



The Truth About Commercials

Writing a persuasive advertisement

Grades: 5-6

Subjects: English, English As A Second Language, Media Literacy

Overview

Students will explore the language of persuasive advertising. They will analyze and identify exaggerations and embellishments used in advertising. Students will use these techniques to write their own scripts for a TV commercial. In the final class, student will use new adjectives and their writing skills to produce an animated commercial. The final commercials will be published on the Internet.

Objectives – at the end of these lessons students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts
- be aware of different types of advertising
- understand the difference between the news and advertising
- learn about exaggeration and embellishment in advertising
- create a commercial for a specific audience
- produce and publish animated commercials on the Zimmer Twins website
- students use peer feedback to improve their work

Suggested Time Allowance: 3x – 60 minutes

Resources and Materials:

paper, pencils, examples of newspaper and magazine advertisements, television commercials, school notebooks or teacher prepared worksheet for brainstorming about commercials, computer lab with internet access and the latest Flash plug-in, 2 prepared Zimmer Twins movies (optional), magazines for researching advertising words and phrases, cut up paper with products or audience written on each,

Lesson one

Warm Up Activity What is advertising?

Where can you find or see advertising? (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards)
Ask students to describe their favorite advertisement or television commercial. Lead a discussion on why these commercials made an impression on them and if it would be effective in persuading them to purchase the product. What are some techniques that are used in these commercials (humor, testimonial, famous actor endorsement, product claims about how this will change your life)? Also discuss the intended audience of the advertisements and commercials and discuss the strategies used by advertisers to reach their intended audience. How do companies sell to a teenager? An adult? A child? How is advertising different from the news? Are commercials always truthful? Or, do they exaggerate the truth? Teacher shows the class several examples of each (newspaper ad, television ad, commercial, billboard etc...)

Lead a discussion on the intended audience and the perceived effectiveness of these ads.

Setting the Stage:

Teacher explains that the class will create their own commercials that exaggerate the truth.

Teacher shows the class 2 examples of an animated commercial created with the Zimmer Twins editor tool. One is absolutely truthful, and one is full of adjectives that exaggerate the product. Students guess which is which and discuss which commercial is more likely to persuade them to buy the product and why.

Prewriting Activity

Research Vocabulary. Go through magazines to research phrases and adjectives that make your product stand out. Look at 3 ads. Teacher writes these questions on the board, and students answer questions in groups on a sheet of paper: Who is the audience? What is the product? What do they claim about the product? What descriptive words do they use to sell this product? Describe what you would do differently? Why should you buy this product over another?

Activity. Discuss the homework activity. Students work in pairs. The first student picks a piece of paper out of a bag that describes the product they will sell (sneakers, candy bar, rubber ball, calculators). In another bag, the other student picks out a piece of paper that describes their audience (under 10, teenager, adult, senior citizen). Teacher uses props if possible.

Students will plan a commercial to sell their product. Students use the activity from the first exercise to make a chart in their notebooks (or teacher supplies worksheet) about how they will sell this new product. In lesson one, each pair will plan one commercial that tells the truth about their product.

After five minutes of group brainstorming, the teacher explains that students will use the backside of the handout to plan their commercial. The commercial should have an introduction, a middle section, and a conclusion. Students use this structure to create their commercials.

Teacher stops the class midway through class to talk about adjectives. Review what they are? Why use them? What are some adjectives we could use in our commercials? Teacher writes them on the board. Students continue to work on their commercials.

Wrap Up:

How did your group brainstorm for ideas? Did the chart you created help? Did you use ideas that you have already seen on TV to help write your commercial?

Optional Homework Activity

Students are to watch TV or read a newspaper or magazine and identify one commercial or advertisement that grabbed their attention. Students are to describe the commercial, identify the intended audience and describe what makes it an effective commercial or advertisement.

Lesson two: (in the computer lab)

Warm Up Activity: Producing and publishing your commercial. Each pair shares one computer. Students watch the teacher's videos again. Teacher explains how to use the Zimmer Twins website (See Teacher Instructions in the download section for more information).

Activity. Teacher reviews the chart which students made in the previous lesson. She explains to students that although the commercial should be truthful, it still needs to be interesting. Class works in pairs on creating a truthful commercial. Teacher circulates, answers questions, and monitors progress. After ten minutes, the teacher explains the second part of the activity. Once students have finished the first commercial they will make a second one. The second commercial will embellish or exaggerate things about the product in order to sell it. Base this commercial on the chart created last class. The second commercial will be the same as the first, but it will make exaggerated claims..

Review. Halfway through class, Teacher reviews adjectives that were discussed during the last class. Teacher tells the class they should now be finishing the first commercials, and creating a second commercial. When commercials are finished, or close to being finished, meet as a class

and review the purpose of the assignment and what you are looking for in each commercial. Match up the pairs of students to share their commercials with each other. Without being told which commercial is truthful and which is exaggerated, the students should be able to identify which is which when viewing them. Students are to provide feedback on the commercials they view. Students then use the feedback to improve their work.

Wrap Up. Teacher stops the class, and reminds students to save their work. Teacher chooses several commercials to show the class, and discusses the experience. Questions: Do you think that it is right to exaggerate or be untruthful in commercials? How would you be honest AND make something interesting in a commercial? How will this experience make you think about things you see advertised on TV? What will you think when you see a commercial after making your own? Class discussion.

Evaluation.

Did the pairs complete two complete commercials for the proper product?

Did the students demonstrate proofreading skills, spell correctly and use proper punctuation and capitalization?

Did the students display active listening and cooperation skills in their group work?

Did the students use a variety of adjectives in their script?

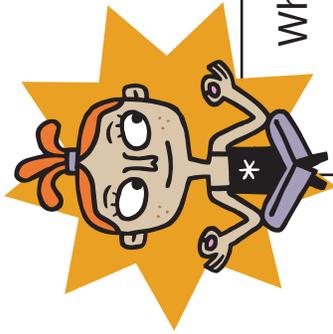
Did students provide constructive feedback to their peers?

If time permits, let students watch some of their classmates' commercials.

Additional Resources

Words Used In The Zimmer Twins Story Editor

Talking actions	Moving actions	More moving actions
agrees angry bored confused disagrees dizzy examines happy impressed plots plugs ears relieved scared seeks surprised suspicious tease	announces lectures reads aloud reports sings talks thinks whispers yells celebrates chases crowd surfs dances drops faints falls finds flies floats gives hides hugs lands	laughs leaves levitates meets plays rides rocks runs sits sneaks sleeps stands steals struts wakes walks



My Commercial Ideas

Names: _____

What is the product?

Who is your audience?

What descriptive words are used to sell this product?

What do you claim about the product?

What makes this ad stand out?
Why would your audience buy it?

Is this ad (circle one):

TRUTHFUL

EXAGGERATED

