

Who's This Magazine For?

This assignment is for students to read advertisements in magazines critically, and develop a sense of who the magazine is supposed to be for. Students will make a short presentation to their group about the advertisement that they found most interesting in the magazine that they took home, compare it to other advertisements in the same magazine, and discuss the “demographic” they think the advertising – and the magazine – is designed for.

Students will:

#1. Make a list of advertisements they found in their magazine. It doesn't need to be all of the advertisements, just enough to give us a good idea of the kinds of things being advertised in general.

#2. Choose one or two advertisements that they think are very interesting, and read the text for the advertisement carefully, looking up unfamiliar language or terms.

#3. Analyze the advertisement(s) to see what their obvious and underlying messages are.

#4. Discuss #1, 2, and 3 with other students in their group.

For example:

#1. I looked at SWIMSUIT ILLUSTRATED. I found advertisements for the following:

Nikon digital camera (1)	Diamond rings (1)
Absolut vodka (2)	A hunting vacation package (1)
Ford Trucks (1)	Nissan Centra (1)
Mens' fitness magazine (1)	Trojan condoms (1)
MAXIM magazine (1)	Levi's Jeans (1)
Canon photocopy machines (1)	

#2. I think the advertisements are definitely for men, but the age group seems less sure to me. Levi's jeans, digital camera, and the fitness magazine seem to be for younger men (mostly in their 20s and 30s), but the hunting vacation, diamond ring, and the car and truck seem expensive enough to be probably for older men (in their late 30s, 40s, and 50s). So I think the demographic for this magazine is men from age 20-50.

#3. I thought that the advertisement for the Levi's jeans was interesting, because it has a woman in it. The magazine is for men, but the picture is of a woman wearing Levi's jeans. She looks very comfortable, and very attractive. So I think men are supposed to think that Levi's jeans are sexy, and when they are buying jeans, they will remember a sexy woman wearing jeans, and want to buy the same jeans she was wearing.

The advertisement for the Ford Truck is very different. It has a Ford truck driving in the countryside, and a man looking at it. The man looks very strong and tough, and he is dressed like a cowboy. Maybe men like to think they are tough and strong like the cowboy, so they feel Ford trucks and strength are connected? Maybe Ford trucks are strong like the cowboy? Or maybe if you buy a Ford truck, you will feel strong and tough like the cowboy, too? Anyway, it's very different from the Levi's advertisement.