

# 3d

## Ads R Us: Understanding Target Marketing

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A major aspect of *Key Question #3* is the idea that different people experience media messages differently. It is also true that *similar* groups of people tend to respond *similarly* to the same message. Because of this, advertisers often create different ads to sell the same product to different (niche) audiences. They spend large amounts of research time and money to learn what appeals to people based on their gender, class, age, religion, ethnicity, health, family upbringing, etc. This information guides them to develop ads that will appeal to groups with similar fantasies, fears, desires, insecurities, hopes – and dreams. In this activity groups of students create different ads for the same product – but for different audiences. As they design the ads, students will experience how their ideas, attitudes and even stereotypes about the audience influence the messages they create.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Build awareness of the way in which advertisers shape ads for specific audiences.
2. Analyze the target audience intended for an advertisement.
3. Create their own targeted ads to demonstrate their understanding of *Key Question #3*.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B5)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B8)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Choose a generic item such as a plain white hand towel, a plant, glass of water, etc. as the “product” for which students will create an advertising campaign.
2. Markers and poster paper

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Introductory discussion**

- Discuss how advertisers create their ads for a specific niche market, often distinguished by age, ethnicity, gender, income level, geographical region, etc.
  - ? Have you ever seen different ads for the same product?
  - ? Why do you think advertisers create different ads for different audiences?

**II. Organizing the activity**

- Break the class into 5-10 groups and assign each group of students a different target audience, such as:
  - Preschoolers
  - Elementary School Boys
  - Teenage Girls
  - College Students
  - Athletes
  - Janitors
  - Moms
  - Dads
  - Grandparents
  - Teachers

- Explain that each group will have to plan a strategy to sell the same product that the teacher has chosen to a different group of people (the target audience). Have each group discuss their target audience and plan an advertising campaign that will motivate their potential customers enough to want to buy the generic product.
- Pass out large sheets of poster paper per group to outline their campaign, draw a sample ad and/or storyboard a commercial.
- Each group should present their campaign to the entire class; then discuss the work.
  - ? On what characteristics of your target audience did you focus?
  - ? Reflect on your process of strategizing the campaign for your target audience:
    - Did you use (or reject) any stereotypes that might be offensive to some groups?
    - What strategies did you reject – and why?
    - What did you learn about how advertising works?
  - ? What principles of persuasion can we learn from this activity? Do the principles change for different audiences?
  - ? Are you a target audience for some advertisers? Which ones?