

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Power of Advertising

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Advertisements are inescapable. They show up in between the shows people watch, in the magazines they read, even on the buildings they walk past. In this informational text, Shelby Ostergaard discusses the advertising industry, as well as the influence it has over people. As you read, take notes on what goes into creating an advertisement and what the goal of an advertisement is.

What is Advertising?

- [1] Advertising is a way of communicating with people about a product or service. Usually, it gives people information about the product or service and to explain why they should buy it. Sometimes it communicates with people about why they should continue buying. In the case of advertising, communicating doesn't simply mean talking to them. Advertisements are communicated to people using every possible method, including television, radio, magazines, and websites. An advertisement can be anything from the commercial before a YouTube video to the small banner on the side of a webpage. These days, there are so many ways of communicating that people are nearly always being exposed to advertisements, from products endorsed by Kendall Jenner on Instagram to the lawyer's face on the bus bench.



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Who is Behind Advertising?

Worldwide, advertising is a billion-dollar industry, with nearly \$500 billion spent in 2016. That industry includes the companies that place advertisements, the agencies that create them, and the media that runs them.

A really good advertisement isn't easy to make. Companies sometimes hire agencies to solve this problem for them. Advertising agencies write, design, and create the advertisement. Today, advertising agencies create all sorts of ads that go on TV, in magazines, across the bottom of mobile apps, or on the sides of buses. But not all companies use advertising agencies. Some hire creative people to work at the company and write, design, and create ads just for that company, year-round.

Once an advertisement is produced, it will be passed on to a media company who will then run the advertisement. When a media company runs an ad, it ensures that viewers have to see the advertisement. That is why magazines have full-color photos of new bags to purchase and the Super Bowl plays commercials in the middle of the game. In fact, the Super Bowl is so widely watched that companies often pay more than a million dollars for the ad slot and the commercials are anticipated all year long. For most media companies, advertisements are the main way the company makes money. If a television show can prove that 1 million people will be watching, companies will pay a lot of money for those people to have to watch their ad as well. Without advertising, we likely would not have television shows, magazines, newspapers, or internet content that we could watch or read without paying a subscription fee.

When Did Advertising Emerge?¹

- [5] Before the early 1900s, advertisements were more informative than persuasive, relegated to tiny print at the backs of magazines. It was generally thought that if a picture was trying *too* hard to sell you a product, the product was probably hogwash — absurd, foolish, and unlikely to work. The ads were also incredibly localized. Philadelphia newspapers ran ads in the back of the paper, informing consumers about Philadelphia stores and products.

However, as the industrial revolution² took hold of the country, suddenly there were more standardized products on the market. National advertising became much more popular. It started to become almost necessary for companies to advertise, in order to sell enough products to survive. Advertising agencies moved from selling small space in the backs of local papers to designing increasingly creative ads. As consumer spending ramped up³ throughout the 1920s, advertising followed suit. In the 1960s, advertisements became much more creative and started to look more like what we would see today. The advertising industry became more important and started to attract writers, artists, and musicians.

As advertising became more popular and artistic, it also became more pervasive.⁴ By the 1970s and 80s, advertising was everywhere.

How and Why Does Advertising Work?

Advertising works by connecting products to positive feelings or experiences. Through the power of advertising, a scented candle becomes synonymous⁵ with the feeling of warmth, coziness, and being at home. Candy canes are associated with Christmas. Steak and lobster dinners are instantly linked to luxury and to feeling powerful. Vegas brings up thoughts of fun. And a diamond ring, rare and valuable, becomes an integral part of getting engaged.

But a really good advertisement wants to do even more. It wants consumers to remember it and to connect the brand to that advertisement. That is why most people can name more breakfast cereal mascots than US presidents. And it's why advertisers create slogans, jingles, and characters for their campaigns.

1. **Emerge** (*verb*): to become apparent or important

2. the transition to new manufacturing processes that involved machines, rather than hand production methods

3. to increase

4. **Pervasive** (*adjective*): spreading widely throughout an area or a group of people

5. **Synonymous** (*adjective*): closely associated with or suggestive of something

[10] As Nigel Hollis, writing in *The Atlantic*, explains it, “the best advertisements are ingenious at leaving *impressions*.” He goes on to describe a friend, who, after claiming that advertisements did not have such an effect, could quote the jingles and premises of ads for an entire range of products.

These days, advertising is constant. But, because of how and why advertising works, it can have negative effects on society. Take the beauty industry for example. A makeup company, like Maybelline, wants people to associate its product with feeling happy, healthy, skinny, and naturally beautiful. The company comes up with a slogan — *Maybe she’s born with it. Maybe it’s Maybelline*. And they hire a slim model to wear the product in the advertisement. Tricks of light and makeup are used to make the model appear to naturally have the attributes the makeup enhances. People start to associate looking like that model with both the product and the brand, through the catchy slogan. And so people buy the product to look like the model... even though the model looks that way because of Photoshop, not mascara. Advertisements work to sell things through association and brand recognition, not by conveying truth. As ads become ubiquitous, these appeals to our desires can become harmful.

People rarely go to buy a product directly after seeing an advertisement. Instead, the ad works to associate positive memories with the product and recognition of the brand. The power of advertising is in the long game.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the central idea of the text?
 - A. While many people consider advertisements to be annoying, they provide the public with necessary information and services.
 - B. Advertisement are capable of manipulating people more than they realize, as ads convince consumers that certain products lead to specific emotions and experiences.
 - C. With the development of technology, advertisements have become more informative and able to cater to specific viewers.
 - D. Advertisements tend to focus their message on youth, as they are most likely to spend money on trendy products.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "That industry includes the companies that place advertisements, the agencies that create them, and the media that runs them." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "Without advertising, we likely would not have television shows, magazines, newspapers, or internet content that we could watch or read without paying a subscription fee." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "The ads were also incredibly localized. Philadelphia newspapers ran ads in the back of the paper, informing consumers about Philadelphia stores and products." (Paragraph 5)
 - D. "Through the power of advertising, a scented candle becomes synonymous with the feeling of warmth, coziness, and being at home." (Paragraph 8)

3. PART A: What is the author's main purpose in paragraph 11?
 - A. to show how advertisements can be dangerous by creating unattainable images that consumers wish to embody
 - B. to provide readers with suggestions about how to avoid the negative influence of advertisements
 - C. to suggest that the advertising industry needs to change the message it directs at consumers
 - D. to prove to consumers that advertisements never use real images or information about their products

4. PART B: Which section from paragraph 11 best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "A makeup company, like Maybelline, wants people to associate its product with feeling happy, healthy, skinny, and naturally beautiful."
 - B. "The company comes up with a slogan — Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline. And they hire a slim model to wear the product in the advertisement."
 - C. "And so people buy the product to look like the model... even though the model looks that way because of Photoshop, not mascara."
 - D. "Advertisements work to sell things through association and brand recognition, not by conveying truth."

5. How did the industrial revolution influence the advertising industry?

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. When has an advertisement encouraged you to buy a product? What about the advertisement appealed to you?
2. How does the article explore ways in which the advertising industry has changed over time in America? Do you think the advertising industry has grown more powerful over the past couple years? Why or why not? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. How has technology influenced the advertising industry? How might technology exaggerate some of the problems with the advertising industry? What positive influences does technology have on the advertising industry? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
4. How does the advertising industry encourage people to follow the crowd? Have you or anyone you know ever bought something just because everyone else was buying it? If so, describe the experience.