



## MEDIA LITERACY: ANALYZING ADVERTISING — HOW ARE FAMILIES PORTRAYED?

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**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 3 – 5

**LENGTH OF TIME:** One session of 60 minutes  
or two sessions of 30 –35 minutes

### GOALS

- To give students media literacy skills around depictions of families in the media.
- To help students develop explicit strategies for looking at and interpreting images used in advertisements.



### OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify messages that advertisements send about families.
- Students will identify media bias and stereotypes around family structures that are represented.
- Students will gain critical thinking skills about the impact on families that are not represented in the media.
- Students will discuss why it is important for advertisers to represent diverse families free of bias.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions one-on-one, in groups and teacher led with diverse partners. (Also 4.1 and 5.1)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text. (Also 4.7 and 5.7)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (Also 3.2 and 4.2)

### EDUCATORS' NOTES

As you prepare for this lesson, consider the composition of your classroom and the different kinds of families represented in it. It is our job as teachers to both mirror students' lives to them so they can develop healthy identities, as well as provide students windows into other lives so that they become global citizens that respect differences. It is important to teach your students about many different kinds of families, whether those particular families are present in your school or not.

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## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Chart paper
- Sample advertisements with images of families (Some examples are attached below; you also could use ads from websites or magazines that your students use in school.)

## **DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO ANALYZE ADS**

- Talk with your students about the concept that advertisements market their messages via both the words and images they use. Explain that in this activity, students will develop the skills to become critical viewers of advertisements. This is called media literacy — just as we learn to read books and become literate, we also learn how to read and interpret images and text in advertisements, on the web and in magazines.
- Most ads use images to either back up or even carry the main message of the ad — whether they are on TV, the internet, a billboard or in print.
- Tell students, “We are going to look at some ads to examine if they are inclusive of all types of families, if they contain biases or stereotypes or if some kinds of families are left out.” (See student definitions below.)
- Begin by showing your students one example ad. (See below for an old car ad from the 1950s. The old ad may help students see the stereotypes more easily.)
- Give students a minute to look at the ad and then discuss it using these anchor questions. Ask them:
  - What most catches your eye in the ad—is it the people, the car or the setting?
  - What kind of family do we see?
  - What message are the advertisers trying to send?
  - Who are they trying to reach with their message? Who is their target audience?
- After practicing with the car ad, work with your class to come up with a guide to critically view images in advertisements. Write this on large chart paper or on the board so that it can then be displayed and students can refer back to it.
- For example:
  - What is the purpose of the advertisement? What is it selling?
  - Who are they trying to sell the product to—who is their target market?
  - What kinds of messages are the advertisements giving about families?
  - What kind of people do we see in the ad?
  - What stereotypes or bias do you see? Does the ad use assumptions about groups of people (stereotypes) to make their point?
  - How are the families in these advertisements similar to and different from the families you know—your own or the families in your school or community?
  - What families are missing in this ad?
  - How would you change this ad to sell the product to all different kinds of families?

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## USING THE STRATEGIES TO ANALYZE AD IMAGES

- Sort your students into pairs or small groups and have them use the class-generated strategies to closely examine the advertisements with different images of families.
  - Ask students to imagine how they and others might be influenced by advertisements differently if they featured more diverse, realistic representations of families — if they looked like all the families in the world.
  - Encourage them to consider which aspects of their identities might be missing from advertisements.
  - How does this affect them—positively, negatively or not at all?

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- Bring the class back together to share what the small groups/pairs discussed.
  - Use the guide that your class developed to lead this discussion.
  - What kinds of messages about family do the ads show?
  - Are the families shown in current car ads that much different from the one shown in the 1950's car ad?
  - What are some types of families that are missing from these ads?
  - How does this affect you?
  - How would you change these ads to sell the product to all different kinds of families?

## EXTENSIONS

- Have students design their own car ad that includes all different kinds of families that they did not see in their research. Remind your students not to use stereotypes in their ads. You may want to put students in teams for this assignment.
- Have students write a persuasive essay about their findings and how they feel representations of families affect their feelings about themselves, their families and the people around them.
- Have your students look at ads for Subaru that were among the first to specifically target lesbians as potential consumers in the 1990s.
  - Talk about a niche market (concentrating marketing efforts on a small but specific and well-defined segment of the population.)
  - What are some of the clues in these ads that Subaru is trying to appeal to lesbians? (Martina Navratilova, a champion, out tennis player; rainbow flag on car; taglines in the ads referring to coming out or being comfortable with one's sexual orientation)
  - What are some of the stereotypes they rely on? (Lesbians like active outdoor sports, lesbians love *Xena*, *Warrior Princess*)
  - Background information for teacher: [How an Ad Campaign Made Lesbians Fall in Love with Subaru.](#)

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## **ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

- Are students actively participating in the group discussion?
- During the small group discussions, listen in to see if students are using the strategies developed in class to analyze the ads.
- Did students understand how images are used to market products?
- Did students see and understand the stereotypes in the ads?

## **DIVERSE AND UP-TO-DATE RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS**

[Children's Books to Embrace Family Diversity](#)

[Lesson Plans to Embrace Family Diversity](#)

[Embracing Family Diversity School Resources](#)

[Family Diversity Vocabulary](#)

[Professional Development Training](#)

Credit: Adapted by Katharine Pillsbury based on lessons in Teaching Tolerance's *Reading Ads with a Social Justice Lens*. <http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/reading-ads-social-justice-lens>



## EXAMPLE OF A 1950's CAR AD



### *America's "best deal" in an all around family car!*

A beautiful Studebaker sedan...an all-purpose cargo carrier...all in one!  
Brilliant Studebaker power...your choice of two great engines...a V-8 or a 6!  
Gas economy team-mate of the '55 Mobilgas Run winner!  
Priced right down with the lowest!



**Y**OU'RE driving something really smart when you're the proud owner of this distinctive Studebaker station wagon.

Easy to park—easy to handle—mothers with active youngsters love it for shopping and other errands. Dads find it just right for business use and vacationing. It's a handsome 6-passenger sedan with plenty

of cargo space normally—and 6 full feet of load capacity when you fold up the rear seat.

See your Studebaker dealer for a try-out drive right away . . . and remember these colorful Studebaker station wagons are priced right down with the lowest. "Best deals" anywhere!

See Studebaker-Packard's TV Reader's Digest—a weekly feature on ABC television network

## STUDEBAKER

STUDEBAKER DIVISION OF STUDEBAKER-PACKARD CORPORATION... ONE OF THE 4 MAJOR FULL-LINE PRODUCERS OF CARS AND TRUCKS



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## EXAMPLES OF CURRENT CAR ADS WITH IMAGES OF FAMILIES







Images: Hyundai (1), Chevrolet (2, 3 & 5), Buick (6) and Subaru (7-11)



## SUBARU ADS – EXAMPLE OF TARGETED MARKETING



Martina Navratilova  
9-Time Wimbledon Champion  
Novelist  
Human Rocket Launcher  
Subaru Driver

Subaru is a proud sponsor of women who kick butt.

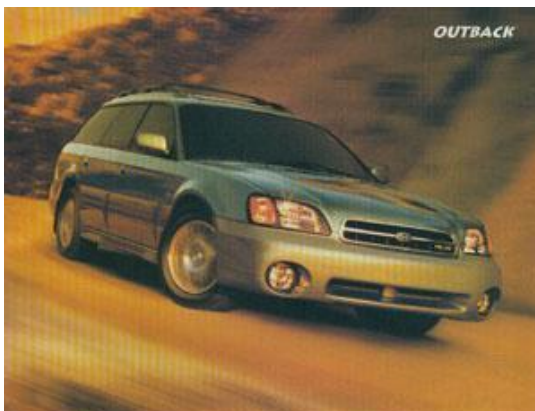
www.subaru.com

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The Beauty of All-Wheel Drive



Entirely comfortable  
with its orientation.


*The New Subaru Forester*

**OUTBACK**

**GET OUT.  
AND STAY OUT.**


Take your partner. Take your friends. Or just take yourself. Your new Subaru will get you out and doing the things you like best. Choose your passion. With it be the comfort and versatility of the unique Forester? The ruggedness of the Outback, the world's first sport-utility wagon? Or the all-out driving excitement of the brand-new, turbocharged, 227-horsepower Impreza WRX? Each features our popular full-time All-Wheel Driving System for maximum traction and performance. And one is sure to fit the way you live. To test drive one of our family of cars, stop by your nearest Subaru dealer, call 1-800-WHENT-AROUND or visit our Website at [www.subaru.com](http://www.subaru.com).

**Rainbow** 

Subaru supports the community as a sponsor of the Rainbow Program and the leading sponsor of the Rainbow Endowment, which uses Rainbow Card has raised more than \$1 million for health, education and cultural issues. For more information or to learn, call 1-800-88-RAINBOW.

**SUBARU**  
The Beauty of All-Wheel Drive


**It's Not a Choice.  
It's the Way We're Built.**



Subaru All-Wheel Driving System.  
In every car we make.

Maximum traction, agility and safety. Experience the performance of the Subaru All-Wheel Driving System in the versatility of the Outback, the ruggedness of the Forester and the get-up-and-go of the Impreza. ©2001 Subaru. To test drive one of our family of cars, stop by your nearest Subaru dealer.

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