How Advertising Portrays Animals

Suggested Grade Level: Middle School
Relative Subject(s): Social Studies

OBJECTIVE
To observe the messages regarding the treatment and portrayal of animals in advertising through a variety of media. To be able to distinguish which messages are positive and which are negative, and how they affect the choices we make.

MATERIALS
- Various types of magazines
- Various types of newspapers
- Several large poster boards
- Glue, scissors, markers

ACTIVITY

Preliminary Discussion
- What is advertising?
- Where do we see or hear advertising?
- Who reads watches and listens to advertising?
- What does advertising try to accomplish?
- Why are animals included or featured in advertising?
- What kinds of products would animals help to sell or publicize?

Procedure
Students will look through magazines and newspapers for advertisements that feature or include animals, then cut them out and paste them in "Negative" or "Positive" categories on the poster boards. Students can also watch television or listen to the radio at home and write descriptions of commercials they see or hear which feature or include animals.

Post-Discussion
- What types of ads did they find, see or hear?
- What message is each ad sending?
- How do these messages affect how our society treats animals?
- How have these ads affected the students’ past treatment of animals?
- Why do advertisers find it necessary to portray animals in a negative light?
- How could the negative ads be changed to become positive?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Have students create their own advertisements for fictional products, which feature or include animals in a positive light and present them to the rest of the class.

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Information adapted from the Denver Dumb Friends League