



**Studying the Past, Imagining the Future:
Cultural Criticism through Rhetorical Analysis of Advertisements
26 July, 2018**

Throughout the the book *Fahrenheit 451*, a number of characters make an effort to influence Montag, the protagonist. These moments of influence include speeches and advertisements, making the text ideal for honing the skills of rhetorical and logical analysis.

This plan aims to review the basics of rhetorical analysis with which students are already familiar. Then, by examining print advertisements, students will extend the scope of their analysis to include visual and typographical elements as well as textual ones while also gaining insight into the culture of the 1950s which shaped the production of Bradbury's text. Last, they will use their observations to guide them in conducting cultural criticism, and use their observations of their own cultures to speculate about the trends and trajectories of our culture.

Overview	
Student Objectives <i>List the bulleted goals/objectives behind your lesson plan</i>	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● review the elements of rhetorical analysis ● learn essential terms for discussing visual documents and typography ● research and select print advertisements from the 1950s ● analyze at least two advertisements, examining text, typography, other visuals, and the rhetorical situation ● develop skills of cultural criticism: viewing artifacts from a specific period and location to learn about that time's cultural expectations and their implications ● develop perspective on their own culture, examining the ways in which our current one is connected to the earlier one of the 1940's-50s. ● speculate on how our society is likely to change, based on observations of our contemporary culture ● apply written and visual rhetorical/persuasive techniques to create an advertisement for a new product
Grade level	11 th grade
Curriculum area <i>Example: Language Arts</i>	English Literature and Composition
Materials	- <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> by Ray Bradbury



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Historical and contemporary advertisements incorporating both text and image- Handouts and/or posters reminding them how to conduct a SOAPS (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject) analysis- Handouts and/or digital images to develop language for discussing the visual elements of text (i.e., typography)- Pens and blank paper for sketching (and/or markers, crayons, colored pencils, or graphics software, depending on the student comfort level, amount of time, and district resources)- Pens and binder paper, <i>or</i> laptops and word-processing software, to offer written explanations of their own visual choices |
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Standards

Learning Standards by State

Explain in bullet points how each of the Objectives align with state learning standards

CC.1.2.11–12.B

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on and related to an author's implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs.

CC.1.2.11–12.D

Evaluate how an author's point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CC.1.2.11–12.G

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CC.1.5.11–12.C

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitative, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Procedures/Resources

Recommended time frame overview

Example: 6 sessions: 1 30-min group intro / 5 30-min computer-based activity sessions / 1 30-min group wrap-up

6 sessions of 50 minutes each:

1. direct instruction and group practice: observe-reflect-question; SOAPS (rhetorical) analysis; typography basics
2. group analysis: SOAPS analysis of a contemporary ad / advertisements and other ephemera as expressions of a specific culture
3. assemble textual details for discussion of past culture; review analysis/reflection of contemporary culture; consider relationships between past and present cultures
4. group analysis and full-class discussion of an ad from 1948. How does the ad reveal and respond to culture?
5. independent: analysis and brainstorming regarding material culture of Bradbury's fictional world, and our real one. What does our material culture/consumer culture reveal? Imagine a product and create an advertisement.
6. independent project/peer response: continue independent work, seeking informal peer analysis to guide revision.



List the procedure and resources for— bullet points with resource links for each sessions:	
Session One:	<p>Provide students with a contemporary advertisement (select a familiar product and magazine, to aid comprehension and improve attention). Have students observe and record the details of the advertisement, encouraging them to assume everything is significant and to trust their eyes. Use the Primary Source Analysis Tool to reflect on what they're seeing.</p> <p>Briefly discuss the observations, assembling a large list of details as a class, and encouraging students to see in greater detail.</p> <p>Review the SOAPS analysis mnemonic for rhetorical analysis (Subject, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Speaker). Have students attempt to apply that analytical tool to the advertisement. (Expect students to find "subject" quite easy; for "Purpose," they'll quickly get an accurate but vague answer. They'll need help with the others; knowing the magazine and date of publication will help with the others).</p> <p>Introduce students to the basics of typography (they need very few technical terms; it's enough to simply describe the qualities of the type in ordinary language. The goal of offering typographical terms is simply to provide them a breadth of things worth observing). Apply those terms/types of observations to the typeface in the advertisement. If time allows, speculate on why the advertiser might have made those typographical choices.</p>
Session Two:	<p>Building on yesterday's work, break students into small groups and provide each with a new, contemporary advertisement. Have them replicate yesterday's process (begin with close observation; move toward reflection/response; ask questions and answer them to help interpret what they're seeing; apply the SOAPS mnemonic to address all of rhetorical analysis).</p> <p>Have each group present their observations and findings, garnering further ideas/responses from other students. Then,</p> <p>Consider each ad as a cultural artifact. In what ways does the ad rely on elements of contemporary culture to achieve its purpose? In what ways does the ad respond to or push back against contemporary culture? In what ways might this ad reinforce or alter the culture? Students should answer these questions in their notebooks, in three columns: 1) observations/facts/details; 2) responses/reactions/emotions; 3) ideas/significance/interpretations.</p>



<p>Session Three:</p>	<p>Review yesterday's work by reporting their ideas regarding the culture of the 50s, and tie it together with direct instruction/outside information they may have on the topic. Fill in gaps or correct misunderstandings in their ideas regarding the culture/history.</p> <p>Brainstorm a list of consumer items and technological advances in <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>. When students report their ideas and assemble a complete list, make sure they include essential ones: Mildred's "seashells," the miniaturized stomach-pumping machine, ten-lane highways, fast cars, larger billboards, advertising in public spaces (e.g. the train), TV walls, the Mechanical Hound, and Faber's in-ear communication device).</p> <p>Evaluate how "right" Bradbury was about the future. For instance, the "seashells" are apparently exactly like today's wireless earbuds; the TV walls are remarkably similar to large flat-panel televisions, etc.</p> <p>Go over the analogous devices at the time (e.g. provide images of televisions; information about the top speed of automobiles or the fact that the Eisenhower highway system was in its infancy; images of stereo systems and headphones, etc. Speculate what elements of the culture may have driven Bradbury's belief that such technological advances might be made, or that such consumer items might be attractive to future Americans.</p>
<p>Session Four:</p>	<p>Examine the Buick automobile ad from 1948. Have students repeat the process of observing as closely and in as much detail as possible, paying attention to how they respond personally to those elements, and what interpretations of claims they can make regarding the rhetorical situation (Subject, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Speaker).</p> <p>Connect to discussions from the last couple of days. What can we learn, from this ad, about the culture that created it? In what ways does the ad appear to be relying on, and pushing against, the contemporary culture? What elements or qualities of the object does the ad emphasize as attractive, and what does that tell us about the audience? Why might these things suggest to Bradbury that cars would be incredibly fast, ubiquitous, exciting, and that the culture would devote resources to accommodating them? Etc.</p> <p>Repeat the exercise, in groups, using other ads from the period.</p>
<p>Session Five:</p>	<p>Have students journal and brainstorm descriptions of their own culture. Then, imagine a product, not currently in existence, that you believe would be designed for a future American consumer. Write a description</p>



	<p>of this object – what it is, what it does, what it costs, who it would appeal to, etc.</p> <p>Create an advertisement to sell this product to the intended audience. To do this, students will have to be very clear on the rhetorical situation. Students may work in any order, but by the time they're done with the task, they should have a drawing of the product, a print advertisement for the product, and a precisely written rhetorical analysis explaining their choices as advertisers.</p>
Session Six:	<p>Continue working on the product, advertisement, SOAPS/rhetorical analysis. Partway through have students respond to one another's ads, describing what they see, who they think it would appeal to, etc. Students may take more days depending on the level of polish you expect out of the final products.</p>
Evaluation	
<p><i>Note the rubric which will help you evaluate/grade your students</i></p>	<p>The rubric will address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How clearly and precisely is the product (the <i>subject</i>) imagined and described? • How detailed and thoughtful are the claims regarding the imagined <i>audience</i> (i.e., the culture of the future)? • To what extent do the ideas appear to be rooted in identifiable elements of contemporary culture? • To what extent can the student identify multiple textual, typographical, and visual elements of his/her own ad designed to appeal to/persuade the target audience?
Additional Resources	
<p><i>List any additional resources (example: websites related to lesson plan topic) that students can use for additional information and/or after class exploration</i></p>	<p>Deconstructing an Advertisement: https://www.mediaed.org/handouts/DeconstructinganAd.pdf</p> <p>Information on SOAPStone strategy of Rhetorical Analysis from the College Board: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/soapstone-strategy-reading-and-writing</p> <p>Why You Bought That Ugly Sweater (Atlantic article on marketing tricks and the psychology underlying them): https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/12/why-you-bought-that-ugly-sweater/413161/</p>






Accommodations

Note any accessibility options that might be applied to address student needs

Rhetorical analysis of advertisements is incredibly flexible. For students who experience linguistic differences, low-to-no text advertisements allow for consideration of specific detail, rhetorical situation, argument and persuasion without the friction created by highly-involved text. Students with visual impairments can examine radio/podcast advertisements. Students for whom writing is a struggle can express much of their thinking through the visual elements of their advertisement.



Primary Sources from the Library of Congress

Image Thumbnail	Description	Citation	URL
	A page from a local newspaper six years before the publication of <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> , presenting two ads for men's attire.	<i>Evening star.</i> [volume] (Washington, D.C.), 12 Nov. 1948. <i>Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.</i> Lib. of Congress.	< http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1948-11-12/ed-1/seq-13/ >
	A page from a local newspaper six years before the publication of <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> , presenting an advertisement for women's coats and attire.	<i>Evening star.</i> [volume] (Washington, D.C.), 08 Nov. 1948. <i>Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.</i> Lib. of Congress.	< http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1948-11-08/ed-1/seq-23/ >
	A page from a local newspaper six years before the publication of <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> , presenting an advertisement for a Buick automobile with Dynaflo Drive.	<i>Evening star.</i> [volume] (Washington, D.C.), 08 Nov. 1948. <i>Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.</i> Lib. of Congress.	< http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1948-11-08/ed-1/seq-17/ >