in the media through violence. Cartoon characters get bonked on the head and weaker characters rise up and beat their oppressors to a pulp. It’s tempting to believe that violence is an acceptable way to solve one’s problems.

Name: _____

Check out the following websites for more information:

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Works to counter the harmful effects of marketing to children.

<<http://www.commercialexploitation.org>>

Center for Media Literacy

Good source for data on the impact media has upon youth.

<<http://www.medialit.org>>

Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU)

Promotes responsible children's advertising and works to ensure that children's advertising is truthful and sensitive to their audience.

<<http://www.caru.org>>

Media Awareness Network

Promotes critical thinking in young people about the media.

<<http://www.media-awareness.ca>>

National Institute on Media and the Family

Explores the impact of media on children and the factors that influence school performance, literacy and violence prevention, works to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm of the media on children.

<<http://www.mediafamily.org>>

New Mexico Media Literacy Project

Works to empower youth to become savvy and critical consumers of the media.

<<http://www.nmmlp.org>>

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OTHER PROGRAMS
FROM HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

<i>Food, Health and Exercise: Putting It All Together</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>No Safe Amount: Women, Alcohol and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Developing Self-Confidence</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Say Know to Diets</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Am I Normal? Teens and Emotional Health</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Social Skills for Life: Managing Strong Emotions</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Avoiding the Pregnancy Trap</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>DUI: The Hard Truth</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Alcohol and Drugs</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Asleep at the Wheel: The Dangers of Drowsy Driving</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Becoming an Organized Student</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Understanding HIV and AIDS</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Systems of the Body: Digestion</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Addiction and the Human Brain</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Athletes, Alcohol and Steroids: What's Wrong with This Picture?</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Stressed Out: Stress Management 101</i>	video/print or DVD/print

Visit our website for detailed descriptions of the above programs.

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