

Cosmetics: Introduction

The idea for this website began as a result of my growing collection of magazines, many of which are aimed at women. As I thumbed through magazines, I was amazed by how many different companies are pitching so many different products. I asked myself: how does the reader make a decision about not only what to pay attention to, but also what to purchase.

The national (US) [health teaching standards](#) suggest that students examine the media because it is through the media (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, The Internet, etc.) that they receive most of their information.

Take a look at the periodicals your school library media center receives; take a look at the ones you subscribe to at home. What messages are being sent to students about beauty?

Before beginning any unit/lesson on cosmetic advertising, I suggest the following question for you the educator:

What do we want students to know about cosmetic advertising?

Here are some issues/questions for you and your students to consider/research:

1. Is the study of cosmetic advertising appropriate and does it meet your teaching standards for health and/or language arts (Advertising)?
2. Where might your students find ads for cosmetics?
3. How has the marketing of cosmetics changed over time?
4. Is there a relationship between cosmetic advertisers and the content of the magazines that carry the ads?
5. Are all photographs in cosmetic ads subject to "digital manipulation" (i.e. airbrushing)?
6. Why don't these ads tell the consumer the ingredients? the cost?
7. Why are celebrities used in cosmetic ads? Do students see these celebrities as role models? Why or why not?

8. Why do all the models for these ads look the same? Who is not shown? Why?

9. Who benefits from cosmetic advertising?

10. If you could change cosmetic ads, how might you change them? Who could you write to, to suggest these changes?

In this [activity](#), I suggest that students select one magazine and conduct a content analysis. Very simply, that means going through the publication and charting the name of the product, its manufacturer, and any other notes about the images and words used in the advertisement. Students can come together in groups and compare notes. Why would one magazine carry an ad, while another does not?

As always, I look forward to hearing from you about this resource. Please let me know what you think of it and if you have any suggestions. You can reach me at fbaker1346@aol.com