

# SC SDE Toy Ad Lesson Plan

*Buy Me That: How TV Toy Commercials Hook Kids*

**Time Frame:** 1 or 2 class periods

**Grade Level:** Grades 3, 4, 5

**Module Overview:** Elementary students use viewing skills to understand the constructed nature of television commercial advertising.

**Lesson created by Frank Baker, South Carolina Media Educator**

## **Text Sets**

Before beginning the module, the teacher may want to create **text sets** to use as a classroom resource that include titles in a variety of genres and reflect the diversity of the students. **Text sets** should include titles that can be used for **read alouds**, additional reading, research, or additional enrichment and reading for pleasure. All of the **text sets** are optional and can be created based upon student need and the focus of the module. Teacher discretion should be used in determining which texts are appropriate to be included in the module.

## **Magazines**

*Nickelodeon*

*Disney Adventures*

*Any other magazine aimed at this age group that contains ads for toys*

## **Videos**

*Buy Me That, Too: A Kids' Survival Guide to Advertising*

(a Consumer Reports/HBO Special available from the Center for Media Literacy, [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org))

*TV Planet: Discover the Secrets of Television* (available from ITV/DELC)

## **Books**

*Made You Look: How Advertising Works and Why You Should Know*—Shari Graydon

*Media Wise: Advertising*—Julian Petley

*The TV Book The Kids' Guide to Talking Back*—Shelagh Wallace

*Television: What's Behind What You See*—W. Carter

## **English Language Arts Standards**

# Communication Goal (C)

The student will recognize, demonstrate, and analyze the qualities of effective communication.

## Communication: Viewing

C3                      The student will comprehend and analyze information he or she receives from **nonprint sources**.

3, 4, 5-C3.1        Demonstrate the ability to make predictions about the content of what he or she views.

3-C3.2                      Demonstrate the ability to recognize details, **setting**, **characters**, and cause and effect in material from **nonprint sources**; begin analyzing details, **character**, **setting**, sequence, and cause and effect in such material.

4, 5-C3.2                      Demonstrate the ability to analyze details, **setting**, **character**, and cause and effect in material from **nonprint sources**.

3, 4, 5-C3.3        Demonstrate the ability to summarize information that he or she received from **nonprint sources**.

3-C3.5                      Demonstrate the ability to make connections between **nonprint sources** and his or her prior knowledge, other sources, and the world.

4, 5-C3.8                      Demonstrate the ability to make connections between **nonprint sources** and his or her prior knowledge, other sources, and the world.

4, 5-C3.7                      Begin/Continue evaluating the ways that different **nonprint sources** influence and inform.

## **BIG IDEAS**

- The students will learn that television toy commercials use techniques that make products look and sound better than they may actually be.
- Students will understand the “constructed” concept of media.
- Students will think differently about advertising claims after being exposed to critical viewing analysis techniques.

## **CULMINATING ASSESSMENT**

Students will analyze toy commercials using the Analyzing Television Toy Commercials rubric.

INSTRUCTION

**Before  
Teaching  
the  
Lesson**

Teachers should plan to pre-record any number of channels (Disney, Cartoon, Nickelodeon, Saturday morning) in order to have at least one toy commercial for each gender. (Fair-use guidelines of the federal copyright law allow teachers to record these and use them for instruction.) Check out the video TV Planet, Discover the Secrets of Television (<http://www.rmpbs.org/tvplanet>) from your school library media specialist. It includes a segment on commercials that is appropriate for viewing.

Teachers should also log onto the "Buy Me That" website (<http://www.medialit.med.sc.edu/toys.htm>) to download the following handouts:

*Questions to Ask About TV Toy Advertising*  
*Attributes of Commercials Aimed at Boys and Girls*  
*Common Advertising Strategies*

There are also articles from mainstream news sources about toy advertising that can be used.

Use the handout of **Vocabulary Words** to familiarize the students with the language of commercials.

Teaching the Lesson

Write the following questions on the board or overhead.

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"What is a commercial?"  
"What are commercials designed to do?"

A general discussion can bring out the role of advertising on television and how these spots are designed to get the public to feel good about a product. The teacher may explore which television networks might air toy commercials.

An excellent videotape entitled *TV Planet: Discover the Secrets of Television* is available from the South Carolina Department of Education Office of Instructional Television (ITV). One of the segments on this video is about commercials. Ask your media specialist or Distance Education Learning Center (DELIC) to assist you in acquiring this video. For additional information, visit the TV Planet website: <http://www.rmpbs.org/tvplanet>. In addition, an original lesson plan, corresponding to this segment, has been developed by South Carolina educator Doug Smith, as part of his participation in the National Teacher Training Institute. The lesson plan can be found at [http://www.scetv.org/ntti/lessons/2003\\_lesson/paytv.cfm](http://www.scetv.org/ntti/lessons/2003_lesson/paytv.cfm)

Students should understand the concept of target audience. The maker of this toy has purchased the air time for this commercial on this channel in order to reach the consumer or the person most likely to be interested in the toy or who might convince Mom or Dad to "buy me that."

Teachers can show students what a 30 second script looks like by dividing an 8x11 sheet of paper into two columns: Label one video at column video and the other audio. (Examples of actual toy scripts can be found on the "Buy Me That" website.) While this might sound simple, the purpose is to explore these two production elements. The teacher should ask students to brainstorm what is meant by video. Typical answers might include the picture on the screen, what the audience sees, what the camera records, colors used, etc. Then do the same for audio. Typical answers might be what the audience hears which could mean narration, music, or sound effects.

A teacher can tell students that commercials are constructed, much like a house is, when it is being built. The producer of the commercial decides what words and images will be used and constructs the script and the commercial to utilize the best techniques. The producer also decides what shots to include and which shots to leave out.

Students need to know more about how a commercial is photographed and produced. For example, a teacher might talk about angles, perspective, and framing. With a video camera connected to a television, the teacher can easily demonstrate how a small toy can be photographed to appear larger.

Ask students if they know what the phrase special effects means. This can be discussed in relation to what students might already know and be familiar with (i.e. *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, etc.). When audio is discussed, the teacher might talk about how it too can be manipulated to create sounds that are intended to attract interest.

Teachers can also talk about attributes of commercials aimed at girls and those aimed at boys. What do we know? What can we guess? Several articles (see handout #4 at <http://medialit.med.sc.edu/toy.htm>) provide some insight. Review specific attributes and write them on the board or overhead. The teacher might also talk about a toy commercial that all can relate to such as GI Joe or Barbie.

Students can understand the concept of formula if the teacher compares this idea to that of a recipe. Everyone knows that a recipe is used to make cookies, for example. The recipe would include not only the list of ingredients, but also the procedures to follow in order to make cookies. The producers of television commercials also use a recipe, called a formula. The formula can be discussed by using the "Five Toy Ad Tricks to Watch Out For" and the "Common Advertising Strategies" handouts that are posted at <http://medialit.med.sc.edu/toys.htm>.

At this stage, the teacher should have pre-selected at least one toy commercial from those recorded earlier from television. The teacher sets up the playback of the commercial by talking about formula, gender, video, audio, editing, and special effects. In general, the teacher wants to make students more comfortable with the process and procedures for making and producing a commercial.

<p><b>After Teaching the Lesson</b></p>	<p>The teacher should distribute the <b>Analyzing Toy Commercials rubric</b> to each student and review each of the questions on it.</p> <p>The teacher plays the commercial. Students complete the rubric upon watching the commercial. It may be helpful to show the commercial more than once. Thirty second commercials go by quickly and with repeated viewings more details can be picked up. Interactivity is encouraged at this stage.</p> <p>Sometimes a toy does not perform as advertised. (This is highlighted well in a video entitled "Buy Me That Too.") The students may have experiences to share, in which a toy they received for a birthday or holiday failed to perform as advertised. Encourage the students to share orally or write about their experiences.</p> <p>Ask students what they would do when one of their toys fails to perform as advertised. Who would they consider writing to complain about the toy's performance or a deceptive advertisement.? At this point, the teacher might make a list. For example, a letter could be written to the television network that aired the ad, the toy manufacturer, a magazine read by kids where the toy was advertised, the local newspaper, the Federal Trade Commission, or the local Better Business Bureau. Note: The now defunct publication <i>Zillions</i> (Consumer Reports for Kids) maintains a website in which kids reviewed toys. This website can be accessed at <a href="http://www.zillions.org">http://www.zillions.org</a>. Your school library media specialist may have old copies of <i>Zillions</i> archived.</p>
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