

Recognizing Purpose and Audience In Media Text

PURPOSE: Media Texts are produced with a very specific purpose.

- News programs are meant to inform.
- TV shows like The Big Bang Theory are meant to entertain.
- Advertising is meant to sell you a product or convince you of something.

Knowing what the creator of a text wants helps you make judgments about the text.

AUDIENCE: Media texts are targeted, or meant for, specific audiences and are constructed to appeal to certain people.

- Advertisers trying to sell electronic devices like cell phones to young people may focus on the “cool factor”.

Sometimes different ads are created for the same product because the advertiser wants to target different groups.

- A cereal company will make one ad for children with focus on the taste of the cereal and the prize in the box. This same company will make another ad for parents, but this time focus on the nutritional content of the cereal.

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO DETERMINE THE PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE OF MEDIA TEXT

- What is the main purpose of this text: persuade, inform, entertain, or sell?
- What elements in the text help me identify the purpose? (font, colour, graphics, etc.)
- Could there be a second purpose to the text?
- How effective is the media text in achieving its purpose?
- What is the source of the text? Does the source give me clues about the audience?
- What kind of audience would like the language or images in the text?
- What demographic (age, race, gender, income, social status) is the media text targeting?
- How effectively do the elements of the text (actors, words, photos, colours, graphics and music) appeal to this group?

You should also consider what the creators of the media text don't want to do or who they don't want to target.

- An ad for sneakers is meant to sell the product, not give information. This means the ad will use elements that may appeal to young people, but not their parents.