

What Did They Say?

John F. Neumann, WVPT

Overview

Topic: Communications, Media Literacy. The purpose of the lesson is to give students insight as to how mass media messages are constructed to persuade them to a way of thinking. This lesson will give them the critical thinking skills needed for analyzing mass media messages.

Length of Lesson

Three 90-minute sessions

Media Components

Newscast from the Past #2, June 15, 1215
Advertising and Marketing #2, Secrets of Selling ☐
Advertising and Marketing #4, Why Ads Work: ☐
 The Power of Self-Deception
 VCR and television

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- analyze mass media messages
- identify the persuasive techniques being used
- describe the possible cause-effect relationships between mass media coverage and public opinion trends
- evaluate advertisements, editorials, and feature stories for relationships between intent and factual content.

(This lesson addresses Va. SOL English Research 8.6; National Standards Theatre Arts IV.5)

Materials

- overhead slides of time vs. wealth graphs (attached—convert to red and green)
- 2 different copies of the same newspaper story (one with and one without graphic)
- scratch paper, as needed.

Teacher Preparation

- Make two identical time vs. wealth charts, one green and one red. (attached)
- Find an illustrated newspaper story. Remove the picture from one copy and leave it in the second. Duplicate as necessary so that each group of 3-5 children receive one or the other.
- Preview and cue the three videotapes.

Introductory Activity

Use a clip from *Newscast from the Past* to get students interested in today's topic. Ask them to pay close attention to this video clip and to think about what ideas come out of it. If needed, hand out scratch paper. Show the first story from *Newscast from the Past* #2. Have students write on their paper one or two ideas that they got from the clip. Collect the papers and go over the responses with the class. Ask why, if everyone saw the same story, not everyone came away with the same idea. Break the class up into groups of 3-5 students.



Focus for Media Interaction

SAY: Evidently, different audience members approach the viewing of television differently, but also the creators of the programming have a specific idea in mind when they create the program. Over the next few days, we're going to be exploring how media creators influence us, even persuade us to think a certain way. We'll be viewing a few pieces of video and we'll be looking at some print pieces. Your job is to develop some ways to analyze the messages that have been constructed for the general public and try to figure out what the underlying messages really are. While we will be using information taken from an advertising class many of the ideas used there carry over to news and even entertainment.

Pause vs. Stop

When using a video interactively with students, teachers need to decide when to use **PAUSE** and when to use **STOP**. **PAUSE** the video when the anticipated discussion or activity will take less than two minutes. **STOP** for longer periods. Pausing for too long at one time can cause video heads on the VCR to become clogged which may require cleaning to correct.

Time Cues

To synchronize your VCR with the time cues that are included with this lesson, zero/reset your time counter at the very beginning of the program, before the introduction and titles. Time cues are expressed as "minutes:seconds;" for example, 3:15 means three minutes and fifteen seconds.

Learning Activities

1. FOCUS: We will start by seeing what role appearance plays by viewing this segment. **PLAY** *Advertising and Marketing* #2 starting at 5:10, which is the shot of bananas while the announcer, says, "produce is a stage." **STOP** at 5:36 when the apples are showing and the announcer says "shiny

apples say buy me." **FOLLOW UP:** Demonstrate the impact of appearance by showing the two graphs. Explain that they show the anticipated results of investment plans. Show the red one first, then the green one. Ask which plan the students would like to follow. Next place the transparencies on top of each other and show they are identical with the only difference being the colors. Have students try to explain why they made the choice that they did. Guide the discussion by asking where the color green is commonly used (go signal in traffic lights, money) and where the color red is commonly used (stop signal in traffic lights, stop signs, warning signs). Explain that this red – stop, green – go, conditioning is often used by message creators to get you to choose their preferred plan over another.

2. Have half of the groups face away from the television. **FOCUS:** In this segment we will see a debate on people's rights. After the segment, each side of the class will decide who won the debate and why. **FAST FORWARD** *Newscast from the Past* to 10:08 right after the calendar. **STOP** at 11:05 when the debate ends with the male telling the female "she needs a husband." **FOLLOW UP:** Have the groups get together and pick the winner of the debate. They will also need to justify their selection. Have each group report the results to the class. Ask the class why they think there were differences between them as to the winners? Was there a difference between those that saw the video and those that only heard it?

3. FOCUS: Emotion may have had a part in your decision. Let's see what these folks can tell us about emotion and selling. **PLAY** the second video, *Advertising and Marketing* #4, starting at 13:57 when the male on the left says, "science doesn't sell." **STOP** at 14:09 when the center male says "people react more to emotion than facts."

FOLLOW UP: Ask each group to get back together and list the emotions that they picked up during the debate. Compare lists. What is the difference between what the audio group picked up and what the audio/visual group noticed? Note that one of the first televised debates took place between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy when they were running against each other for president. On television, John Kennedy looked rested, buoyant, and sharp. Richard

Nixon, on the other hand, had a “five o’clock shadow” and appeared tired. Since this was early television, the debate was also carried on radio. Polls taken after the debate showed John Kennedy the winner among television viewers, but Richard Nixon was the chosen winner among radio listeners. Why do you think that was possible? How is this similar to the experiment we tried here in class?

4. FOCUS: Watch these two segments and think of how these ideas might show up in news stories.

PLAY the third video, *Advertising and Marketing* #2 at 1:04 when the newspaper ads show up. **STOP** at 1:39 when the window signs stop. **FAST FORWARD** to 15:10 right after the coupons, since the section in between is irrelevant to this lesson.

PLAY the segment on how displays are designed to influence shoppers. **STOP** at 15:30 when the camera is on the cookie display and the announcer says “without any price reduction.” **FOLLOW UP:** Discuss with the class what the news equivalent to these tactics are (headlines and graphics). Have the groups look at the newspaper story, some get the copy with the pictures and some without. Again, have the groups come up with their list of primary ideas, compare them, and discuss the reasons for any differences.

Culminating Activities

Each group of students is to research a topic and prepare a news story to convey the results of their research. They may use any of the forms of mass media that they wish, print, audio, or video. They will prepare a list of ideas that could possibly be gleaned from their story and highlight the ones they have chosen to emphasize. They will turn the list in to the teacher.

Assessment

The stories are now shown to the other students. These students are also given the list of possible ideas that each story contains. After seeing the story, the students are to mark the major idea on their list. How well the students did will be mea-

sured by how much of their audience receive the intended message.

Community Connections

1. Invite local radio and television newscasters and local newspaper reporters to the class to discuss how they write headlines and pick graphics for their stories.
2. Ask advertising designers to come and talk about their work.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

In any curricular area instead of assigning a traditional written report have the students do a mass media presentation as outlined in the culminating activities.

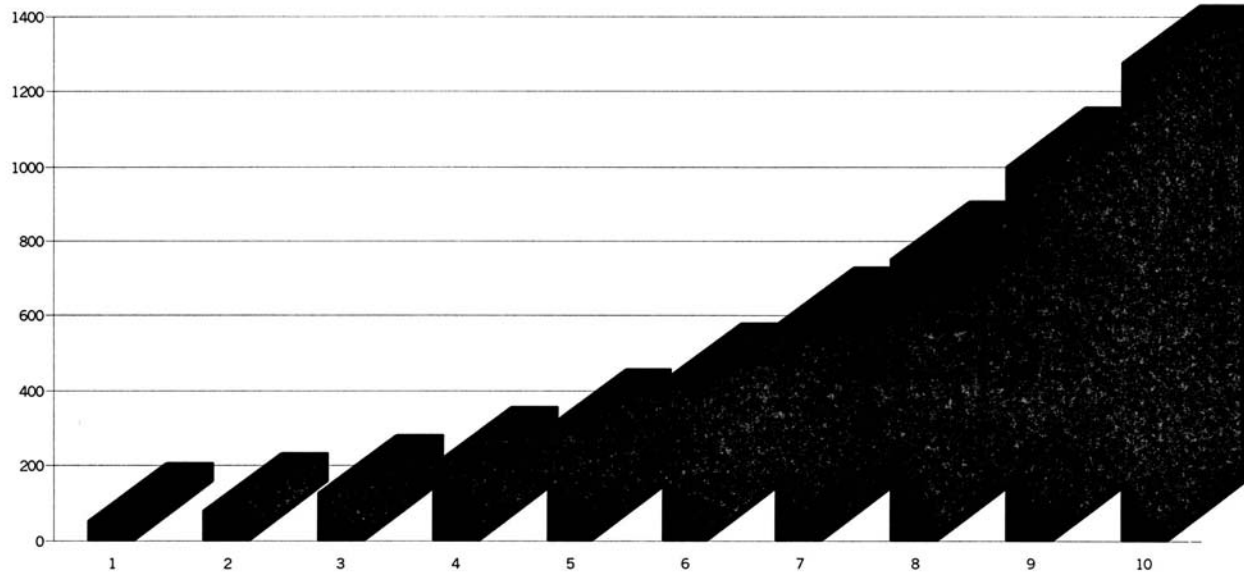
About the Author

John Neumann

John Neumann joined the WVPT as staff Education Specialist in fall 2001. He comes to education from a career in the military where in the Naval Education and Training Command and earned the designation of a Training and Education Sub-specialist. On moving to the Valley he spent a year as a substitute teacher before accepting a position as a technology teacher at Montevideo Middle School in Rockingham County. As an Education Specialist, John will be visiting with school media specialists and conducting workshops that are designed to aid teachers with integrating technology resources into lesson plans.

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Make two of these charts, one red and one green.