

Seeing the Pitch: Techniques of Persuasion in Action

Written by Beth Thornton

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What is being told? What is being sold? These are two questions that even young children can learn to sort out, and such sorting is essential to critical thinking and decision-making. We are faced with sales pitches each and every day, yet we often don't think consciously about what decisions we are making and why. Although life would become too complicated to be actively conscious of the process we use when we are choosing red shoes or green shoes to wear, it is still important to have some awareness and practice – occasionally – for what the process of choice entails, so that we can improve our track record of making wise choices that better fit our needs.

CML has identified 10 Techniques of Persuasion that are often at the core of sales pitches – whether those sales pitches are coming from social media influencers or from advertising messages that are clearly labelled. Seeing the pitch is essential to catching the pitch and even to making a pitch!

AHA! This is how I'm being sold!

Grade Level: 3-6

Materials: Varied pictures or magazines with pictures to be torn from the magazine. Tape or pins.

Key Question/Core Concept #2 Deconstruction: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

10 Posters or signs that show one of the 10 Techniques of Persuasion:

- Humor (Funny or crazy images)
- Macho (Strong, tough, powerful. May have weapons!)

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- Friends (Groups together, smiling, buddies, pals, friendship)
- Family (Mother, father, children or family. Intergenerational, possibly)
- Fun (Everyone is happy, smiling and laughing. Images of fun times by self too, or with others)
- Nature (Outdoor settings. May or may not include people)
- Sexy (Emphasis on physical, usually female, perhaps with revealing clothing or flirting through attitude or body language)
- Cartoon (People or animals as drawings or animation, often humorous)
- Celebrity (Influencers or athletes, musicians, politicians, "stars")
- Wealth (Expensive or elegant places and things. Big houses, new cars, jewelry, designer clothing, etc.)

There is a lot to be learned from the discussion and from each student's perceptions. Ask students if they have learned from each other, and what they have learned. After students do their labeling of the photos, show each poster or sign area and discuss what students found – and let the students talk about why they made their choices and what "pitch" they see. Ask the students to find any examples that don't fit very well, and ask them to tell why they don't think the example is a fit for a particular Technique of Persuasion. Ask them which Technique might be a better fit, and why. Then, talk about the 10 Techniques of Persuasion and show an example. Tell the students that it's important for them to be able to identify techniques of persuasion, so they know whether they are being "told something" or "sold something." Give them photos or magazines to use, and ask them to find examples of each of the 10 Techniques of Persuasion, and to tape or pin the examples they find to the posters or signs which label each of the 10 Techniques. **ACTIVITY:** Discuss with students what persuasion is – how persuasion is voluntary, and how persuasion is geared towards meeting our own needs, so that we want to do something or try something or change our minds about something. Give some examples of what persuasion is in everyday life.