

**Media Education:
Fostering Enjoyment in Critical Engagement**

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Unit Plan
LLED 314A (301)
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➡ title: Media Education: Fostering Enjoyment in Critical Engagement

➡ profile

grade: 9
subject: English
number of lessons: 14
duration of lessons: 80 minutes

➡ unit rationale

The goal of the unit is to help students learn to enjoy critically engaging with the media. The focus of the unit is on critical thinking and pleasure. The former involves examining and critiquing stereotypes in the media. Grappling with stereotypes requires asking how and why the media promotes and challenges which stereotypes. This unit queries stereotypes concerned with gender, “race” or ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and global/“3rd world” issues. The objective of questioning stereotypes is to promoted social justice. In an attempt to ensure relevancy and enjoyment, the substantive content of the unit is based on short and informal media surveys, which students completed prior to the planning of the unit. The unit also incorporates the development of writing, reading, presenting (oral and visual), and viewing skills. The unit positions students as cultural critics and media makers.

➡ unit overview

#1 introduction	#8 global and “third world” issues
#2 gender in advertising	#9 reality TV
#3 racism and representation	#10 cartoons
#4 heterosexism and homophobia	#11 corporations in schools
#5 magazine ads and class	#12 violence and video games
#6 culture jamming	#13 music and music videos
#7 bias in news	#14 conclusion

➡ proscribed learning outcomes

British Columbia Outcome Chart: English Language Arts Grade 9¹

Comprehend and Respond

Comprehension

- describe and assess the strategies they use before, during, and after reading, viewing, and listening for various purposes
- identify examples of the use of stock or stereotypical characters
- demonstrate an understanding of the main ideas, events, or themes of a variety of novels, stories, poetry, other print material, and electronic media
- cite specific information from stories, articles, novels, poetry, or mass media to support their inferences and to respond to tasks related to the works

¹ The PLOs listed here are taken from the Media Awareness Network and based on the BC IRP.

Engagement and Personal Response

- demonstrate a willingness to explore a variety of genres and media
- identify and explain connections between what they read, hear, and view and their personal ideas and beliefs
- compare the themes, purposes, and appeal of different communications

Critical Analysis

- identify and investigate how different cultures and socio-economic groups are portrayed in the media
- describe and provide examples of the power of satire to influence beliefs
- locate and assess the effectiveness of a variety of persuasive techniques in relation to purpose, audience, and medium
- evaluate information for its suitability for an identified audience
- explain how mass media can influence social attitudes, self perceptions, and lifestyles

Communicate Ideas and Information

Composing and Creating

- locate, access, and select appropriate information from a variety of resources (including technological sources)

Presenting and Valuing

- create a variety of communications designed to persuade, inform, and entertain classroom and other audiences
- create a variety of personal, literary, technical, and academic communications, including poems, stories, and personal essays; oral and visual presentations; written explanations, summaries, and arguments; letters; and bibliographies

Self and Society

Presenting and Valuing

- analyze their understanding and beliefs to draw conclusions and identify gaps or contradictions in their thinking

➡ resources

www.media-awarenessnetwork.ca ✓ AMAZING RESOURCE: LESSONS, RESOURCES, DEFINITIONS...

www.adbusters.org

www.rethinkingschool.org

www.accesstomedia.org → Peer Perspectives (video packages)

www.bctf.ca → see BC Association for Media Education

www.adstandards.com/en (Advertising Standards Canada)

Duncan, Barry, et al. *Mass Media and Popular Culture: Version 2; Resource Binder*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Co. Canada, Ltd., 1996. c = P91 D86 1996 TGuide EL

note: refer to individual lessons for specific resources (i.e., videos, articles)

➡ some concerns regarding preparation and miscellaneous notes

- before planning and modifying unit to suit students and community, conduct short media survey with students to generate data on their interests and concerns
- contact Adbusters with wish list of resources as they will provide available materials to teachers at no cost!
- note: most lessons require preparation: collecting materials, recording current news casts, etc.
- see appendix for supplementary materials – note: ➡ means please see appendix
- for in-class reading, supply class set of assorted print media: local papers (i.e., accumulate free weekly publications), magazines, etc.
- suggestion: play music during desk-work and other activities; have students bring their own music to share with class (but listen to it first to ensure appropriate content)

➡ evaluation options

30%	participation portfolio	- collect work produced in class to assess students' understanding and performance, and as something tangible to measure participation
40%	media response log	- collect in four installments over duration of unit; venue for students to respond to and critically engage with a variety of media and apply concepts learned in lessons; provide students with questions to consider in relation to each medium
30%	final project	- visual component and short written explanation – possible suggestions: collage, (spoof) ad campaign poster, promotional poster for band or sports team, comic strip, story board, ya-ya box

100%

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 1

lesson title
Introduction

objectives

- students will be able to discuss and identify media and stereotypes
- students will be able to understand the outline of and expectations for the unit

rationale

An understanding of the relevant terms and concepts is necessary to begin fostering media literacy and challenging stereotypes.

introduction

- play Bugles, “Video Killed the Radio Star” (audio or video recording) 5
- community building activity (i.e., students survey classmates about media preferences) 10

methodology

- brainstorm types of media
- through discussion, students generate definition of media – write on board or overhead
- brainstorm examples of stereotypes
- through discussion, students generate definition of stereotype – write on board/overhead
- introduce concept of representation – discuss how media images are constructed 30
- discuss audience: passive or active? – explain that latter is an expectation of the unit
- introduce concept of critical engagement/thinking (process of asking thoughtful questions) about particular texts or mediums
- introduce concept of negotiating pleasure (but don’t use the jargon with students) – emphasize that this unit is not about taking the fun out of pop culture; rather, negotiating criticism, interest, entertainment, and enjoyment 15
- review appropriate conduct – this unit covers controversial subjects
- provide students with unit overview, and details outlining assignments, due dates, etc. 15
- time permitting, have students read news paper independently and silently

resources

- unit outline
- Bugles, “Video Killed the Radio Star”
- class set of assorted news papers
- optional/if necessary, community building handout/worksheet

assessment

- general participation: did students participate in (i.e., make comments, seem attentive) the discussion and community building activity?

summary

- state the objective of the unit: enjoy critically engaging with the media 5
- foreshadow: announce the subject of the next lesson – gender in advertising

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 2

lesson title

Examining Gender in Advertising: Fighting for Life

objective

- students will be able to define gender and identify gendered stereotypes in advertising

rationale

Gender stereotyping pervades advertising; students must be able to identify it in order to begin to deconstruct such media images and understand their effects.

introduction

- show gender stereotypes in print media ads – select a variety of images of masculinity and femininity
- alternative: show recording of a few TV commercials to illustrate above
- define gender (vs. sex)

time:
5

methodology

- watch “Killing Us Softly 3” (video recording)
- written response activity – record first impressions to video (what caught your attention? how do you feel after watching it?) and, based on what you saw in the video, consider how are women and girls portrayed in the media? what stereotypes are associated with women?
- “Marketing to Teens: Gender and Roles in Advertising” – small group activity ²
- students read “Advertising and Image” ²

34

10

20

5

resources

- Kilbourne, Jean. “Killing Us Softly 3” Sut Jhally, producer/director/editor. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2000. c = HF5822 K5 2000
- assorted current magazines
- “Advertising and Image” (article – see “The Price of Happiness” lesson) Media Awareness Network
- “Marketing to Teens” (lesson) Media Awareness Network

assessment

- collect written response activity – did students write at least one paragraph on what they thought about the video or gender stereotypes in the media, in general?

summary

- media log tip: be mindful of gender in viewing and responding to media
- questions to consider: how are men and women represented? how is it similar or different? why? what effect does this have on you?
- homework: finish reading article

5

² Please note that ² means see appendix.

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 3

lesson title

Recognizing Racist Representations

objective

- students will be able to define racism and identify racist stereotypes in the media

rationale

In order to combat racism, students need the skills to recognize it.

introduction

- brainstorm on racial stereotypes in the media

time:

10

methodology

- watch “Racism for Reel” (video recording) 20
- positive/minus/interesting chart in response to video complete (aim for minimum 2 entries per category) individually and then share with partner 10
- group discussion: what stereotypes were challenged in the video? report PMI findings 10
- through discussion with students, define “race”, racism, prejudice 10
- brainstorm alternative media sources with more positive and realistic representations 5
- read news paper or finish “Advertising and Image” (homework from last class) 10

resources

- Peer Perspectives, “Racism for Reel” Access Media Education Society
- “Race and the Media” *Mass Media and Popular Culture* (80)

assessment

- collect PMI chart – is it complete?

summary

- handout “Race and the Media– Keeping Track of Racist Images in the Media” – 5
option: students can complete and submit for future media log
- post and paraphrase quote: “The process of naming racism is not an indictment. It is an opportunity for change.” – Carl E. James, “Seeing Ourselves” (65).

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 4

lesson title

Whose Closet? Exposing Stereotypes of Sexual-Orientation in the Media

objective

- students will be able to identify heterosexist and homophobic stereotypes in the media

rationale

The objective is to critique sexual orientation stereotypes and assumptions in order to promote justice as outlined in the Human Rights Code.

introduction

- brainstorm on stereotypes of gay men and lesbian women

time:
10

methodology

- introduce terms: heterosexism, homophobia, sexual orientation
- watch “Outlet” (video recording)
- written response to video: describe your initial response. what are you left wondering? did anything surprise you? were any of your own assumptions challenged? please give examples. what do you know now? what do you still want to know?
- debrief through discussion
- time permitting, read print media

5
27
15
5
10

resources

- Peer Perspectives, “Outlet” Access Media Education Society
- listing of community resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered youth
- Human Rights Code

assessment

- collect written response to video: have students written minimum one paragraph on heterosexism and homophobia or stereotypes of gays and lesbians in the media?

summary

- provide students with information (website, phone number, pamphlet or printout from web) about Peer Perspectives – www.accessstomedia.org and 250 539 5904
- post websites for community services on board

5

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 5

lesson title

Addressing Advertising Or, Consuming/-er Culture and Class

objectives

- students will be able to identify and analyze stereotypes in magazine ads
- students will be able to be thoughtful about being consumers

rationale

The aim is to help students be(come) critical rather than passive consumers.

introduction

time:

- show assortment of ads from a variety of teen and other popular magazines
- write on board: advertising and consumerism – what’s the link? and where do magazines factor in? do magazines promote consumerism? are magazines sources of entertainment and information or are they small billboards?

10

methodology

- define consumerism
- in groups of 4 or 5, students examine advertising in magazines – collect data: how many pages of ads, articles? quizzes? celebrity profiles? fashion pieces? beauty or health features? what themes are evident in the above? record group findings
- group discussion: report findings and discuss what products are advertised? besides the products, what are the ads selling (ideas, hopes, fears, life style, identity)? who is the target audience/market?
- cliché and class: contrast the cliché ‘money can’t buy love or happiness’ with the images and messages in the ads – are ads selling love, happiness, etc., in order to promote a product? what does this mean if you are poor? how is class or social economic status represented in ads? based on ads, does everyone seem wealthy? brainstorm on stereotypes of poverty and poor people
- tableau: in same groups, students produce stereotypical visual representation/ads and present to class or perform/pose, class interprets, group reflects on message, process...

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20

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20

resources

- assorted magazines (5-6)

assessment

- general participation: did they cooperate in completing the magazine survey and reporting their group’s findings? did they participate in the tableau activity?

summary

- acknowledge themes present in tableaus

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English 9
media education unit
lesson # 6

lesson title
Culture Jamming

objective

- students will be able to understand parody and apply it to the media

rationale

Making criticism fun will help students internalize critical thinking skills.

introduction

- display Adbusters spook ads
- write www.adbusters.org on board

time:

10

methodology

- through discussion, define parody, spoof
- “Marketing to Teens: Parody Ads” (lesson) Media Awareness Network

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55

resources

- contact Adbusters: will provide available materials to teachers at no cost!
- see www.adbusters.org and magazine
- Adbuster spoof images
- assorted regular print media ads to contrast above
- “Marketing to Teens: Parody Ads” Media Awareness Network (2003)
- www.media-awareness.ca

assessment

- collect group parody assignment: poster (is it a parody?) and presentation (did they explain what it is a parody of? and how it is a spoof?)

summary

- what is culture jamming? brainstorm definition. is it effective or productive? what impact does or can it have?
- what can you do? want more info? check out adbusters website and magazine

10

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 7

lesson title

What's new(s)?

objectives

- students will be able to define or discuss bias and objectivity
- students will be able to understand that news is a representation – that is too has bias

rationale

Fostering the skills to acknowledge subjectivity in supposed facts is necessary to develop thoughtful questions and independent ideas.

introduction

time:

- watch montage of current news clips (i.e., CBC national news, CNN, “This Hour Has 22 Minutes”

20

methodology

- students independently record first impressions
- share with partner
- define bias (see handouts for guidance)
- class discussion: what counts as news? what characterizes mainstream news (i.e., who is the anchor? what does s/he look like? what is s/he wearing? how is their hair done? what impression does this give you? what does the set look like? is it fancy or shabby? what was the tone of the piece? subject matter?)? compare and contrast with news parody. what is similar? different? what version has more authority? which one seems more official? reliable? why?
- free press? who owns and operates the media? who consumes it? – provide students with current statistics and discuss: how does this effect news?
- read print media

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20

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10

resources

- video clips
- handout: “A Practical Guide for the Detection of Bias in the Media” *Mass Media and Popular Culture* (90)
- handout: “How to Detect Bias in the Media” Media Awareness Network

assessment

- collect written response to news clips – does it respond to bias in news? is it minimum one paragraph?
- general participation in discussion

summary

- handouts: “A Practical Guide for the Detection of Bias in the Media” and “How to Detect Bias in the Media”

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**English 9
media education unit
lesson # 8**

lesson title

➡SUBJECT: GLOBAL + “THIRD WORLD” ISSUES

Hugh, please know that this lesson is still in development. I am searching for a resource (video, text) to link it to. If you have any suggestions, please share them with me – thanks, in advance. :) – A

objective

- students will be able to

rationale

introduction	time:
methodology	
resources	
assessment	
summary	

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 9

lesson title

Reality TV: Is It Really Real?

objective

- students will be able to understand and identify how reality TV shows construct or represent reality rather than capture or reveal it

rationale

Deconstructing representations of reality fosters an understanding of how and that such images are made with purpose for certain effects.

introduction

time:

- pose question: is reality TV really real?
- display images from or associated with reality TV shows

5

methodology

- brainstorm/discuss: what is reality TV? examples? what have you watched? did you enjoy it? why (not)? concepts? – what are the premise(s) behind shows? what themes do they deal with? what are they about? what sort of characters are present? what happens behind the scene? what about the camera and sound crews, producers, editors, support staff? what about the editing? the use of music? the individual interviews? how does the camera and crew always seems to be there at the crucial moment? what gets shown? what doesn't?
- creative writing activity: in the form of a short story or narrative, (a.) imagine that you are a contestant on a reality show; describe/construct it ; describe your experience, (b.) pitch a concept or story-line for a new reality TV series
- read print media

30

30

10

resources

- assorted reality TV media images, materials, etc.

assessment

- collect in-class writing assignment: do students demonstrate an understanding that reality TV is constructed? have they created their own construction?

summary

- questions to consider: if it really isn't real, why do people watch and enjoy reality TV? what's interesting about it?
- remind students that the next installment of the media log is due next class
- if students read comics or graphic novels, bring to next class

5

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 10

lesson title

Comics and Graphic Novels: Are Cartoons Sophisticated or Silly?

objective

- students will be able to discuss and experiment with producing graphic images

rationale

Students engage with graphic images daily – doing so thoughtfully is important and fun. And relevant. It is important to acknowledge the skill set that students possess (making sense of graphic images along with text and/or sound) as valuable knowledge.

introduction

time:

- write lesson title on board and can they be reliable sources of info? why (not)? 10
- play clip of “The Simpsons”

methodology

- discussion: did anyone watch the entire episode (of above clip)? what happened? from what you saw here, what was this scene about? what caught your attention? was it funny? did you learn anything? what do you have questions about? what information do you need to understand it better? – acknowledge complex knowledge informing scene 15
- read excerpt from *Persepolis* (or another graphic novel) aloud; photocopy and display key images on overhead 15
- provide brief background info on political history in Iran (or, depending on selected material, other appropriate details) to illustrate how comics cover range of topics
- brainstorm possible topics for comics
- students draft comic strips 35

resources

- “The Simpsons” clip (video recording)
- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. NY: Pantheon Books, 2003. c = PN 6747 S25 P4713
- overheads of selected scenes/images
- bibliography of graphic novels and comics – if possible, get from local library
- art supplies: paper, markers, etc.

assessment

- collect draft of comic strip – is there an idea or theme? have students began to grapple with it using images and/or text?
- participation in discussion and other activities

summary

- remind students that reading comics and graphic novels requires an understanding of both images and text and how those two interact in; also, like any other type of media or source of information, graphic ones are constructions that may or may not be reliable... 5
- remind students that the end of the unit is approaching! – projects due in two classes

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 11

lesson title

Corporations in Schools?

objective

- students will be able to identify/discuss/understand the positive and negative aspects of corporations in schools in order to begin forming their own opinion

rationale

In order to participate in the debate that is shaping their education, students must be informed.

introduction

time:

- read “Commercial-Free School” Adbuster blurb aloud to students
- place the Adbusters “Aim Higher” poster up on board or image on overhead – have students discuss/interpret the message: what is it saying? is it funny? is it disrespectful? is it effective? should you follow their advice? 10

methodology

- counter anti-corporation message with an explanation of why schools need the money (supplement government cut backs and rising costs due to inflation, etc.), what it is used for (equipment for sports teams, arts programs, even text books, etc.) – brainstorm more reasons with students 10
- if possible, read quote from current Education Minister’s position on issue or paraphrase (i.e., explain that the Clark has cut funding yet does not support corporations in schools but will not offer a solution...)
- individually and silently, have students read “Why YNN Sucks” , “Fast food back on school menu” (check media for ongoing debate at time of lesson for current material) 20
- along with reading, have students generate a Positive/Minus/Interesting chart based on the articles for the issue 10
- handouts: have students review in relation to their school with a partner as desk work 10
- discuss the presence of corporations in their school – how do they feel about it? does it matter? is it a good thing? bad thing? 10
- time permitting and if they are interested... what can they do? show Prince George Secondary campaign posters 5

resources

- administration: what is the school’s policy, etc.?
- see Education page on www.gov.bc.ca for current provincial info
- “Commercial-Free School” (introductory blurb) Adbusters
- “Aim Higher” (campaign poster) Adbusters
- “High School Subversion” (campaign posters) Adbusters
- Brand, David. “Why YNN Sucks” www.adbusters.org
- Steffenhagen, Janet. “Fast food back on school menu” *Vancouver Sun* 11.03.03.
- “Survey of Advertising and Sponsorship on Schools” and “Guidelines for Partnerships in Education” (handouts) *Mass Media and Popular Culture* (84, 85)

assessment

- collect PMI chart – are both positives and negatives listed?

summary

- show of hands: in favour/against/undecided/indifferent? 5

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 12

lesson title

Violence in Video Games and Youth

objective

- students will be able to understand and discuss the controversy surrounding violent video games

rationale

Initiate critical thinking about violence as entertainment in popular culture.

introduction

- read “Video Games and TV Teach to Kill” aloud to students

time:
5

methodology

- “Killer Games” lesson →modified: place ratings on overhead (handout not necessary) and review; handout “Killer Games” and have students read; proceed with questions 35
- informal debate about whether or not violent video games cause youth to be violent; divide class in half (in favour and against); allot time to generate argument; present and refute 30

resources

- www.media-awarenessnetwork.ca
- “Video Games and TV Teach to Kill” *National Post* 05.11.99 ➡
- “Killer Games” (lesson plan) Media Awareness Network ➡

assessment

- general participation: did students participate in the debate (preparation and/or speaking)?

summary

- acknowledge both sides of argument 10
- question: does the media portray youth as violent? is that a realistic representation of you and your friends? are youth any more violent than adults?

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 13

lesson title

Listening and Watching: Music and Music Videos

objective

- students will be able to examine and discuss how images and sound operate together in music videos

rationale

Music and music videos are complex mediums that pervade popular culture; students need critical viewing skills to make sense of the messages.

introduction

- collect projects
- four corners of controversy: music preferences and opinions – post disagree somewhat, disagree strongly, agree somewhat, and agrees strongly around room; read statements (i.e., ‘I enjoy listening to music’, ‘I regularly watch music videos’) aloud with controversy increasing and have students move to the corner that suits them

time:
5
10

methodology

- play a music video with no sound
- students respond in writing – consider: what was it like to watch but not listen to a video? what images caught your attention? what was interesting? odd?
- play same music video again but with sound
- note response again – consider: how do the images and sounds work together? do they compliment one another? how does watching the video shape your understanding of the song and its lyrics? do you like the song? why (not)? do music work with the images? what stereotypes are present?
- exchange response journal with partner and comment in writing on their response...
- discuss: how are men/women/authority figures, etc. represented? what stereotypes are evident? it is a good video? why? do you like it? why? is it controversial? why or how so? is controversy appealing? how is it used?
- read assorted music articles in print media

30
15
15

resources

- music video (video recording)
- current music articles in print media

assessment

- collect student responses – did they write at least half a page on the video? respond to a classmate’s writing?

summary

- remind students that next class is the unit wrap-up session/celebration; they can bring a beverage and a snack will be provided
- recruit volunteers for clean up at end of the school day after next class

5

English 9
media education unit
lesson # 14

lesson title

Students Make Sense: Seeing Ourselves as Media Makers

objective

- students will be able to actively engage with their classmates and their media projects

rationale

Celebrate students as makers of meaning and conclude the unit with a focus on students' active and enjoyable engagement with media.

introduction

time:

- celebratory atmosphere: students enter class to see their own and other classmates work on display; music playing and popcorn and refreshments (if possible /permitted?)

methodology

- display student work
- each student takes 1-2 minutes to introduce their project (i.e., what is it about? what have they done?) 30
- art gallery: students circulate and view each other's work 15
- self-evaluation –record: one thing I like best about my project; one thing I would change and why; one thing I now know about media; one thing I still want to learn
- peer evaluation – record: one thing I appreciate about _____'s project; in your own words, describe the project; one question you have about the project 15
- media unit evaluation – record: one thing I liked; one thing I did not like; what lesson, activity or subject did you prefer and why?; what about the unit needs to be changed?

resources

- students' work on display
- evaluation forms

assessment

- did students submit work on time in order that is be displayed? was a brief oral explanation offered? was others' work viewed?

summary

- media game show: media based questions to review unit – sample questions: what is the name of the Vancouver-based organization that parodies advertising? what is the title of the first music video ever played on MTV (note: played in first lesson of unit)? name to magazines targeted at adolescent girls? etc. 20

➡ appendix

➡ find materials below

- locate other resources using bibliographic information listed under resources in lessons
-

Marketing to Teens: Gender Roles in Advertising

Level(s): Grades 8 - 12

Length: 20 minutes

Overview:

In this lesson students explore gender roles in advertising by taking an ad campaign they have seen which is specifically directed to one gender, and redesigning the campaign to target the opposite gender.

Learning Outcomes:

Students demonstrate:

- * an awareness of gender stereotypes that are used by advertisers to sell products
- * an understanding that advertisements are designed to deliver very specific messages to consumers

Preparation and Materials

- * paper and markers

The Lesson

Guided Discussion

Advertisers create campaigns directed at girls that are different from campaigns directed at guys. Often an ad will tell you whether a product is something "masculine" or "feminine," even though the product could be used by either gender. This activity explores some of the ways advertisements tell us which gender a product is being marketed to.

Begin by asking students for a definition of "stereotypes." (*Stereotypes are assumptions we make about people based on generalisations about groups of people.*)

- * What are some common gender stereotypes associated with guys and girls? (*For example, guys are "tough and aggressive" and girls are "sweet and passive."*)
- * Do students believe these gender stereotypes to be accurate?
- * Where do they think these stereotypes come from?

Activity

- * Divide class into groups of 4 or 5. (*Each group will have a large piece of paper and some markers.*)

- * Explain that each group is to think of a product that is advertised specifically to either guys or girls.
- * They need to design an ad that would make it appeal to the opposite gender. For example, we've all seen the *McCain Pizza Pocket* ads on TV - for years they have been directed at teenage boys. Imagine what these ads would be like if McCain decided to shift its focus and try to sell *Pizza Pockets* to teenage girls. Students have to consider what type of ad they would create, what techniques they would use to reach a particular gender and where they would place the ad in order to reach their target market (*i.e. for girls, advertisements would be placed in girls' magazines, or during popular shows like Sabrina the Teenage Witch, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and Felicity.*)
- * Ask students to create an outline and storyboard for a TV commercial or a print ad campaign. They only have 5 minutes, so ask them to illustrate their ideas in quick sketches, as they will be able to explain them verbally to the class. Also have them decide during which shows, or in which magazines this ad would appear. (*If you have more time, students can develop their ad campaign more fully.*)
- * Have each group explain their work to the rest of the class.

Questions for discussion:

- * How is marketing to guys different to marketing to girls?
 - * Does gender-based marketing reinforce stereotypes?
 - * What types of ads appeal to both sexes?
- * If time permits, allow students to fully develop their campaigns and present the finished product to the class.

This lesson has been adapted from *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, a peer education workshop from the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program*. The original workshop is designed for secondary students who want to conduct workshops with other students about advertising and its impact on teenagers. *Adapted with permission.*

For more information about the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program* program or to obtain a copy of *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, e-mail sthompson@mcd.gov.ab.ca

Advertising and Image

Do advertisements influence our self image and our self esteem?

Some critics accuse marketers of systematically creating anxiety, promoting envy, and fostering feelings of inadequacy and insecurity to sell us their products. Marketers respond that advertising does nothing more than mirror society's values, alert people to new products and bargains, or motivate people to switch brands. At the very worst, they say, it bores or annoys.

Of course, some ads provide information useful to consumers. And advertising clearly plays a valid role in an economy based on a system of free enterprise. The question is not whether advertising is valid; clearly, it is.

The concern discussed here is the relationship between the images presented in ads and our sense of self. Can ads influence what we perceive as valid roles for ourselves in our society? And can our self-image and self-esteem be influenced by advertising?

What are the images that ads present? Everywhere we turn, advertisements tell us what it means to be a desirable man or woman. Ads paint limited images of what men and women can be. Because ads are everywhere in our society, these limited images sink into our conscious and unconscious minds. In this way, ads help limit our understanding of our worth and our full potential.

Ads tend to present women in limited roles. Girls and women in ads show concern about their bodies, their clothes, their homes, and the need to attract a boy or man. Seldom are women shown in work settings, business roles, or positions of responsibility and authority. Our society recognizes many valid roles for women, but this isn't always reflected in ads.

Also, the girls and women in ads are presented as "beautiful." But ads offer a very limited, narrow image of beauty. The advertising industry favors models with facial features that look Anglo, even if the model is Black or Hispanic.

Ads also present a very thin body type as though it were the most common or most desirable body type. Researchers have found that girls and women who work as models weigh 23% less than the average female their age. And the hips of an average department store mannequin measure six inches less than that of the average young woman.

Girls, women, boys, and men seeing these commercial images may be influenced to think of an ultra-thin female body as more normal or desirable than one of average weight. The extreme preoccupation with weight fostered by advertising images is reflected in the fact that 80% of 10-year-old girls report having dieted and that eight million American women suffer from anorexia or bulimia, two potentially life-threatening eating disorders.

In reality, many different kinds of facial features and body types are beautiful. Besides, the flawless appearance of women in ads isn't even real. It's an illusion created by makeup artists, photographers, and photo retouchers. Each image is carefully worked over. Blemishes, wrinkles, and stray hairs are airbrushed away. Teeth and eyeballs are bleached white. In some cases, the picture you see is actually made of several photos. The face of one model may be combined with the body of a second model and the legs of a third.

So many of the pictures we see are artificial, manufactured images. What happens when a girl or woman compares her *real* self with this narrow, unreal image of "perfection"? She may feel unattractive. When her self-image suffers, often her self-esteem is damaged too. She then looks for ways to improve her image and self-esteem.

Ads also present an image of the "ideal" male. Although ads targeting boys and men do not present as narrow an imaginary physical ideal as do ads targeting girls and women, they still present a very limited view of masculinity. For girls and women, body image is emphasized in most ads. For boys and men, the image emphasized is an image of attitude. Boys and young men in ads typically play the part of someone who is cool and confident, independent, even a rebel. Men in ads tend to have an aura of power, physical strength, confidence, dominance, and detachment. The implied message for the viewer is that this is the way to be cool, this is the way a young man should act.

The male image shown in ads almost never includes such traits as sensitivity, vulnerability, or compassion. This may discourage boys and men from displaying these natural and desirable human traits. Ads may thus limit a boy or man's sense of what he can or should be.

The actors in ads tend to be handsome, with clear complexions and hair that is perfectly combed or perfectly windblown. They are also almost always athletic. Physical or even sexual prowess is suggested in scenes of physically challenging, dangerous, or aggressive sports. The self-image of boys and men who do not exhibit these traits for example, who have normal complexions, are not athletic, and don't feel cool and confident may suffer when they watch these ads. Negative feelings about oneself, whether related to appearance or anything else, can be followed by lower self-esteem.

Ads offer to sell a new self-image.

Of course, the ads that injure our self-image and self-esteem don't stop there. They conveniently offer to sell a product that will solve our newly imagined "problem."

Consider this quote from Nancy Shalek, president of an advertising agency: "Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're a loser. Kids are very sensitive to that. If you tell them to buy something, they are resistant. But if you tell them they'll be a dork if they don't, you've got their attention. You open up emotional vulnerabilities and it's very easy to do with kids because they're the most emotionally vulnerable." Another person involved in marketing, Charles Kettering, said that selling new products is about "the organized creation of dissatisfaction."

Many commonly accepted ideas about appearance — for example, that skin should be blemish free and teeth bright white — are not absolute truths. These expectations were artificially created over a period of years by those who wanted to sell certain kinds of products and promoted the idea that we needed those products if our physical appearance was to be acceptable.

Let's take a closer look at this emphasis on appearance.

Ads tend to convey the idea that appearance is all-important. They teach us to be self-conscious about how we look. When we grow up surrounded by ads, intense self-scrutiny may seem normal.

Of course, all cultures have their own ideas about the traits that make a boy or man and a girl or woman attractive. Often these ideas are very, very different than our own. Rather, it is the level of concern with physical appearance that makes modern Americans unique. The intense concern with appearance that is so common in our culture has not been the norm in most cultures. It is an artificial concern that we have acquired from living immersed in a society dominated by commercialism.

Marketing to Teens: Parody Ads

Level(s): Grades 8 - 12

Length: 50 minutes

Overview:

In this lesson students explore what's hidden behind advertising messages by analysing and creating parody advertisements.

Learning Outcomes:

Students demonstrate:

- * an understanding that advertisements don't necessarily tell the whole truth about a product
- * an awareness that advertisements are designed to deliver very specific messages to consumers

Preparation and Materials

Sample parody ads are available from Adbusters, on their Web site at www.adbusters.org. You can print a few of these prior to class or, if your school library or the public library have copies of *Adbusters* magazine, you can flag the pages these ads appear on, and pass them around the class.

You will need:

- * assorted magazines
- * parody ads
- * art supplies (optional)
- * paper for brainstorming answers in groups
- * markers.

The Lesson

Guided Discussion

Parody ads are a fun way to analyse popular advertisements. When you spoof an ad, you take the elements of the ad that give it power, and make them absurd. You turn the message around to show that it is ridiculous or even untrue.

Activity

- * Have students work in small groups.
- * Give each group a parody ad to look at (*and, if possible, a sample of the original ad that it parodies.*)
- * Have students answer the following questions. (*Write these questions on the board or have them ready on flip chart paper.*)

- * What was the first thing you noticed about the ad?
- * What is being made fun of in the ad?
- * What is different or the same compared to the real ad?
- * How did it make you feel?
- * Did the parody ad change how you look at the original advertisers?
- * Tell students they have 5 minutes to answer these questions as a group and to write down their answers in point form. Students will be asked to share their responses with the rest of the class.
- * Give students some real ads, or have them choose real ads to spoof out of the magazines that have been brought to class.
- * In their groups they will create a spoof ad. They may want to make collages by cutting out of magazines, draw or paint their ads, use computer generated images, or you may think of another medium students would like to use.
- * Make sure to leave enough time to have students explain their work to the rest of the class.

Question for discussion: **"Why is humour an effective way to make a point?"**

Evaluation

- * Group parody ad assignment

This lesson has been adapted from *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, a peer education workshop from the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program*. The original workshop is designed for secondary students who want to conduct workshops with other students about advertising and its impact on teenagers. *Adapted with permission.*
For more information about the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program* program or to obtain a copy of *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, e-mail sthompson@mcd.gov.ab.ca

“Corporate-Free Schools”: Hey kids, here's a newsflash. You are being sold. You are being sold every time you walk in the door of your school -- or you soon will be. The marketing business has put a price on your head, to the tune of \$300 billion a year -- that's what experts believe that people your age collectively spend, whether it's money out of your own pocket, or the way you influence your parents' spending habits. So now your compulsory education will come to include compulsory commercials as ad agencies target you in the one place you can't tune out. – **Adbusters**

Why YNN Sucks: Corporate Censorship in the Classroom

Today, my school held the event that most students look forward to all year: Meadowstock - a competition for bands from our school, Meadowvale SS. My band, Bikes, walked onto the stage as the crowd roared. At the beginning of our second song the power was cut on the bass and one guitar amplifier. I assumed this was an accident and continued singing without paying much attention to it. After we finished our set, I walked backstage and was informed by Mrs. Furzer, the staff sponsor of the event, that we had been disqualified and that we were to pack up our equipment and leave the school immediately.

Why were we disqualified? Well, Meadowvale SS is not just any ordinary high school. We are the subjects of a pilot program for Youth News Network. YNN has installed televisions in every classroom in our school and has given us a computer lab in exchange for the right to show us a 12-minute news program with two-and-a-half minutes of commercials every morning. The goal of YNN although the company maintains that it is to keep the students up-to-date on current events is to make money. This goal has sparked a lot of controversy in our school. The tension between the staff, students and administration has continued to rise over the past year. It's affecting our schooling, our extra-curricular activities, and the lives of every student and staff member.

Last year, televisions were installed in all the classrooms. The teachers didn't seem to know what was going on, or if they did they weren't saying anything about it. Shortly after, we were given some very limited information about the YNN project. Mrs. Pedwell, our new principal, gave us the opportunity to ask her questions at the end of an assembly. One student, Owen Jarvis, asked why a profit organization was allowed to infiltrate our school. The crowd applauded Owen's question but Mrs. Pedwell walked away without answering.

After that, very little was said about YNN. One teacher told me confidentially that it was because the teachers were afraid that if they said they didn't like the project, their work environment would become a living hell. Another teacher, who was at Meadowvale until January of this year, told me that many teachers in our school were afraid to challenge the administration. One student last year put out an underground newspaper featuring an anti-YNN article on the front page. The newspapers were confiscated.

This year, when the programs finally started in mid-January, the students were given the opportunity to opt-out of YNN. This meant that instead of watching the program in class, we had to go to a designated room and not watch YNN. The opt-out room is in the library where we are told to sit in carrels. You can't see anything other than yourself and your work, which is useful if you want to study quietly without distractions, or keep a group of students miserable for 15 minutes every day.

The more students who opt-out, the more controversial the project becomes. I went to a meeting at the Peel District School Board office to try to resolve this issue. There I saw a few episodes of YNN. Because I have been in opt-out, I had not realized that YNN wasn't what it boasted to be. YNN claims to be a news program designed to keep the students up-to-date on current events. The programs I saw were all magazine-style programs like 20/20 and 60 Minutes. They did not deal with the news at all. I spoke to Janet McDougald, who is the trustee for Mississauga Ward One and Seven, and explained the situation to her. She said that she would speak to Mrs. Pedwell about it and get back to us. Still, nothing has changed in opt-out and no one ever got back to us.

It was what happened today at Meadowvale that made me realize just how bad the situation has become. I walked onto the stage wearing a white shirt that read "YNN Stinks!" (Both the president of the SAC and the other staff sponsor, Mr. Pavelich had approved my shirt beforehand.) After we had finished our first song I asked the crowd, "So, what does everyone think of YNN?" The crowd booed. The bassist in my band, Andrew McArthur, quoted the WWF's DX and said "I have two words for that!" An audience member then yelled out "It Sucks!" I replied, "That's what I thought," and we continued our set.

What angers me the most about all this is not that we were disqualified; what angers me is that when Mrs. Furzer disqualified us because I spoke my mind on something controversial, she demonstrated to every student in that room that they will be punished for voicing their opinions. When the other students hear about what happened, the same message will be conveyed to them: school is not the place to have an opinion.

- *David Brand is an 18-year-old high school student.*
-

How to Detect Bias in the News

At one time or other we all complain about "bias in the news." The fact is, despite the journalistic ideal of "objectivity," every news story is influenced by the attitudes and background of its interviewers, writers, photographers and editors.

Not all bias is deliberate. But you can become a more aware news reader or viewer by watching for the following journalistic techniques that allow bias to "creep in" to the news:

Bias through selection and omission

An editor can express a bias by choosing to use or not to use a specific news item. Within a given story, some details can be ignored, and others included, to give readers or viewers a different opinion about the events reported. If, during a speech, a few people boo, the reaction can be described as "remarks greeted by jeers" or they can be ignored as "a handful of dissidents."

Bias through omission is difficult to detect. Only by comparing news reports from a wide variety of outlets can the form of bias be observed.

Bias through placement

Readers of papers judge first page stories to be more significant than those buried in the back. Television and radio newscasts run the most important stories first and leave the less significant for later. Where a story is placed, therefore, influences what a reader or viewer thinks about its importance.

Bias by headline

Many people read only the headlines of a news item. Most people scan nearly all the headlines in a newspaper. Headlines are the most-read part of a paper. They can summarize as well as present carefully hidden bias and prejudices. They can convey excitement where little exists. They can express approval or condemnation.

Bias by photos, captions and camera angles

Some pictures flatter a person, others make the person look unpleasant. A paper can choose photos to influence opinion about, for example, a candidate for election. On television, the choice of which visual images to display is extremely important. The captions newspapers run below photos are also potential sources of bias.

Bias through use of names and titles

News media often use labels and titles to describe people, places, and events. A person can be called an "ex-con" or be referred to as someone who "served time twenty years ago for a minor offense." Whether a person is described as a "terrorist" or a "freedom fighter" is a clear indication of editorial bias.

Bias through statistics and crowd counts

To make a disaster seem more spectacular (and therefore worthy of reading about), numbers can be inflated. "A hundred injured in air crash" can be the same as "only minor injuries in air crash," reflecting the opinion of the person doing the counting.

Bias by source control

To detect bias, always consider where the news item "comes from." Is the information supplied by a reporter, an eyewitness, police or fire officials, executives, or elected or appointed government officials? Each may have a particular bias that is introduced into the story. Companies and public relations directors supply news outlets with puffpieces through news releases, photos or videos. Often news outlets depend on pseudo-events (demonstrations, sit-ins, ribbon cuttings, speeches and ceremonies) that take place mainly to gain news coverage.

Word choice and tone

Showing the same kind of bias that appears in headlines, the use of positive or negative words or words with a particular connotation can strongly influence the reader or viewer.

Killer Games - Handout

By Chris Nashawaty

Kids Extra: Entertainment Weekly, March 11, 1994

Reprinted with permission.

"Everyone's got an opinion about violent video games"

Kids love them. Critics, from senior members of Congress to newspaper editorialists, see them as Public Enemy No. 1. Some people say they send the wrong message; others think they're more silly than scary. Parents, no doubt, have been left thoroughly confused by the controversy. So *Kids Extra* decided to evaluate the 10 video games that have been singled out as the most violent. Here, we settle the debate.

1. Night Trap (*Sega CD*)

* **Violent Content:** Ninja-like vampires stalk scantily clad coeds. Victims get drilled through the neck with a power tool.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** This full-motion video game is more lifelike than traditional animated fare; it plays like a movie and features human actors (including Dana Plato from *Different Strokes*).

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** This is intended to be a campy B-movie in video-game form, but frightened kids won't get the joke. Sega, which appropriately rated it -17 (not for players under 17) for its graphic violence and mature story line, announced in January that it would halt production of the game until the violence is scaled down and an industry-wide rating system is in place, but it will not pull games from the shelves.

2. Mortal Kombat (*Super Nintendo Entertainment System and Sega*)

* **Violent Content:** The most infamous title in the hand-to-hand fighting category is bloodless on SNES; the Sega version has an unpublished, but widely known, "secret" blood code that players can punch in. This allows them to rip out their opponent's still-beating heart, decapitate him, or pull out his bloody spinal cord.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** Very: both versions use live-action video animation.

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** If your children don't have the blood code, Mortal Kombat is your basic fighting game. But unless they live under a rock, your kids have the code.

3. Lethal Enforcers (*Sega CD*)

* **Violent Content** Although the game has little blood, it *is* violent and comes with a large pistol called the Justifier that players fire at the screen.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** Yes; the game uses photo-realist images of actors pointing guns.

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Definitely. Sega has rated the game a justly deserved -17. Lethal Enforcers puts a gun in kids' hands and teaches them to shoot first and ask questions later.

4. Ground Zero Texas (*Sega CD*)

* **Violent Content:** This shooting game has players blowing away human-looking aliens in a Texas border town.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** Full-motion video footage makes this the most true-to-life game on the list.

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? There's no blood, but kids *are* shooting at real people and watching them die.

5. Splatterhouse-3 (*Sega*)

* Violent Content: A hockey-masked man trying to save his family wields knives and cleavers against flesh-eating ghouls; gallons of blood.

* Is the Violence Realistic? Typical game animation, with harrowing graphics of the wife fearing for her life.

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? Worse. Although the blood is cartoonish, the slasher story could be troubling for younger kids.

6. Prize Fighter (*Sega CD*)

* Violent Content: This boxing video game doesn't show blood or actual violence – except boxing, of course.

* Is the Violence Realistic? The game's selling point (picture-perfect graphics) is the very thing that makes it problematic for children under 13.

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? The best litmus test: Do you let kids watch boxing on TV?

7. Street Fighter II (*SNES and Sega*)

* Violent Content: The grand-daddy of hand-to-hand fighting games features flying head-buttings, torching, and electrocutions.

* Is the Violence Realistic? Not especially.

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? Not really. For kids ages 13 and up, the creativity and challenge of Street Fighter II make it the best of its class.

8. Terminator 2: The Arcade Game (*Sega*)

* Violent Content: A very standard shooting-game tie-in to a very violent film. The problem here is the Menacer – a shoulder-mounted gun used in place of a joypad.

* Is the Violence Realistic? No; graphics are run-of-the-mill.

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? Worse. Learning how to fire the Menacer isn't a skill a child needs to develop. It is possible, though, to pay T2 with the joypad instead of the gun.

9. Mutant League Football (*Sega*)

* Violent Content: The field is dotted with land mines, players get to kill the referee after a bad call, and deaths are listed as a halftime statistic.

* Is the Violence Realistic? Average animation, with a cartoonishly high body count.

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? Older kids may find it a funny twist on the basic sports game, but it may be too much for the younger children.

10. Clayfighter (*SNES*)

* Violent Content: Not much in this toned-down fighting game.

* Is the Violence Realistic? Nah – the warriors are wacky digitized characters (Bad Mr. Frosty, Blue Suede Goo).

* Is It as Bad as It Sounds? Far from it. Although still a brawling game, this clever newcomer is a more suitable alternative for parents who don't want to expose their kids to too much violence.

Killer Games

Level: Grades 7 to 9

Overview

To print only this page, use the "printable version" link at the top of the page.

In this lesson, students explore the issues surrounding violent video games. The lesson begins with a review of the Entertainment Software Rating Board's rating codes for video and computer games, and a class discussion about the appropriateness of these ratings for children and teens. Using the article "Killer Games" as a starting point, students discuss the elements that contribute to video game violence; at what age young people should be in order to play violent games; and the possible effects of violent video games on young people. As a summative activity, students write a persuasive essay (or have a class debate) refuting or affirming the idea that violent video games promote violence among youth.

Learning Outcomes

Students demonstrate:

- * an understanding of the debate surrounding the influence of violent video games on young people
- * an awareness of the different types of violence found in some video games
- * a knowledge of the classification systems that govern video and computer games
- * an understanding of their own attitudes towards violent video games

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the following student handouts:

- * Killer Games
- * Video and Computer Games Rating Systems
- * Video Games and TV Teach Kids to Kill

Procedure

In Canada, most video game manufacturers have adopted the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) system. This rating system categorizes games according to levels of nudity, sex, violence and offensive language. It's important to note that although most games are rated, nothing legally prevents a young person under the age of 17 from legally purchasing an adult or mature game – many retailers routinely rent and sell adult-rated games to minors. In an informal survey conducted by an Ottawa newspaper in July 2000, two fourteen-year-old boys were able to rent violent M-rated games from every video store they tried, with no questions asked.

- * Have students read the ESRB ratings on the Video and Computer Games Rating Systems handout.
- * Review the criteria of each rating.
- * Do students agree or disagree with the rating criteria?
- * What changes would they make?
- * Have any students played mature or adult games?
- * Did they consider themselves mature enough to play these games? Under what conditions (of age, maturity, or circumstances) would they consider it *inappropriate* for someone to play this game?
- * Distribute the article Killer Games to students, and give them time to read through it.
- * This article was written in 1994. What video games would be on this list today?

- * In this article, what criteria have been considered to determine whether or not a game is violent?
- * How do these criteria compare to the ESRB ratings?
- * Ask students whether, based on the information they've been given, they agree with the author's conclusions regarding each game. Why or why not?
- * The author – and many child development experts – stress the importance of the concept of “realistic violence” as a measure of whether a video game is suitable for young people.
- * How important is realism in the games you play?
- * Put yourself in the place of a child development expert. What might be some of your concerns about kids playing these games?
- * What effect might realistic violent games have on young children?
- * In addition to the ratings, there is the additional problem of kids under 17 obtaining mature and adult games. How would you solve this problem?

Activity

- * Distribute the article *Video Games and TV Teach Kids to Kill* to students.
- * Have students respond to the article by writing a persuasive research essay (about five paragraphs long) in which they agree or disagree with the author's claims.
- * **OR** Have students organize a class debate on the topic: “Violent video games negatively affect children and teens.”

Evaluation

- * Persuasive essay, or class debate.
-

Video Games and TV Teach Kids to Kill, *National Post*, May 11, 1999

May 11, 1999 - Former psychology professor David Grossman is forcing media companies to be accountable for the messages they are spreading to children.

Grossman compares soldiers in training to children watching T.V. Both, he says, are "taught to reject old values and accept that the world is a dark and dangerous place."

Grossman targets video games in particular, which he says are increasingly sophisticated and often attempt to simulate military warfare. Combined with overwhelmingly violent television shows, the result is a desensitizing of viewers - particularly children.

Grossman makes further comparisons between exposure to media violence and cigarette smoking. As he puts it, "The television industry has gained its market share through an addictive and toxic ingredient."

Grossman says he looks forward to the day when media companies are subject to the same criticism as tobacco companies. He hopes that preventative measures will be put in place to ensure that incidents of youth violence, such as the recent one in Littleton, Colorado, do not occur.

As Grossman says, "We're not just teaching kids to kill. We're teaching them to like it."

Grossman has written two books examining the link between media violence and violence in real life - his first, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, was a best-seller when released in 1995. His second book, *Teaching Kids to Kill*, will be published in the latter part of 1999.

British Columbia Outcome Chart: English Language Arts Grade 9

Comprehend and Respond

Comprehension

- describe and assess the strategies they use before, during, and after reading, viewing, and listening for various purposes
- identify examples of the use of stock or stereotypical characters
- demonstrate an understanding of the main ideas, events, or themes of a variety of novels, stories, poetry, other print material, and electronic media
- cite specific information from stories, articles, novels, poetry, or mass media to support their inferences and to respond to tasks related to the works

Engagement and Personal Response

- demonstrate a willingness to explore a variety of genres and media
- identify and explain connections between what they read, hear, and view and their personal ideas and beliefs
- compare the themes, purposes, and appeal of different communications

Critical Analysis

- identify and investigate how different cultures and socio-economic groups are portrayed in the media
- describe and provide examples of the power of satire to influence beliefs
- locate and assess the effectiveness of a variety of persuasive techniques in relation to purpose, audience, and medium
- evaluate information for its suitability for an identified audience
- explain how mass media can influence social attitudes, self perceptions, and lifestyles

Communicate Ideas and Information

Composing and Creating

- locate, access, and select appropriate information from a variety of resources (including technological sources)

Presenting and Valuing

- create a variety of communications designed to persuade, inform, and entertain classroom and other audiences
- create a variety of personal, literary, technical, and academic communications, including poems, stories, and personal essays; oral and visual presentations; written explanations, summaries, and arguments; letters; and bibliographies

Self and Society

Presenting and Valuing

- analyse their understanding and beliefs to draw conclusions and identify gaps or contradictions in their thinking

Marketing to Teens: Gender Roles in Advertising

Level(s): Grades 8 - 12

Length: 20 minutes

Overview:

In this lesson students explore gender roles in advertising by taking an ad campaign they have seen which is specifically directed to one gender, and redesigning the campaign to target the opposite gender.

Learning Outcomes:

Students demonstrate:

- * an awareness of gender stereotypes that are used by advertisers to sell products
- * an understanding that advertisements are designed to deliver very specific messages to consumers

Preparation and Materials

- * paper and markers

The Lesson

Guided Discussion

Advertisers create campaigns directed at girls that are different from campaigns directed at guys. Often an ad will tell you whether a product is something "masculine" or "feminine," even though the product could be used by either gender. This activity explores some of the ways advertisements tell us which gender a product is being marketed to.

Begin by asking students for a definition of "stereotypes." (*Stereotypes are assumptions we make about people based on generalisations about groups of people.*)

- * What are some common gender stereotypes associated with guys and girls? (*For example, guys are "tough and aggressive" and girls are "sweet and passive."*)
- * Do students believe these gender stereotypes to be accurate?
- * Where do they think these stereotypes come from?

Activity

- * Divide class into groups of 4 or 5. (*Each group will have a large piece of paper and some markers.*)
- * Explain that each group is to think of a product that is advertised specifically to either guys or girls.
- * They need to design an ad that would make it appeal to the opposite gender. For example, we've all seen the *McCain Pizza Pocket* ads on TV - for years they have been directed at teenage boys. Imagine what these ads would be like if McCain decided to shift its focus and try to sell *Pizza Pockets* to teenage girls. Students have to consider what type of ad they would create, what

techniques they would use to reach a particular gender and where they would place the ad in order to reach their target market (*i.e. for girls, advertisements would be placed in girls' magazines, or during popular shows like Sabrina the Teenage Witch, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and Felicity.*)

* Ask students to create an outline and storyboard for a TV commercial or a print ad campaign. They only have 5 minutes, so ask them to illustrate their ideas in quick sketches, as they will be able to explain them verbally to the class. Also have them decide during which shows, or in which magazines this ad would appear. (*If you have more time, students can develop their ad campaign more fully.*)

* Have each group explain their work to the rest of the class.

Questions for discussion:

* How is marketing to guys different to marketing to girls?

* Does gender-based marketing reinforce stereotypes?

* What types of ads appeal to both sexes?

* If time permits, allow students to fully develop their campaigns and present the finished product to the class.

This lesson has been adapted from *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, a peer education workshop from the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program*. The original workshop is designed for secondary students who want to conduct workshops with other students about advertising and its impact on teenagers. *Adapted with permission.*

For more information about the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program* program or to obtain a copy of *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, e-mail sthompson@mcd.gov.ab.ca

Advertising and Image

Do advertisements influence our self image and our self esteem?

Some critics accuse marketers of systematically creating anxiety, promoting envy, and fostering feelings of inadequacy and insecurity to sell us their products. Marketers respond that advertising does nothing more than mirror society's values, alert people to new products and bargains, or motivate people to switch brands. At the very worst, they say, it bores or annoys.

Of course, some ads provide information useful to consumers. And advertising clearly plays a valid role in an economy based on a system of free enterprise. The question is not whether advertising is valid; clearly, it is.

The concern discussed here is the relationship between the images presented in ads and our sense of self. Can ads influence what we perceive as valid roles for ourselves in our society? And can our self-image and self-esteem be influenced by advertising?

What are the images that ads present? Everywhere we turn, advertisements tell us what it means to be a desirable man or woman. Ads paint limited images of what men and women can be. Because ads are everywhere in our society, these limited images sink into our conscious and unconscious minds. In this way, ads help limit our understanding of our worth and our full potential.

Ads tend to present women in limited roles. Girls and women in ads show concern about their bodies, their clothes, their homes, and the need to attract a boy or man. Seldom are women shown in work settings, business roles, or positions of responsibility and authority. Our society recognizes many valid roles for women, but this isn't always reflected in ads.

Also, the girls and women in ads are presented as "beautiful." But ads offer a very limited, narrow image of beauty. The advertising industry favors models with facial features that look Anglo, even if the model is Black or Hispanic.

Ads also present a very thin body type as though it were the most common or most desirable body type. Researchers have found that girls and women who work as models weigh 23% less than the average female their age. And the hips of an average department store mannequin measure six inches less than that of the average young woman.

Girls, women, boys, and men seeing these commercial images may be influenced to think of an ultra-thin female body as more normal or desirable than one of average weight. The extreme preoccupation with weight fostered by advertising images is reflected in the fact that 80% of 10-year-old girls report having dieted and that eight million American women suffer from anorexia or bulimia, two potentially life-threatening eating disorders.

In reality, many different kinds of facial features and body types are beautiful. Besides, the flawless appearance of women in ads isn't even real. It's an illusion created by makeup artists, photographers, and photo retouchers. Each image is carefully worked over. Blemishes, wrinkles, and stray hairs are airbrushed away. Teeth and eyeballs are bleached white. In some cases, the picture you see is actually made of several photos. The face of one model may be combined with the body of a second model and the legs of a third.

So many of the pictures we see are artificial, manufactured images. What happens when a girl or woman compares her *real* self with this narrow, unreal image of "perfection"? She may feel unattractive. When her self-image suffers, often her self-esteem is damaged too. She then looks for ways to improve her image and self-esteem.

Ads also present an image of the "ideal" male. Although ads targeting boys and men do not present as narrow an imaginary physical ideal as do ads targeting girls and women, they still present a very limited view of masculinity. For girls and women, body image is emphasized in most ads. For boys and men, the image emphasized is an image of attitude. Boys and young men in ads typically play the part of someone who is cool and confident, independent, even a rebel. Men in ads tend to have an aura of power, physical strength, confidence, dominance, and detachment. The implied message for the viewer is that this is the way to be cool, this is the way a young man should act.

The male image shown in ads almost never includes such traits as sensitivity, vulnerability, or compassion. This may discourage boys and men from displaying these natural and desirable human traits. Ads may thus limit a boy or man's sense of what he can or should be.

The actors in ads tend to be handsome, with clear complexions and hair that is perfectly combed or perfectly windblown. They are also almost always athletic. Physical or even sexual prowess is suggested in scenes of physically challenging, dangerous, or aggressive sports. The self-image of boys and men who do not exhibit these traits for example, who have normal complexions, are not athletic, and don't feel cool and confident may suffer when they watch these ads. Negative feelings about oneself, whether related to appearance or anything else, can be followed by lower self-esteem.

Ads offer to sell a new self-image.

Of course, the ads that injure our self-image and self-esteem don't stop there. They conveniently offer to sell a product that will solve our newly imagined "problem."

Consider this quote from Nancy Shalek, president of an advertising agency: "Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're a loser. Kids are very sensitive to that. If you tell them to buy something, they are resistant. But if you tell them they'll be a dork if they don't, you've got their attention. You open up emotional vulnerabilities and it's very easy to do with kids because they're the most emotionally vulnerable." Another person involved in marketing, Charles Kettering, said that selling new products is about "the organized creation of dissatisfaction."

Many commonly accepted ideas about appearance — for example, that skin should be blemish free and teeth bright white — are not absolute truths. These expectations were artificially created over a period of years by those who wanted to sell certain kinds of products and promoted the idea that we needed those products if our physical appearance was to be acceptable.

Let's take a closer look at this emphasis on appearance.

Ads tend to convey the idea that appearance is all-important. They teach us to be self-conscious about how we look. When we grow up surrounded by ads, intense self-scrutiny may seem normal.

Of course, all cultures have their own ideas about the traits that make a boy or man and a girl or woman attractive. Often these ideas are very, very different than our own. Rather, it is the level of concern with physical appearance that makes modern Americans unique. The intense concern with appearance that is so common in our culture has not been the norm in most cultures. It is an artificial concern that we have acquired from living immersed in a society dominated by commercialism.

Marketing to Teens: Parody Ads

Level(s): Grades 8 - 12

Length: 50 minutes

Overview:

In this lesson students explore what's hidden behind advertising messages by analysing and creating parody advertisements.

Learning Outcomes:

Students demonstrate:

- * an understanding that advertisements don't necessarily tell the whole truth about a product
- * an awareness that advertisements are designed to deliver very specific messages to consumers

Preparation and Materials

Sample parody ads are available from Adbusters, on their Web site at www.adbusters.org. You can print a few of these prior to class or, if your school library or the public library have copies of *Adbusters* magazine, you can flag the pages these ads appear on, and pass them around the class.

You will need:

- * assorted magazines
- * parody ads
- * art supplies (optional)
- * paper for brainstorming answers in groups
- * markers.

The Lesson

Guided Discussion

Parody ads are a fun way to analyse popular advertisements. When you spoof an ad, you take the elements of the ad that give it power, and make them absurd. You turn the message around to show that it is ridiculous or even untrue.

Activity

- * Have students work in small groups.
- * Give each group a parody ad to look at (*and, if possible, a sample of the original ad that it parodies.*)
- * Have students answer the following questions. (*Write these questions on the board or have them ready on flip chart paper.*)

- * What was the first thing you noticed about the ad?
- * What is being made fun of in the ad?
- * What is different or the same compared to the real ad?
- * How did it make you feel?
- * Did the parody ad change how you look at the original advertisers?
- * Tell students they have 5 minutes to answer these questions as a group and to write down their answers in point form. Students will be asked to share their responses with the rest of the class.
- * Give students some real ads, or have them choose real ads to spoof out of the magazines that have been brought to class.
- * In their groups they will create a spoof ad. They may want to make collages by cutting out of magazines, draw or paint their ads, use computer generated images, or you may think of another medium students would like to use.
- * Make sure to leave enough time to have students explain their work to the rest of the class.

Question for discussion: "**Why is humour an effective way to make a point?**"

Evaluation

- * Group parody ad assignment

This lesson has been adapted from *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, a peer education workshop from the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program*. The original workshop is designed for secondary students who want to conduct workshops with other students about advertising and its impact on teenagers. *Adapted with permission.*

For more information about the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program* program or to obtain a copy of *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, e-mail sthompson@mcd.gov.ab.ca

“Corporate-Free Schools”: Hey kids, here's a newsflash. You are being sold. You are being sold every time you walk in the door of your school -- or you soon will be. The marketing business has put a price on your head, to the tune of \$300 billion a year -- that's what experts believe that people your age collectively spend, whether it's money out of your own pocket, or the way you influence your parents' spending habits. So now your compulsory education will come to include compulsory commercials as ad agencies target you in the one place you can't tune out. – **Adbusters**

Why YNN Sucks: Corporate Censorship in the Classroom

Today, my school held the event that most students look forward to all year: Meadowstock - a competition for bands from our school, Meadowvale SS. My band, Bikes, walked onto the stage as the crowd roared. At the beginning of our second song the power was cut on the bass and one guitar amplifier. I assumed this was an accident and continued singing without paying much attention to it. After we finished our set, I walked backstage and was informed by Mrs. Furzer, the staff sponsor of the event, that we had been disqualified and that we were to pack up our equipment and leave the school immediately.

Why were we disqualified? Well, Meadowvale SS is not just any ordinary high school. We are the subjects of a pilot program for Youth News Network. YNN has installed televisions in every classroom in our school and has given us a computer lab in exchange for the right to show us a 12-minute news program with two-and-a-half minutes of commercials every morning. The goal of YNN although the company maintains that it is to keep the students up-to-date on current events is to make money. This goal has sparked a lot of controversy in our school. The tension between the staff, students and administration has continued to rise over the past year. It's affecting our schooling, our extra-curricular activities, and the lives of every student and staff member.

Last year, televisions were installed in all the classrooms. The teachers didn't seem to know what was going on, or if they did they weren't saying anything about it. Shortly after, we were given some very limited information about the YNN project. Mrs. Pedwell, our new principal, gave us the opportunity to ask her questions at the end of an assembly. One student, Owen Jarvis, asked why a profit organization was allowed to infiltrate our school. The crowd applauded Owen's question but Mrs. Pedwell walked away without answering.

After that, very little was said about YNN. One teacher told me confidentially that it was because the teachers were afraid that if they said they didn't like the project, their work environment would become a living hell. Another teacher, who was at Meadowvale until January of this year, told me that many teachers in our school were afraid to challenge the administration. One student last year put out an underground newspaper featuring an anti-YNN article on the front page. The newspapers were confiscated.

This year, when the programs finally started in mid-January, the students were given the opportunity to opt-out of YNN. This meant that instead of watching the program in class, we had to go to a designated room and not watch YNN. The opt-out room is in the library where we are told to sit in carrels. You can't see anything other than yourself and your work, which is useful if you want to study quietly without distractions, or keep a group of students miserable for 15 minutes every day.

The more students who opt-out, the more controversial the project becomes. I went to a meeting at the Peel District School Board office to try to resolve this issue. There I saw a few episodes of

YNN. Because I have been in opt-out, I had not realized that YNN wasn't what it boasted to be. YNN claims to be a news program designed to keep the students up-to-date on current events. The programs I saw were all magazine-style programs like 20/20 and 60 Minutes. They did not deal with the news at all. I spoke to Janet McDougald, who is the trustee for Mississauga Ward One and Seven, and explained the situation to her. She said that she would speak to Mrs. Pedwell about it and get back to us. Still, nothing has changed in opt-out and no one ever got back to us.

It was what happened today at Meadowvale that made me realize just how bad the situation has become. I walked onto the stage wearing a white shirt that read "YNN Stinks!" (Both the president of the SAC and the other staff sponsor, Mr. Pavelich had approved my shirt beforehand.) After we had finished our first song I asked the crowd, "So, what does everyone think of YNN?" The crowd booed. The bassist in my band, Andrew McArthur, quoted the WWF's DX and said "I have two words for that!" An audience member then yelled out "It Sucks!" I replied, "That's what I thought," and we continued our set.

What angers me the most about all this is not that we were disqualified; what angers me is that when Mrs. Furzer disqualified us because I spoke my mind on something controversial, she demonstrated to every student in that room that they will be punished for voicing their opinions. When the other students hear about what happened, the same message will be conveyed to them: school is not the place to have an opinion.

- *David Brand is an 18-year-old high school student.*

How to Detect Bias in the News

At one time or other we all complain about "bias in the news." The fact is, despite the journalistic ideal of "objectivity," every news story is influenced by the attitudes and background of its interviewers, writers, photographers and editors.

Not all bias is deliberate. But you can become a more aware news reader or viewer by watching for the following journalistic techniques that allow bias to "creep in" to the news:

Bias through selection and omission

An editor can express a bias by choosing to use or not to use a specific news item. Within a given story, some details can be ignored, and others included, to give readers or viewers a different opinion about the events reported. If, during a speech, a few people boo, the reaction can be described as "remarks greeted by jeers" or they can be ignored as "a handful of dissidents."

Bias through omission is difficult to detect. Only by comparing news reports from a wide variety of outlets can the form of bias be observed.

Bias through placement

Readers of papers judge first page stories to be more significant than those buried in the back. Television and radio newscasts run the most important stories first and leave the less significant for later. Where a story is placed, therefore, influences what a reader or viewer thinks about its importance.

Bias by headline

Many people read only the headlines of a news item. Most people scan nearly all the headlines in a newspaper. Headlines are the most-read part of a paper. They can summarize as well as present carefully hidden bias and prejudices. They can convey excitement where little exists. They can express approval or condemnation.

Bias by photos, captions and camera angles

Some pictures flatter a person, others make the person look unpleasant. A paper can choose photos to influence opinion about, for example, a candidate for election. On television, the choice of which visual images to display is extremely important. The captions newspapers run below photos are also potential sources of bias.

Bias through use of names and titles

News media often use labels and titles to describe people, places, and events. A person can be called an "ex-con" or be referred to as someone who "served time twenty years ago for a minor offense." Whether a person is described as a "terrorist" or a "freedom fighter" is a clear indication of editorial bias.

Bias through statistics and crowd counts

To make a disaster seem more spectacular (and therefore worthy of reading about), numbers can be inflated. "A hundred injured in air crash" can be the same as "only minor injuries in air crash," reflecting the opinion of the person doing the counting.

Bias by source control

To detect bias, always consider where the news item "comes from." Is the information supplied by a reporter, an eyewitness, police or fire officials, executives, or elected or appointed government officials? Each may have a particular bias that is introduced into the story. Companies and public relations directors supply news outlets with puffpieces through news releases, photos or videos. Often news outlets depend on pseudo-events (demonstrations, sit-ins, ribbon cuttings, speeches and ceremonies) that take place mainly to gain news coverage.

Word choice and tone

Showing the same kind of bias that appears in headlines, the use of positive or negative words or words with a particular connotation can strongly influence the reader or viewer.

Killer Games - Handout

By Chris Nashawaty

Kids Extra: Entertainment Weekly, March 11, 1994

Reprinted with permission.

"Everyone's got an opinion about violent video games"

Kids love them. Critics, from senior members of Congress to newspaper editorialists, see them as Public Enemy No. 1. Some people say they send the wrong message; others think they're more silly than scary. Parents, no doubt, have been left thoroughly confused by the controversy. So *Kids Extra* decided to evaluate the 10 video games that have been singled out as the most violent. Here, we settle the debate.

1. Night Trap (*Sega CD*)

* **Violent Content:** Ninja-like vampires stalk scantily clad coeds. Victims get drilled through the neck with a power tool.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** This full-motion video game is more lifelike than traditional animated fare; it plays like a movie and features human actors (including Dana Plato from *Different Strokes*).

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** This is intended to be a campy B-movie in video-game form, but frightened kids won't get the joke. Sega, which appropriately rated it -17 (not for players under 17) for its graphic violence and mature story line, announced in January that it would halt production of the game until the violence is scaled down and an industry-wide rating system is in place, but it will not pull games from the shelves.

2. Mortal Kombat (*Super Nintendo Entertainment System and Sega*)

* **Violent Content:** The most infamous title in the hand-to-hand fighting category is bloodless on SNES; the Sega version has an unpublished, but widely known, "secret" blood code that players can punch in. This allows them to rip out their opponent's still-beating heart, decapitate him, or pull out his bloody spinal cord.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** Very: both versions use live-action video animation.

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** If your children don't have the blood code, *Mortal Kombat* is your basic fighting game. But unless they live under a rock, your kids have the code.

3. Lethal Enforcers (*Sega CD*)

* **Violent Content** Although the game has little blood, it *is* violent and comes with a large pistol called the Justifier that players fire at the screen.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** Yes; the game uses photo-realist images of actors pointing guns.

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Definitely. Sega has rated the game a justly deserved -17. *Lethal Enforcers* puts a gun in kids' hands and teaches them to shoot first and ask questions later.

4. Ground Zero Texas (*Sega CD*)

* **Violent Content:** This shooting game has players blowing away human-looking aliens in a Texas border town.

* **Is the Violence Realistic?** Full-motion video footage makes this the most true-to-life game on the list.

* **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** There's no blood, but kids *are* shooting at real people and watching them die.

5. Splatterhouse-3 (*Sega*)

- * **Violent Content:** A hockey-masked man trying to save his family wields knives and cleavers against flesh-eating ghouls; gallons of blood.
- * **Is the Violence Realistic?** Typical game animation, with harrowing graphics of the wife fearing for her life.
- * **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Worse. Although the blood is cartoonish, the slasher story could be troubling for younger kids.

6. Prize Fighter (*Sega CD*)

- * **Violent Content:** This boxing video game doesn't show blood or actual violence – except boxing, of course.
- * **Is the Violence Realistic?** The game's selling point (picture-perfect graphics) is the very thing that makes it problematic for children under 13.
- * **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** The best litmus test: Do you let kids watch boxing on TV?

7. Street Fighter II (*SNES and Sega*)

- * **Violent Content:** The grand-daddy of hand-to-hand fighting games features flying head-buttings, torching, and electrocutions.
- * **Is the Violence Realistic?** Not especially.
- * **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Not really. For kids ages 13 and up, the creativity and challenge of Street Fighter II make it the best of its class.

8. Terminator 2: The Arcade Game (*Sega*)

- * **Violent Content:** A very standard shooting-game tie-in to a very violent film. The problem here is the Menacer – a shoulder-mounted gun used in place of a joystick.
- * **Is the Violence Realistic?** No; graphics are run-of-the-mill.
- * **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Worse. Learning how to fire the Menacer isn't a skill a child needs to develop. It is possible, though, to play T2 with the joystick instead of the gun.

9. Mutant League Football (*Sega*)

- * **Violent Content:** The field is dotted with land mines, players get to kill the referee after a bad call, and deaths are listed as a halftime statistic.
- * **Is the Violence Realistic?** Average animation, with a cartoonishly high body count.
- * **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Older kids may find it a funny twist on the basic sports game, but it may be too much for the younger children.

10. Clayfighter (*SNES*)

- * **Violent Content:** Not much in this toned-down fighting game.
- * **Is the Violence Realistic?** Nah – the warriors are wacky digitized characters (Bad Mr. Frosty, Blue Suede Goo).
- * **Is It as Bad as It Sounds?** Far from it. Although still a brawling game, this clever newcomer is a more suitable alternative for parents who don't want to expose their kids to too much violence.

Killer Games

Level: Grades 7 to 9

Overview

To print only this page, use the "printable version" link at the top of the page.

In this lesson, students explore the issues surrounding violent video games. The lesson begins with a review of the Entertainment Software Rating Board's rating codes for video and computer games, and a class discussion about the appropriateness of these ratings for children and teens. Using the article "Killer Games" as a starting point, students discuss the elements that contribute to video game violence; at what age young people should be in order to play violent games; and the possible effects of violent video games on young people. As a summative activity, students write a persuasive essay (or have a class debate) refuting or affirming the idea that violent video games promote violence among youth.

Learning Outcomes

Students demonstrate:

- * an understanding of the debate surrounding the influence of violent video games on young people
- * an awareness of the different types of violence found in some video games
- * a knowledge of the classification systems that govern video and computer games
- * an understanding of their own attitudes towards violent video games

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the following student handouts:

- * [Killer Games](#)
- * [Video and Computer Games Rating Systems](#)
- * [Video Games and TV Teach Kids to Kill](#)

Procedure

In Canada, most video game manufacturers have adopted the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) system. This rating system categorizes games according to levels of nudity, sex, violence and offensive language. It's important to note that although most games are rated, nothing legally prevents a young person under the age of 17 from legally purchasing an adult or mature game – many retailers routinely rent and sell adult-rated games to minors. In an informal survey conducted by an Ottawa newspaper in July 2000, two fourteen-year-old boys were able to rent violent M-rated games from every video store they tried, with no questions asked.

- * Have students read the ESRB ratings on the [Video and Computer Games Rating Systems](#) handout.
- * Review the criteria of each rating.
- * Do students agree or disagree with the rating criteria?
- * What changes would they make?
- * Have any students played mature or adult games?
- * Did they consider themselves mature enough to play these games? Under what conditions (of age, maturity, or circumstances) would they consider it *inappropriate* for someone to play this game?
- * Distribute the article [Killer Games](#) to students, and give them time to read through it.
- * This article was written in 1994. What video games would be on this list today?

- * In this article, what criteria have been considered to determine whether or not a game is violent?
- * How do these criteria compare to the ESRB ratings?
- * Ask students whether, based on the information they've been given, they agree with the author's conclusions regarding each game. Why or why not?
- * The author – and many child development experts – stress the importance of the concept of “realistic violence” as a measure of whether a video game is suitable for young people.
- * How important is realism in the games you play?
- * Put yourself in the place of a child development expert. What might be some of your concerns about kids playing these games?
- * What effect might realistic violent games have on young children?
- * In addition to the ratings, there is the additional problem of kids under 17 obtaining mature and adult games. How would you solve this problem?

Activity

- * Distribute the article [Video Games and TV Teach Kids to Kill](#) to students.
- * Have students respond to the article by writing a persuasive research essay (about five paragraphs long) in which they agree or disagree with the author's claims.
- * **OR** Have students organize a class debate on the topic: “Violent video games negatively affect children and teens.”

Evaluation

- * Persuasive essay, or class debate.
-

Video Games and TV Teach Kids to Kill, *National Post*, May 11, 1999

May 11, 1999 - Former psychology professor David Grossman is forcing media companies to be accountable for the messages they are spreading to children.

Grossman compares soldiers in training to children watching T.V. Both, he says, are "taught to reject old values and accept that the world is a dark and dangerous place."

Grossman targets video games in particular, which he says are increasingly sophisticated and often attempt to simulate military warfare. Combined with overwhelmingly violent television shows, the result is a desensitizing of viewers - particularly children.

Grossman makes further comparisons between exposure to media violence and cigarette smoking. As he puts it, "The television industry has gained its market share through an addictive and toxic ingredient."

Grossman says he looks forward to the day when media companies are subject to the same criticism as tobacco companies. He hopes that preventative measures will be put in place to ensure that incidents of youth violence, such as the recent one in Littleton, Colorado, do not occur.

As Grossman says, "We're not just teaching kids to kill. We're teaching them to like it."

Grossman has written two books examining the link between media violence and violence in real life - his first, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, was a best-seller when released in 1995. His second book, *Teaching Kids to Kill*, will be published in the latter part of 1999.