

5e

Power, Persuasion & Propaganda: Exploring Multiple Motives

While commercial media is created to generate profit, non-commercial media has many motivations – from influencing people how to vote or sharing ways to protect the environment to convincing us the world is flat or promoting racist beliefs. With so much information available today through media, students need to be able to recognize media messages that are motivated by power and persuasion in order to become independent and critical thinkers. First, students will search for and discuss media messages that have purposes other than just making money. Then group production projects will help students discover the power of propaganda for both positive and negative ends thus yielding greater understanding of the multiple (and at times ulterior) motivations in today’s media landscape.

Objectives: Students will be able to...

1. Recognize different motives even in non-commercial media.
2. Analyze the role of media in a democratic society.
3. Wrestle with ethical issues concerning media and the public good.

Correlation With McRel National Standards:

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S10/B2)
- Grades 9-12: (S10/B6, B11)

Civics Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 9-12: (S19/B6)

Materials/Preparation:

1. Access to the Internet
2. Chart paper or black board

Teaching Strategies:

I. Review and Reflect on Motives

- Mention that now with the Internet there are many media messages that have motives other than just selling a product to make money.
- Begin a class chart that lists all the different motives beyond just making money that organizations could have for creating media. List as many motives as possible. Start with questions like:
 - ? Why do you think PBS broadcasts *Sesame Street*?
 - ? Why do the Democratic Party and the Republican Party both make TV commercials?
 - ? Who creates the commercials that tell you smoking is dangerous?
 - ? What kinds of information would you find on a website “.org” “.com,” “edu”. Others?
 - ? How can you tell if an Internet site has accurate information?

II. Creating Media with Multiple Motives

- Divide the class into teams and assign each team the job of creating a media message with one or more motives that are not specifically commercial. The messages can be in any format that works best: poster, written or tape-recorded radio ad, TV commercial

performed live, illustrated print advertisement, etc. The students may choose their own scenario or use one from the list below.

- You work for a cigarette marketer which lost a lawsuit that now requires you to create anti-smoking posters targeting women. Since selling tobacco is your business you also want these posters to make your company look good.
- You work for the dairy industry and must create fun toys that encourage children to drink milk.
- You work for the American Nazi party and you want to create a web site that convinces people that Martin Luther King, Jr. was bad person.
- You work for a school district that has low test scores. Create a flyer to convince parents that this is still a great district.
- You work for an oil company that has been receiving lots of bad publicity recently because of accidents that have caused millions of barrels of oil damage on the environment. You must create a commercial that promotes an environmentally friendly image for your company.
- You work for the US Army and you need to recruit more soldiers. Research shows that more people will join if you portray the Army as an excellent career opportunity for high-tech training. Create a radio ad that will attract as many recruits as possible.
- You work for a local TV channel that is sponsoring a reading contest for children so they can increase their ratings with young families. Create bookmarks that connect watching TV with reading books.
- You work for the teacher's union and must create a full-page newspaper ad to create a positive image of teachers and the union.
- You work for a breakfast cereal company and your owner is very patriotic. Design the cover of a box of sugary cereal to appeal to kids but, most importantly, also be very patriotic.

III. Discovering Motives

- Once all the teams have created their media message, they should present them to the class.
- Encourage the class to uncover the various motives in each one.
- Ask them to relate this experience to real media messages they encounter daily.