

WRITING EXERCISE #1

Due Week 1, Second Section

Analyzing Popular Signs – Print Advertisements

Welcome to DOC 3! This quarter we will be analyzing a wide variety of imaginative texts in the hope of developing a more critical eye toward the world around us. To begin that analytical process, we invite you to think about how imaginative texts communicate clear messages to their audiences through the use of implicit meanings. Puzzled? That's good because we rarely think seriously about how imaginative texts directly affect us.

We will begin by analyzing a print advertisement – its details, elements, and overall message. For next section, select a print ad from a magazine or newspaper and take notes on its Level 1 details and elements. Be prepared to discuss your reading of the ad, explaining why you think its details work well in presenting its overall message.

It is often helpful, as Raimes suggests, to begin by asking yourself some basic questions about a text: Who is in it? What is being shown? When is it taking place? Where is it taking place? What visual or textual elements are used? (81). In addition, it might be useful to consider some of the questions posed by Maasik and Solomon in their article. For instance, how do the characters in the ad function as “signs”? (10). What sort of people do not appear in this ad? What does the ad assume? What “cultural myths” or values are invoked in this ad? (15). What relationship do you see between those cultural myths and the intended audience of the publication?

See the sample analysis of an ad's details included on the back. Please be aware that the writer's list of details which you are being asked to provide in this exercise are not included with the sample. What the sample shows is how the writer has grouped details in an analysis according to elements that he or she wants to address. Another writer might group the ad's details into different categories and thus lead to another interpretation of the ad. Both would be based on a close reading of the text.

Your assignment: a close analysis of the details in a print ad