

# MEDIA LITERACY

## Related Subjects:

Economics  
Language Arts

## The Art of Advertising

## Objectives:

- Understand the basic principles of advertising
- Analyze how advertising affects Hip-Hop
- Use media literacy skills to deconstruct an advertisement

## Materials:

- Ads from popular magazines
- Key Concepts of Media Literacy (handout)
- Who's the Target? (handout)
- "Consumers Viewed Like Hooligans and Rioters" article (download from Web site)
- "Brandwashed" article (download from Web site)

## Resources:

*Merchants of Cool*, a PBS documentary about the creation of youth culture  
(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/>)

## Introduction:

This lesson is intended to have students examine the nature of advertising — from the targeting of teens to the elusive search for “cool” to the use of Hip-Hop to sell products. The aim is to have students understand the basic nature of advertising, as well as analyze some of the techniques and tools that advertisers use to reach their desired audience, particularly young consumers. The idea is not to bash the media and the advertising industry, but to peel back their layers and better understand them.

## Activity:

Have students read the two articles and discuss. In the Consumers article, an advertising executive talks about a “herd mentality” — what does he mean by this? Students should also explore how this attitude affects consumers. Then pass out the Key Concepts handout and go over the main points. Break students into small groups and hand out one advertisement per group. Have each group complete the Who's the Target? handout for their ad. Some additional discussion questions for students can include:

- What techniques do advertisers use to reach their intended audience?
- Are these techniques tailored to a youth audience? If so, how?
- Do you think that your buying habits and those of your friends are influenced by advertisements? If so, in what ways?
- If not, what influences you to buy the things you do?
- How do you feel about Hip-Hop being used to sell products?

## Production activity:

Have your students stay in their small groups. Each group of students will be responsible for creating a new product, from conception to marketing. (If you have enough time, have students create and produce an actual advertisement — either print or video.) Students should first start with a brainstorming session to discuss what would make a successful new product. Some of the questions they may want to consider include:

- What are some successful advertising campaigns, and what makes them effective?
- Where is there an opportunity in the market? In other words, what do people need that isn't currently being produced? (Or, taking a page out of an advertiser's book, can you manufacture or create a need?)
- Who would the product be geared towards? Youth? Women? Business travelers?
- How would the product be marketed?
- What would the advertising campaign look like?
- Which specific ad techniques would be used?
- Which media outlets would be most effective in getting the word out about the product?