

## Going for Gold: Ads from the Olympic Games

Written by Quentin Hancock

Tuesday, 18 November 2008 15:42 - Last Updated Monday, 06 July 2009 07:46

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Advertisers often create different ads to sell the same product to different (niche) audiences. They spend large amounts of research time and money to determine what appeals to certain audiences. Television advertisers for the Beijing Summer Olympics used a number of strategies to market their brands, and creating a sense of heightened emotional participation in the lives of athletes was one of the most common--and popular--approaches advertisers used. With this Media Lit Moment, you can help students identify some of the responses advertisers hoped to elicit from viewers of the summer games.

Have students investigate their responses to an advertisement about a famous Olympic defeat (Visa).

**AHA!** This advertiser knows I'm a fan of the Olympic games and has targeted this ad to me to stir my emotions. They want me to like their brand because I like the Olympics!

**Key Question #3:** How might different people understand this message differently?

**Core Concept #3:** Different people experience the same media message differently.

**Grade Level:** middle school +

**Materials:** Still frame from or entire advertisement by Visa for Beijing Olympics which narrates the injury and defeat of Derek Redmond in a 1992 summer games track event. Computer with internet access and projection screen; OR overhead projector and transparency for still shot.

**Resources:** Article on Olympic advertisements from August 18th Wall Street Journal online, which includes a free video link to the advertisement. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121901681793648157.html>

And/or sample still shot from:

[http://www.astropix.com/SPORTSPIX/OLYMPICS/1992/92\\_11.HTM](http://www.astropix.com/SPORTSPIX/OLYMPICS/1992/92_11.HTM)

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**Activity:** The camera and the narration for this ad devote significant attention to the athlete's pained expressions and Redmond's father helping him walk to the finish line. Have the students talk about the image(s) and the emotions they evoke. What is their response to the close-ups of Redmond in his moment of defeat? What do they think/feel about the presence of Redmond's father in the scene? What does this ad make them think or feel about the Olympic Games in general? What kind of response do they think the advertiser hoped they would have? Why would Visa create this ad? (Visa is not only promoting its product, but its sponsorship of the 2008 summer games).

Encourage Further Discussion: Use the Wall Street Journal article to discuss television advertisements for the Olympics in a broader context. The article discusses the pricing of ads, Nielsen rankings for most popular ads, and the different types of ads which tended to be the most popular. The online article also includes free links to about fifteen of the most popular ads, including a few ads for Chinese audiences.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2008, Center for Media Literacy, [www.medialit.com](http://www.medialit.com)