

LESSON: Talking Back to the Ads

Overview

Women and girls are the subject of highly sexualized portrayals in all forms of media. The messages to young women through all types of media they consume from the music video they watch, the video games they play, the magazines that they read, the TV and movies they choose to the ads and other material plastered all over the Internet are subjects of great concern. Expert opinion and findings from researchers studying the impact of these media are summarized in the 2010 report of the **American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls**. Much of the Task Force's report focuses on media and its influence on our young women.

This lesson which examines the portrayal of women in advertising requires the students to take a second look at some of the ads around them and express their own opinions about their findings. The website *About Face* is used here to provide students a catalyst for becoming involved in "talking back to the media."

Objectives:

- Create awareness of objectification of women in the media and its implications for cultural attitudes as well as behavior of both males and females
- Find both positive and negative portrayals of women in ads
- Deconstruct positive and negative examples considering the kinds of messages they convey about women
- Develop a written piece that could potentially be placed on the About Face website (or a class version of this site).

Level: Middle / High School

Time: 1-2 class periods

Preparation and Materials:

- About Face website
- Report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2010
- Video Clips from Thomas Keith's Film: Generation M: Misogyny in Media & Culture
- Jean Kilbourne video clips including:
 - Killing Us Softly 4
 - Killing Us Softly 3
- Video Clip from Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video
- Teens Speak Out in Meme Films Haiku Media Literacy.mov
- Hallway Rant

Procedures

Open the discussion about portrayal of women in the media by showing a video clip from Jean Kilbourne's *Killing Us Softly 4*. Depending on the time you are able to devote to this topic, you may also want to show pieces from some of the other videos listed above such as Thomas Keith's *Generation M: Misogyny in Media & Culture*

Now turn to the About Face website. Discuss the website's mission and then explore sections of this site

Activities

PART 1: SUBMIT YOUR OWN ENTRY TO ABOUT FACE

Inform the students that today we're going to write our own contributions to the About Face website. Tell them that you have seen many ads that could easily be entered into the Gallery of Offenders on the site. Also note that you have also seen some ads that you feel really would belong in the site's Gallery of Winners. (Note that so far you're commenting only on your own observations.)

Now examine with the class how the site's contributors write their commentary for the Gallery of Offenders and the Gallery of Winners

Tell the students that their challenge for today is to first find at least one ad that clearly belongs in the Gallery of Offenders and justify why you think it belongs there. In developing their commentary for the site, they are to follow the same format they would find on the site. That is:

- Write the "Questions to Consider" that you would feel would encourage visitors to the About Face site to take a second hard look at the ad.
- Write a concise "What We Think" paragraph or two summarizing the most important points that you feel justify why this ad clearly belongs in the Gallery of Offenders.
- Be prepared to present and defend the position you have taken about this ad and the comments you have made justifying your choice

If time, encourage students to write about more than one ad. Other ads they find can be placed in the Gallery of Offenders or the Gallery of Winners.

PART 2: DISCUSS ENTRIES

Ask for student volunteers to present the ad they have chosen and discuss their rationale for their selection. Allow time for general class discussion about these choices.

PART 3: OPTIONAL: STUDENT PRODUCED VIDEOS EXPRESSING VIEWS

Tell students that those who would be interested are encouraged to develop their own video response to some of the ads we find in the Gallery of Offenders. Show the class some sample video where teens expressed their views about these types of ads. See **Meme Films Haiku Media Literacy.mov** and **Hallway Rant**

Assessment

Since this is a lesson requirement, written pieces students submit about the ads of their choice can be used for assessment purposes.