



Advertisements can give us important information about the past. Because they are typically designed for the mass public, they often offer us ideas about a society's prevailing trends and attitudes. Although they are intended for the general public, they also are created with a purpose in mind—to sell a product or point. As a result, they may present a view that is designed to promote the ideas and products, rather than to offer an objective view of life.

Because advertisements are generally biased, it is important to read them with a critical eye. Below are some guidelines to follow as you view historical advertisements.

Name of Advertisement:
What is the ad's purpose?
What group, company or individual created it? Describe them and their interests.
Who is the intended audience of the ad? How do you know?
What are some of the ad's assumptions or underlying messages? Who or what does the ad promote as "good" or "bad"?
What are the ad's biases or logical fallacies? (See list of fallacies on next page.)
What does the ad tell you about society at this point in history?

How does the ad attempt to persuade its audience? What emotional appeals does it make? (See list on next page.)

Emotional Appeals or Fallacies

Psychological appeals - using an emotion or set of emotions to advance a point

Sexual Appeals - using sexuality as a means of persuading

Exaggerations/Superlatives - going beyond the bounds of truth

Ad hominem - attacking the person rather than the person's argument

Popularity - relying exclusively on numbers to support a claim

Tradition, Patriotism - appealing to feelings of reverence or respect for some custom that supports the view being advanced

Novelty - assuming that something is good or desirable simply because it is new

Provincialism (*Ad Baculum*) - viewing things exclusively in terms of group loyalty

Mob Appeal (*Ad Populum*) - attempting to persuade by arousing a group's deepest feelings (by playing to its culturally conditioned prejudices)

Ad Misericordiam (argument to pity) - appealing to the audience's sense of pity (such as when an accident victim hobbles into court with bandages and groans loudly)

Fallacy of the Golden Past - playing upon the combined moods of nostalgia for the old times and disillusion for the present

Appeal to Authority - justifying an idea not on its merits but because a well-known person said it

Guilt by Association - making judgments about a person solely on the basis of their relationships with others

Ridicule, Fear - to make fun of in a mean-spirited or frightening way

Symbols and Myths - Many of these foster racism, sexism or attitudes which shape our perception of those with money and power.

Logical Fallacies

Begging the Question (*Petitio Principii*) - claiming as true a conclusion not proven at all but simply assumed along the line of the argument

Equivocation, Ambiguity - using the same term in two different senses; using language that can be taken to mean more than one thing

Mixed Messages - Are some of the ideas presented by the author at cross purposes? For example, an author may quote or make reference to a person and prioritize that person, but the ultimate message of the book may run counter to that cited person's basic philosophy.

Argument to Ignorance (*Ad ignorantiam*) - using the claim that (1) something must be true because it has never been proven false; or (2) something must be false because it has never been proven true

False Implication - stating something that is usually true while implying something that is false

Jumping to Conclusions - forming a judgment based on insufficient evidence or atypical cases

Half-truth - ignoring, suppressing or unfairly minimizing evidence

Faulty Comparison- making a comparison on too few points or only on those points that advance one's claim while ignoring other significant points

False Analogy- overlooking significant differences in comparison

Oversimplification- simplifying the argument so much that it is no longer representative of the author's viewpoint and is easier to attack

Post Hoc - asserting that one event is the cause of another merely because the first preceded the second

Non sequitur ("it does not follow") - the conclusion does not follow logically from the premises ("Billy is honest; therefore, he will do a good job.")

Red herring - dodging the real issue by drawing attention to an irrelevant issue

Hasty generalization - basing a generalization on too little or biased evidence