



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades K to 3
About the Author:	This lesson was written for MediaSmarts by Eve Duchesne
Duration:	45-60 minutes

Can You Spot the Ad?



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the concept of branded content and will learn to differentiate between branded images and videos and non-branded images and videos in online and offline contexts through a series of questions and discussions.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate an understanding of:

- what “branding” and “brands” are and how to recognize them
- how to identify advertisements in different media
- the goals and tactics of advertising

Preparation and Materials

Prepare to project the following:

- *What is an Ad?*
- *What is a Brand?*

Photocopy the handout *Can You Spot the Ad?*.

Procedure

What is an Ad?

Start by projecting or distributing *What is an Ad?* and ask students what the difference is between the pairs of images (the two pictures of a forest, the two pictures of orange juice and the two pictures of a bus.) Lead students to understand that one of each pair is just a photograph of a real thing, while the other is an ad. Ask students for examples of ads; make sure they give enough examples to be sure that everyone understands that ads come in different forms and media but all serve the same purpose.



Now ask where we see or hear advertisements or commercials. (Examples: TV, online, before movies, newspapers, magazines, radio, billboards.)

What is the *purpose* of ads? (To make us want to buy or do something. For example, these ads want you to go to a U.S. National Forest, buy orange juice and visit the zoo.) What are some examples of things often seen in ads that are aimed at them? (Toys, cereal, pop and juice, clothes, chocolate bars, movies, video games, TV shows, etc.)

What is a Brand?

Point out to students that none of the ads they've seen come right out and *tell* you to buy the thing they're advertising: instead, they make them look cool (the way the family looks amazed in the forest ad) or try to grab your attention (the snake around the bus in the zoo ad.)

Now project the first slide of *What is a Brand?*

Ask the students if they can identify some of the products being sold. (Skittles, MacDonald's, Pringles, Honey Nut Cheerios.) Explain that these images represent different ways that advertisers help you like and remember their products by creating a brand. Some common ways of branding a product are to come up with a slogan ("Taste the rainbow"), to have a logo that stands for the product (the Golden Arches), to have a distinctive package (the tubular Pringles can) or to have a mascot or branded character (Honey Nut Cheerios bee).

Ask students if seeing the images makes them *feel* anything – whether they seem familiar, friendly or funny (or make them hungry!). Point out the use of cartoon characters, bright colours and fun lettering. Branding is especially important in ads for kids: even if you can't read yet, you will still be able to recognize the bee from Honey Nut Cheerios or the Quik bunny. Using cartoons and characters also helps tell a story that you want to keep watching because it is funny and entertaining to watch.

Now project the second slide and tell the class that a lot of the time branding isn't about making us think a product is *good*, just making sure that we can tell it apart from other products that are like it. Can they recognize the first product just by seeing its colours (Coca-Cola)? How can they tell exactly what kind of corn chip the second product is? (Only Doritos are triangles and are that particular orange colour. You can point out that Pringles, from the first page, also have a distinctive shape.) Why is the waffle round? (So you can tell it's an Eggo and not some other kind of waffle.) Finally, explain that even the sound a product makes can be part of its brand: when the people who make Rice Krispies noticed that they go "snap, crackle and pop" when milk is poured over the cereal, they made up cartoon characters with those names to make it a part of the brand. The noise that Rice Krispies make doesn't make them taste any better, or make them any better for you – but it does make them *different* from other cereals, and that helps you remember them.

Branded Games and Cartoons

(*Note: when playing videos, "pop-up" ads will often appear before the video plays. Teachers may cue up the videos ahead of time to avoid showing these ads or have a discussion about them a part of the lesson.*)

Show students the following "Nestle Quik" commercial: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/xmsgIzVEBLY>

(Alternate link: <http://www.ispot.tv/ad/7nvU/nesquik-chocolate-bunny-ears>)



Ask students: is this an *ad* or a *cartoon*?

Make a t-chart on the board with the headings *Ad* and *Cartoon*. Have students watch the video again and then fill in the chart with the class. Likely entries include:

AD	CARTOON
Has a branded character (Quik bunny)	Has animated characters
Shows a product (Quik)	Tells a story
Talks about a product	Is funny

Ads like this are two things at once: they are both ads *and* fun cartoons to watch. Companies use cartoon characters (or “branded characters”) to make their ads funny, entertaining and friendly - just like the cartoons you might like to watch on TV or YouTube. If you like the cartoon, especially if you think the branded character is a lot of fun, you might want your parents to buy that product. The fact that it’s an ad doesn’t mean it isn’t fun, but it’s important to know when someone is advertising to us.

Now show students footage of the game Hula Hoops Hot Shot (<https://www.marketjs.com/case-study/html5-basketball-games-to-promote-a-snack-brand>) and ask: is this an *ad* or a *game*?

Make a t-chart on the board with the headings *Ad* and *Game* and fill the chart with the class. Likely entries include:

AD	GAME
Has a brand logo (Hula Hoops logo)	You control a character
	You solve problems
	You fight enemies

Point out to the class that while the Quik ad had about the same number of characteristics of an ad and of a cartoon, this game has only a few things – primarily the logo – that makes it like an ad. Does that mean it’s more of a game than an ad? Let the class discuss the question for a few minutes without requiring them to come to a conclusion.

Now ask the students how long they think the Quik ad was (about a minute long). Ask them to guess how long it would take to finish the Hula Hoops Hot Shot game (you can play it as long as you want).

Explain that this is an example of an *advergame*, which is part ad and part game. Remind students that the purpose of branding is to make sure that you recognize a product and that you have good feelings about it. Would playing a fun game for an hour make you remember the character and feel good about it?

Evaluation

Distribute the handout *Can You Spot the Ad?* Ask the students to cut out each image on the second page and to glue it in either the Branded Character column or Cartoon Character column on the second page. Older students can be asked to write a few sentences showing how they identified the Branded Characters.



Extension Activity

Older students can compile a “branding diary” over a certain period, in which they record everything they see that is branded content. Encourage students to watch not just for obvious ads but for things like commercials or jingles on PA systems, distinctive shapes (like the shape of a VW Beetle) and branded colour schemes. Make sure they include their time spent online!

Extension: Wacky Media Songs

You may consider supplementing this lesson with the TVOntario Original Series *Wacky Media Songs*. These short videos explore a variety of digital media literacy topics, including advertising and marketing. Here are a few suggested videos and discussion topics:

[Create the Hype!](#) There’s a whole marketing machine behind movies and they start to create the hype way before the movie even opens by selling us hoodies, toys, t-shirts and more! Guess what? We help create that hype when we wear or use their merchandise!

Before the video, ask: Do you have any clothes or toys that were made to promote a movie, a TV show or a video game? Have you first ever heard about a game, movie or show that way?

After the video, ask: Why do you think marketers use things like toys and clothes to build hype for games, movies or TV shows? How do you feel about giving them free advertising by wearing those clothes? (*It’s okay if they do! Kids love media and sometimes like being “brand ambassadors.” But they should understand that’s what they’re doing.*)

[Creating a Brand!](#) From packaging to creating a cool mascot, everything about a brand should give us good feelings. Ava creates her own brand of cereal. Plus, she plays a wacky, singing llama!

Before the video, ask: What does it mean when we talk about a “brand” in ads?

After the video, ask: Can you think of any ads that try to make you like the brand instead of telling you what’s good about the product? What are some ways that they do that?

[Hiding in Plain Sight!](#) Have you ever watched movies or TV shows and seen brand-name products in them? That’s product placement - a sneaky way advertisers promote their products by showing them to us in the media we watch!

Before the video, ask: Have you ever noticed a product you recognized, like a cereal or a kind of chips, in a movie or TV show? Why do you think they were included?

After the video, ask: Why do you think advertisers pay to put their products in TV shows, games and movies? (They make us recognize and remember the products, and because we don’t know they’re ads we connect the good feeling of enjoying what we’re watching with the product.)



What is an Ad?



Photo Credit: Nicholas A. Tonnell



USDA Forest Service



Tropicana



Wikimedia Commons

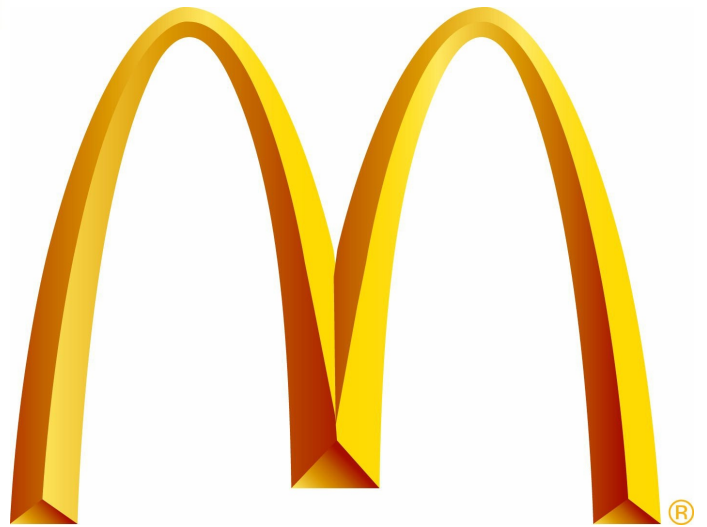


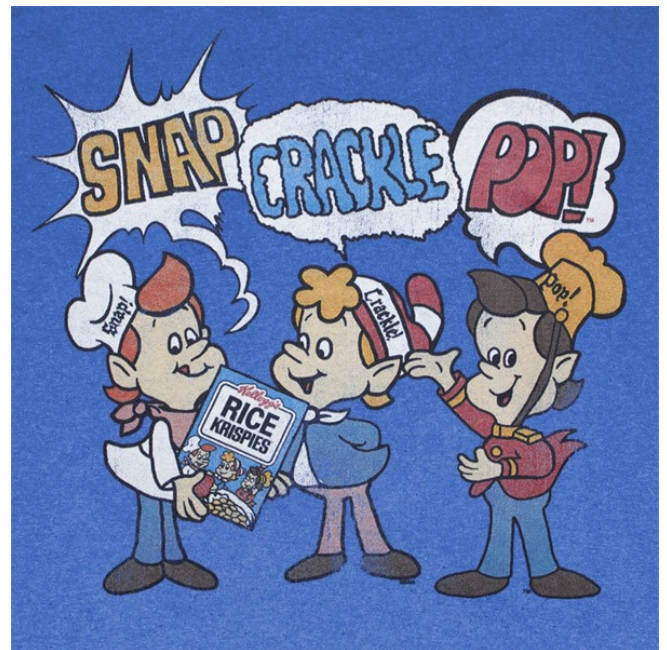
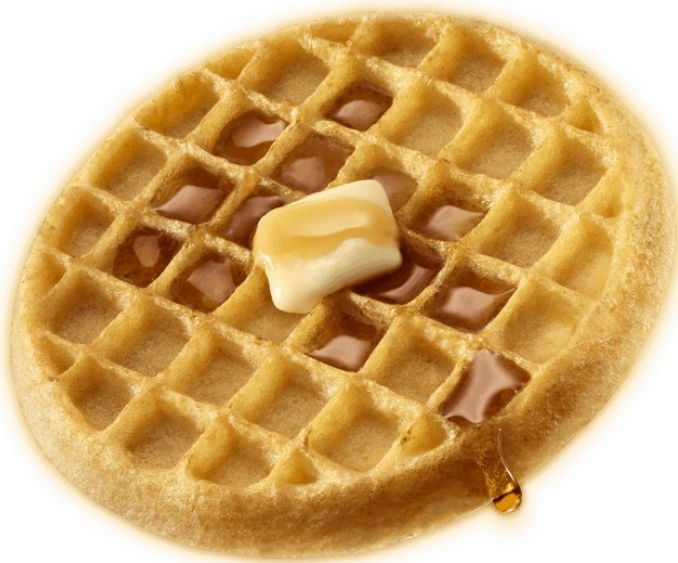
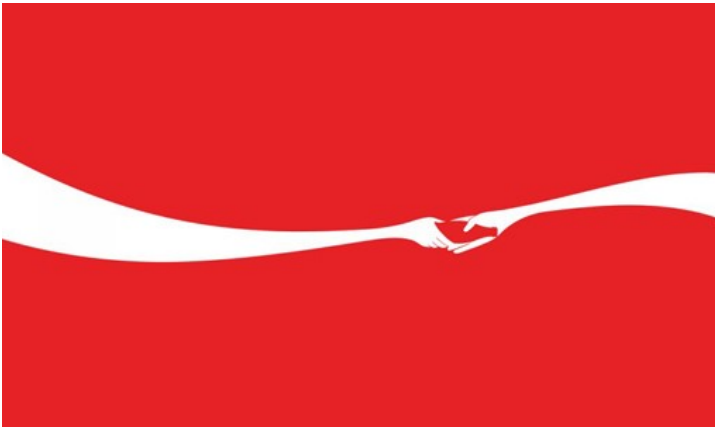
Photo Credit: Martin Arrand



Copenhagen Zoo

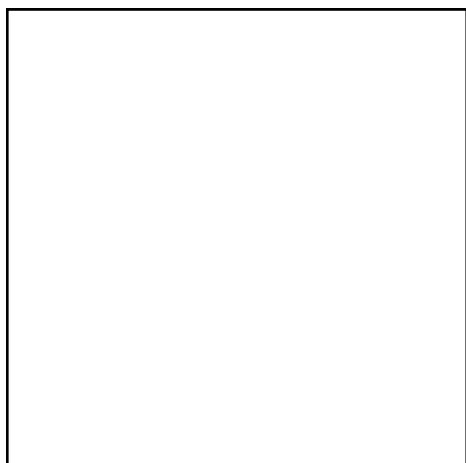
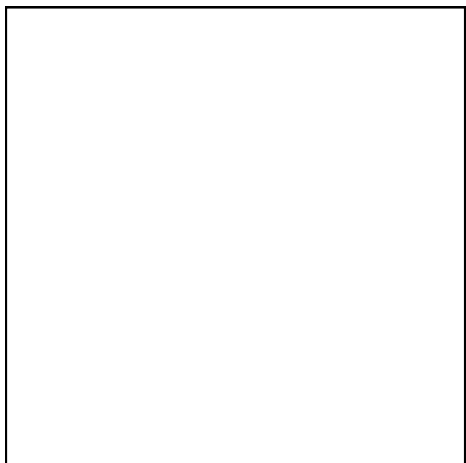
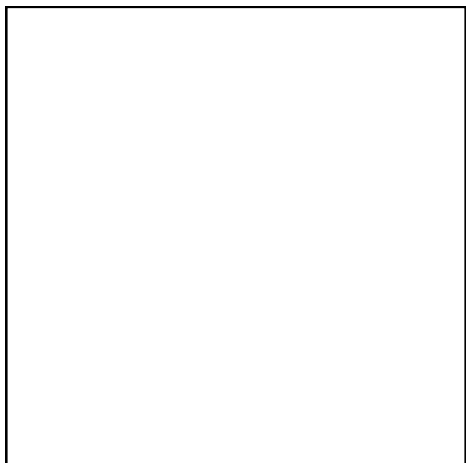
What is a Brand?





Can You Spot the Ad?

CARTOON CHARACTER



BRANDED CHARACTER

