Action Plan for Learning
Teacher’s Summer Institute 2010
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TITLE: Picture Perfect?: Advertising, Propaganda, and Being a Critical Thinker

SUBJECT AREA / COURSE: 5th Grade Language Arts / Social Studies

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION:
“How accurate were advertisements in depicting soldiers’ conditions during WWII?”

PA TEACHING STANDARDS:

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening:
1.4.5.C Write Persuasive Pieces
R5.A.2.3.1: Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.
1.6.5.A Critical Listening and Thinking
R5.B.3.2.1: Identify exaggeration (bias) in nonfictional text.
R5.B.1.2.1: Identify, explain, interpret, compare, describe, and/or analyze connections between texts.

Social Studies:
8.1.6.B- Explain and Analyze historical sources.

OBJECTIVES:

Student will evaluate the effectiveness of advertisements in shaping a reader’s opinion of a product.

Student will use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the conditions of WWII soldiers depicted in Coca-Cola advertisements to actual accounts from WWII veterans.

Student will use critical thinking skills to draw their own conclusions.

DURATION: 45-60 minutes
MATERIALS:


![Tastes Like Home](image1)


![Soldier with Coke](image2)


![Howdy, Friend](image3)


![Coca Cola Goes Along](image4)
INQUIRY BASED LEARNING:

I will use an Inquiry-Based Learning Model (IBLM) with the following components: Questioning, Researching, Discussing, Creating, Reflecting, and Assessment.

**Questioning** – This section is comprised of asking the classroom a series of questions. Examples follow: “What do these posters make you think about serving in the military during this time?” “What words (adjectives) could you list to describe these soldiers?” “How do advertisements contain inaccuracies?” “What elements make these effective advertisements?

**Researching** – Students will collect first hand information about conditions during WWII through witnessing an interview of a WWII veteran and video from the Veterans’ History Project collection from the Library of Congress online collection.

**Discussing** – Students will discuss all aspects of advertising and persuasive media, from what it takes to make effective ads, to the importance of being a critical thinker when viewing ads.

**Creating** – Students will complete a Venn diagram to illustrate the similarities and differences between WWII ads and actual conditions for soldiers.

**Reflecting** – Students will share and discuss their conclusions about the advertisements and the presence of bias in advertising in general.

**Assessment** – The students’ Venn diagrams will be graded using a check list.
DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES:

This lesson is part of a larger study of persuasive writing, propaganda, advertising, and critical thinking skills with a connection to our school wide focus on Veteran’s Day during early November. Students are familiar with the terms persuasive writing, opinion, advertising, propaganda, bias, etc. Students also have experience in writing persuasive pieces as well using their critical thinking skills to evaluate persuasive media.

Additionally, students will have participated in an oral history project as a means of collecting and evaluating information first hand. A WWII veteran visited their classroom to participate in an interview with the teacher. Prior to the interview, students and the teacher discussed the value of oral history, what can be gained from the interview that can’t be found in the textbook, and what broad ideas students hoped to gain from the project. An interview guide was formed collaboratively, but the interview itself was conducted by the teacher. Students silently observed the interview while completing the “Veteran’s Account” side of a Venn diagram. After viewing the interview, the students share their information from their diagrams aloud and a larger diagram was completed on the Promethean Board. The interview guide and Venn diagram are attached at the end of the APL.

QUESTIONING:

To introduce today’s lesson, ask students to recall the interview they witnessed and review the Venn diagram together. Explain that to gather even more information, students will be watching the following short interview from the Veteran’s History Project to reinforce what students learned about the soldiers’
conditions during WWII:

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.21644/video?ID=mv0001001. (minutes 14-24) This portion of the video describes the 48 hours Gene D. Airheart’s waited wounded along a road in France and the long period of time spent waiting for treatment in a field hospital where his leg was almost amputated.

After viewing the video, begin by asking students to brainstorm a list of words they think of when they hear “WWII”. Remind students to think about the oral history project they participated in earlier and the knowledge they gained from listening to the WWII veteran. Allow students 2-3 minutes to list as many words as possible, then share students ideas aloud and create a larger list on the Promethean Board. Next, have students generate a second list of words in response to hearing the phrase “Coca Cola”. Guide students to listing words that would describe how this beverage would make them feel (refreshing, happy, relaxed at a picnic, fun, cool, etc.), rather than adjectives describing its physical description (carbonated, brown, fizzy, etc.). After sharing students’ ideas and making a second list on a transparency, ask students “Do you see any connection between these two lists?” Discuss how each group of words tends to contain very opposite ideas.

Next, show the following pictures simultaneously to the class:
Ask students if these images have a connection to Coca Cola. Students should respond that they are related because they are all Coca Cola ads showing images of people drinking and enjoying the beverage. “Are they connected in any way to WWII, or soldiers in general?” Students should realize that all the people are service members of some kind, including a woman telegraph operator. After students respond that they are connected to both ideas, remind them that just earlier they concluded that the 2 list of words had no connection. After a minute of think time, pose the investigative question, “How accurate were advertisements in depicting soldiers’ conditions during WWII?” Continue by asking students what they think Coca Cola used to sell their product. What made these images appealing?

Also, ask the students to look at the images again, and evaluate their effectiveness. “What draws you to these images? Do they send a positive message to you, the consumer? What make these effective advertisements?” Then, switch gears and ask “On the other hand, how do these send and inaccurate image of war time
conditions? Do you feel they are misleading? Is there a fine line in advertising that is often crossed?"

RESEARCHING:

Students will then be taken to the Library of Congress website to locate another sample of Coca Cola advertising to evaluate. After 5-10 minutes of search time, students will complete the “Coca Cola’s Account” side of their Venn diagram. View some of the images students found and allow them to share what they listed in their Venn diagrams to describe the image.

DISCUSSING:

After sharing the images, ask students to find a few similarities between what the ads and video/interviews portrayed. Be sure to note the difficulty students may have finding similarities compared to finding differences. Ask students why this may be, and then post the investigative questions again: “How accurate were advertisements in depicting soldiers’ conditions during WWII?” Students will write an answer to the Investigative Question in pairs using a “Ticket Out the Door”. These will be collected and posted on the “Ticket Bulletin Board” and discussed as a group.

CREATING:

To illustrate students’ understanding of persuasive techniques and propaganda in ads, student will have completed a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the portrayal of WWII experiences illustrated in Coca Cola images and actual accounts from soldiers. Students will also have written a formal response to the Investigative Question using the “Ticket Out the Door” strategy.
REFLECTING:

Collect and post tickets on the “Ticket Bulletin Board” and discuss the responses as a group. Students should come to the consensus that advertisements during WWII did NOT accurately depict conditions of soldiers and that the false “happy, safe, and relaxed” images of the soldiers were used as a technique to persuade readers to buy the product. Students may also realize that patriotic icons are often used in advertising techniques to appeal to consumers today. Lead the students into a discussion of the importance of having good critical thinking skills to come to your own conclusions about a product, and not solely relying on the advertisement itself.

ASSESSING:

Students’ comprehension will be assessed using a Venn diagram and the “Ticket Out the Door” Strategy. Venn Diagrams will be assessed with the checklist below.
ASSESSMENT:

NAME_______________________________________________PERIOD_____

Picture Perfect?
Venn Diagram Checklist

You Venn diagram includes....

1. ____ at least 5 accurate descriptions of the WWII veterans’ experiences.
2. ____ at least 5 accurate descriptions of the WWII soldiers’ appearance in the Coca Cola ads.
3. ____ at least 2 similarities between the WWII and Coca Cola soldiers’ appearances/experiences.
4. ____ information categorized in the correct locations.
5. ____ neat and legible writing.

Score: ____/5

TICKET OUT THE DOOR

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Oral History Project Interview Guide

GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. Name
2. Date and Place of birth
3. Family background
4. Hobbies

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

5. Branch of Service and Rank
6. During what war did you serve?
7. What countries were you stationed in?
8. What were some positive experiences from your service?
9. What were some negative experiences from your service?
10. Looking back on your service, what are some details that you remember most?
11. What are some words that you feel would describe your service?

CONCLUSION

12. What are some details Americans who didn't serve during WWII not know or understand about the time you spent overseas?
13. Do you feel your service was accurately portrayed in the US during WWII?
14. Do you think people today will ever understand what it was really like during WWII?