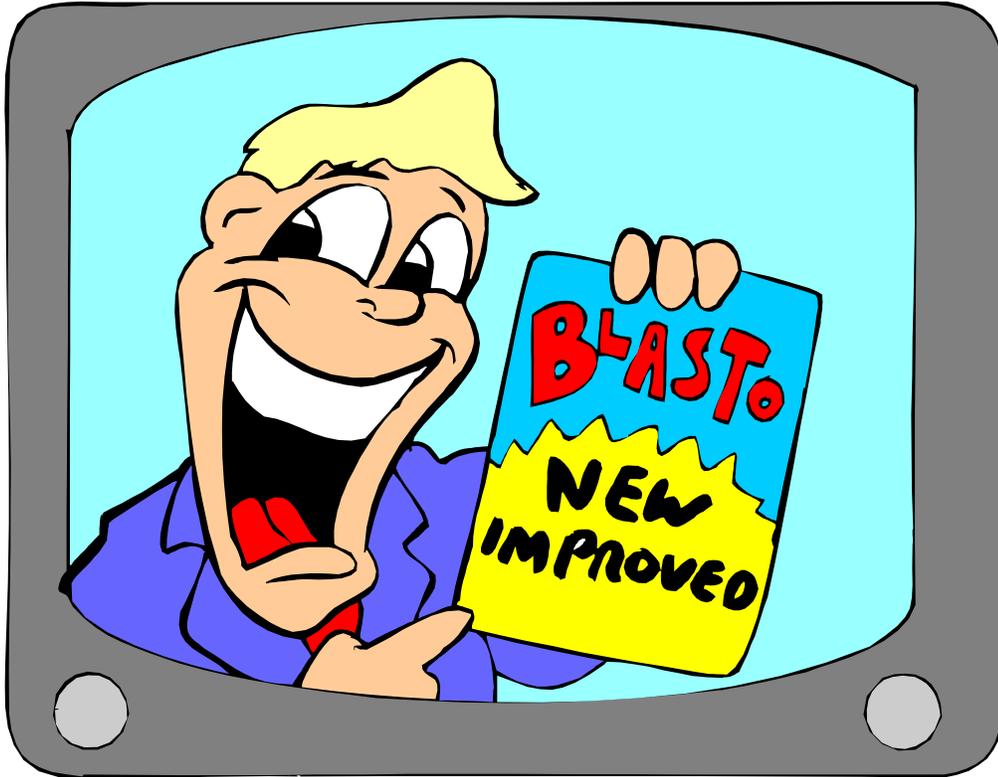


# Rhetoric for Beginners:

## Using Advertisements to Introduce Rhetoric



Every ad is a mini-essay, an argument crafted to appeal to a particular audience. **DIDLS** – diction, images, details, language and sentence structure – will be used as a strategy for analysis. Print and television ads will be used to teach stylistic devices and techniques.

### **Sandra Effinger**

1105 S W 139<sup>th</sup> Street  
Oklahoma City OK 73170  
(405) 378-6832  
mseffie@mac.com

### **Personal Professional Website**

<http://homepage.mac.com/mseffie/index.html>

OR

<http://www.mseffie.com>

## How to Read an Advertisement

First, look closely at all of the details of your assigned advertisement. This includes examining the foreground and the background, the type of people in the ad (if any), the prominent objects or images, the kinds of colors used, and the various words or phrases. You should think about both the denotative and connotative meaning of all of these details. You must engage intellectually with the material at hand and discover the ways in which the ads both draw upon and promote the popular mythologies and ideologies in American culture. Then use your detailed observations to answer the following **discussion questions**:

1. Who is the audience for the advertisement? How can you tell? What assumptions do the advertisers make about the audience?
2. Is this a populist advertisement? Or an elitist one? How can you tell? What traditions or standards does it rely upon to be understood in these terms?
3. What is your prior knowledge of the product? Of the advertisement? How does this help you understand the ad's meaning?
4. In what ways is the ad designed to manipulate you into buying the product? What emotions does it play upon? What desires does it commodify?
5. What unstated messages does the ad convey? What themes does it employ? What does the ad tell us about American culture?

**Essay:** The final draft of your essay must

- provide an introductory paragraph that offers a clear thesis statement;
- describe the key features and important details of the advertisement;
- identify the audience for the ad and explain how this is made clear in the ad;
- discuss the ways in which the ad is designed to appeal to the audience identified; and
- explain the implicit and explicit messages presented in the ad by discussing the mythologies and ideologies used.

Based upon the following article: Henry, Matthew. "Advertising and Interpretive Analysis: Developing Reading, Thinking, and Writing Skills in the Composition Course." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 29.4 (May 2002): 355–366.

Here is the article in a print-friendly format. [Click the button above to print this page.](#)

## The Rhetoric of Advertising

by Renee Shea  
Bowie State University  
Bowie, Maryland

### Introduction

Advertisements bombard us in magazines and newspapers, on television, and just about everywhere on the Web. Although these are sometimes annoying, they are also an opportunity for that "teachable moment" to introduce students to elements of rhetoric. Ads are, after all, arguments. As such, they engage students in critical thinking about claims, assumptions, counterargument, types of appeals, logical fallacies, and audience -- basic elements of rhetoric. Whether we use this approach in a ninth- or tenth-grade class, or as a launch into an AP course in English Language and Composition, analyzing advertisements allows students to work with easily accessible materials and topics that interest them.

### The Rhetorical Situation

Students begin by examining the rhetorical situation of the ad: the written text, visual images, overall organization, and, for television and the Web, elements of sound and movement. Regardless of what is being advertised -- a product, service, organization, or individual -- the first step is to identify context. Is the ad seasonal -- perhaps from Tiffany's or Target -- encouraging gift-buying around a holiday? Is it one of the new Camel cigarette ads that came out after Joe Camel was banned? Another element of context is where the ad appears: for example, in *Vibe* magazine or on TV during the Super Bowl. An interesting approach is to compare and contrast the way one product is pitched in different magazines. How is the "Got Milk?" campaign, for instance, presented in *Glamour* versus *Essence*? How is the same product advertised in the English and Spanish versions of *People*? Questions such as these lead students to a sharpened awareness of audience.

From these considerations, students can begin to restate the claim an advertiser makes and identify the underlying assumptions. Generally unstated, an assumption is an implied shared belief. For instance, ads for Botox treatments assume that the target audience believes wrinkles are undesirable, perhaps even that any signs of aging are negative. Those points are not stated explicitly, but if they were not true, why would anyone want to use Botox?

### Appeals to Pathos, Logos, and Ethos

Appeals to pathos, logos, and ethos work together synergistically in advertising, though the appeal to our emotions (pathos) is generally the strongest. The visual elements in print ads include pictures, color, typefaces, and their arrangement or design. The group of smiling, well-dressed, seemingly carefree individuals in beer ads tugs at the viewer's desire for a similar good time, just as the image of the adorable puppy in the Humane Society ads tries to link our feelings to our pocketbooks. The wording of ads may also appeal to pathos, whether it's the name of the product ("Stetson Untamed" cologne), connotation (a car called "Explorer"), or a metaphor ("email is a bridge").

Logos, the appeal to reason, usually doesn't predominate, because a clear head could bring the kind of scrutiny that argues against handing over our cash or credit card. At the same time, however, advertisers are exceedingly clever at presenting pseudoscientific "evidence," such as the explanation of why a particular shampoo will improve the shine or health of our hair. Car ads, too, are prime examples of appeals to the reason of the would-be buyer: safety features, environmental concerns, price itself. Very often celebrities -- presumed authorities -- offer testimony, an appeal to reason if the person is actually an authority (such as a sports star advertising Nike shoes), but also often an appeal to pathos (such as the well-known personalities featured in Verizon or T-Mobile ads).

Ads may make a rather subtle, even flattering appeal to logos when they present the counterargument. In some

instances this boils down to choosing Product X over its competitor; at other times the approach is more elaborate. The initial iMac ads, for example, included a series of "myths" stated with responses. For example, Myth 2, "Macs don't work with PCs," is one point sometimes raised against the Mac; the response acknowledges, then refutes it.

Ethos, the appeal to character and shared values, might be linked to logos when, for instance, a drug manufacturer makes safety claims or a public service organization describes its mission. In fact, the inclusion of a toll-free number or a Web site inviting consumers to gain more information has elements of both logos (implying the consumer is smart enough to want to know more) and ethos (suggesting the company is open and honest, offering a kind of partnership with the consumer). But ethos these days is often the corporate equivalent of reassurance and apology. Criticized for putting corporate interests ahead of environmental concerns, Shell Oil Company responds with a print ad asking, "Cloud the Issue ... or Clear the Air?" This play on words introduces deftly written text attesting to Shell's "commitment to contribute to sustainable development" -- and thus to its good corporate character.

### Logical Fallacies

Having students debate the effectiveness of an ad can increase their awareness of logical fallacies. For instance, an ad claiming that "more people buy X than any other" relies on a bandwagon appeal, our desire to be part of a group. An ad could be guilty of creating an either/or fallacy if it suggests that not doing or buying something will automatically have certain consequences. The ad that boasts of a painkiller's effectiveness might, if examined more closely, be seen to rely on a hasty generalization.

### Web Sites as Advertisements

Students can put all of these analytical tools to work by studying Web sites, particularly those for political candidates and corporate entities. During an election year, every candidate (e.g., John Kerry) has a Web site just waiting to be analyzed in terms of the claim, "Vote for me!" Logos, pathos, and ethos exist in visual elements as well as written text. Ways to present counterarguments abound ("Don't vote for the other guy!"). The fancy corporate Web sites of such megacompanies as Coca-Cola and Benetton contain color, visual images, many different texts available at the click of a mouse, and testimonies galore to their good works and good products. All are rich possibilities to get students thinking rhetorically, a crucial step toward analyzing the complex texts that appear on the AP English Language and Composition Exam. For examples, try the following Web sites:

- [John Kerry](#)
- [Coca-Cola](#)
- [Benetton](#)

*Renee H. Shea is Director of Freshman Composition at Bowie State University, Maryland, where she teaches graduate courses in rhetoric and is a member of the Honors Faculty. She has worked with the AP English Program for over 25 years as a Reader and question leader, and frequently conducts workshops for teachers.*

Also useful --

**What Do Students Need to Know About Rhetoric**

[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/repository/ap06\\_englang\\_roskelly\\_50098.pdf](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/repository/ap06_englang_roskelly_50098.pdf)

## Appealing to Your Audience

When analyzing someone else's argument or constructing your own, always ask yourself these questions:

- Who is the speaker?
- Who is the speaker or author's intended audience?
- How do I know who the audience is?
- How has the audience influenced the speaker or author's choice of argumentative strategies?

### LOGOS – LOGICAL

Loosely defined, logos refers to the use of logic, reasons, facts, statistics, data, and numbers. **Logical appeals** are aimed at the mind of the audience, their thinking side. Very often, **logos** seems tangible and touchable. When a speaker or writer uses **logical appeals**, he or she will avoid inflammatory language, and the writer will carefully connect its reasons to supporting evidence. Ask yourself why the author or speaker is using **logos**?

**Advantages: provides evidence for major decisions**

**Disadvantages: can demand a high degree of reader attention**

Here are some, but not all, techniques that are used in this type of appeal:

- **test results**
- **standard research findings**
- **surveys**
- **eyewitness testimony**
- **logical reasons** why your audience should believe you (keep in mind that not all reasons are equally persuasive for all audiences).
- **evidence** that proves or explains your reasons
- **facts** – using information that can be checked by testing, observing firsthand, or reading reference materials to support an opinion.
- **statistics** – percentages, numbers, and charts to highlight significant data
- **expert opinion** – statements by people who are recognized as authorities on the subject.
- **examples** – giving examples that support each reason
- **use of cause and effect, compare and contrast, and analogy**

### PATHOS – EMOTIONAL

Arguments from the heart are designed to appeal to the audience's emotions and feelings. Emotions can direct people in powerful ways to think more carefully about what they do. In hearing or reading an argument that is heavy on **emotional appeals**, ask yourself these questions: How is the speaker or author appealing to the audience's emotions? Why? Always try to name the emotions being appealed to (love, sympathy, anger, fear, hate, patriotism, compassion) and figure out how the emotion is being created in the audience.

**Emotional appeals** are often just examples - ones chosen to awaken specific feelings in an audience. Although frequently abused, the **emotional appeal** is a legitimate aspect of argument, for speakers and authors want their audience to care about the issues they address.

Most common emotions appealed to include

- **Creativity** – desire for recognition by self-expression
- **Achievement** – the need to attain money, fame, or fulfillment
- **Independence** -- the drive to be unique, to stand out, to be individual
- **Conformity** – the desire to be included
- **Endurance** – to achieve satisfaction by bearing burdens others could not
- **Fear** – to resist, avoid, or defeat threats to the self or society

**Advantages: produces immediate results.**

**Disadvantages: limited impact, can backfire, limited factual support**

Here are some, but not all, techniques that are used in this type of appeal:

- **creativity** – may use humor, word play, etc. to invoke positive emotions
- **moving stories and anecdotes** that prove your opinion
- **music, color, art**
- **using emotional language** or “catchy words” to appeal to people’s values or guilty consciences or vivid description.
- **slanting** . Omitting or not using information that may conflict with or weaken the author’s opinion.
- **predicting extreme outcomes of events/dire predication** in order to create a sense of urgency
- **specific examples**

## **ETHOS – ETHICAL**

**Ethical appeals** depend on the credibility or training of the author. Audiences tend to believe writers who seem honest, wise, and trustworthy. An author or speaker exerts ethical appeal when the language itself impresses the audience that the speaker is a person of intelligence, high moral character and good will. Thus a person wholly unknown to an audience can by words alone win that audience’s trust and approval. Aristotle emphasized the importance of impressing upon the audience that the speaker is a person of good sense and high moral character.

**Advantages: can be very powerful, if the audience shares standards**

**Disadvantages: depends on readers who accept similar principles**

Here are some, but not all, techniques that are used in this type of appeal:

- **Religion** – the desire to follow the rules and behavior of one’s faith
- **Patriotism** – the urge to place one’s country before personal needs
- **Standards** – the desire to be a good citizen, good student, good parent, etc.
- **Humanitarianism** – secular appeal to help others, save the environment, help the helpless, etc.

## Argument vs. Persuasion

Argument	Purpose	Persuasion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain legitimacy</li> <li>• Convince of credibility</li> </ul>	Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain consent</li> <li>• Motivate to action/non-action</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal to logic</li> </ul>	Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal to values, desires, emotions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal</li> </ul>	Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal</li> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Non-standard</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Informed sources</li> <li>• Concession for legitimacy</li> <li>• Definition (generic audience)</li> </ul>	Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illustrations</li> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Jargon</li> <li>• Euphemisms</li> <li>• Overstatement/understatement</li> <li>• “Common man”</li> <li>• Specific audience</li> <li>• Connotation</li> </ul>
Summary (repetition of arguments)	Endings	Often direction – action/non-action
Logically – often linear organization, i.e. most to least/least to most	Organization	Organization development for building emotion
Clear assertions – often at beginning first third		Relate to reader then charged examples Assertions often implied

From Sara Hayes Website: <[http://lausd.k12.ca.us/Jefferson\\_HS/lessons/shayes/index.html](http://lausd.k12.ca.us/Jefferson_HS/lessons/shayes/index.html)>

# A Checklist for Analyzing Images (Especially Advertisements)

- What is the overall effect of the design? Colorful and busy (suggesting activity)? Quiet and understated (for instance, chiefly whites and grays, with lots of empty space)? Old-fashioned or cutting edge?
- What about the image immediately gets your attention? Size? Position on the page? Beauty of the image? Grotesqueness of the image? Humor?
- What is the audience for the image? Affluent young men? Housewives? Retired persons? Does the text make a logical appeal (“Tests at a leading university prove that . . .,” “If you believe X, you should vote ‘No’ on this referendum”)?
- Does the image appeal to the emotions? Examples: Images of starving children or maltreated animals appeal to our sense of pity; images of military valor may appeal to our patriotism; images of luxury may appeal to our envy; images of sexually attractive people may appeal to our desire to be like them; images of violence or extraordinary ugliness (as, for instance, in some ads showing a human fetus destroyed) may seek to shock us.
- Does the image make an ethical appeal – that is, does it appeal to our character as a good human being? Ads by charitable organizations often appeal to our sense of decency, fairness, and pity, but ads that appeal to our sense of prudence (ads for insurance companies or for investment house) also essentially are making an ethical appeal.
- What is the relation of print to image? Does the image do most of the work, or does it serve to attract us and lead us on to read the text?

Barnet, Sylvan and Hugo Bedau. *From Critical Thinking to Argument: A Portable Guide*. “Chapter 4: Visual Rhetoric Images as Arguments.” New York: Bedford, 2005. Page 94.

# VAPID: Questions to Ask When Reading an Ad

## Voice:

- What voice is speaking in this ad?
- Is it an authentic, credible voice or an unreliable persona trying to use irrational propaganda to sell the audience something?

## Audience:

- Where does this ad appear?
- What audience is the ad directed toward?
- What race, class, gender, or age-group does the ad target?
- Does the ad writer take unfair advantage of the reader?

## Purpose:

- What is the apparent purpose of the ad?
- What is the actual purpose of the ad?
- Does the ad claim to offer some kind of public service?
- If so, does the product really fulfill the promises of the ad?
- Does the ad conceal or minimize anything negative about the product?

## Idea:

- What is the central idea of the ad, its thesis or hypothesis, its focus?
- Is this idea rational or irrational, i.e. does the ad appeal to emotion or reason?
- Does the ad appeal to one of the “Seven Deadly Sins” (pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, or sloth)?
- Does the ad try to impress the reader with impressive-sounding data or pseudoscientific “facts”?
- Does the ad make general claims which are unsubstantiated by factual data?

## Devices:

- What is the overall design of the ad?
- What attention-getting ploys are used?
- If there are people in the ad, what race, class, gender, age-group and “type” are they?
- How are the people positioned within the ad?
- What role does costume or fashion play in the ad?
- What place do graphics, setting and inanimate objects play?
- How is the product represented and packaged and what role does this play in the overall design of the ad?
- What role does the relative size of the product and other images play?
- What about the use of color and texture in the ad?
- What information and support for the ad’s claims does the copy (i.e. the written text of the ad) provide?
- What does the copy convey denotatively?
- What does the copy convey connotatively?
- What role does the print-size and font play?
- Is there any small print? If so, why is it so small?

Based on D. G. Kehl’s “How to Read an Ad: Reading Between the Lies” in *Beyond 1984*, ed. William Lutz, Illinois: NCTE, 1989.

## Finding Ads' Hidden Messages\*

There's more to advertising's message than meets the casual eye. An effective ad, like other forms of communication, works best when it strikes a chord in the needs and desires of the receiving consumer -- a connection that can be both intuitive and highly calculated.

The following questions can help foster an awareness of this process. Use them for class or group discussions or your own individual analysis of ads or commercials. You may be surprised by the messages and meanings you uncover.

1. What is the general ambience of the advertisement? What mood does it create? How does it do this?
2. What is the design of the advertisement? Does it use axial balance or some other form? How are the basic components or elements arranged?
3. What is the relationship between pictorial elements and written material and what does this tell us?
4. What is the use of space in the advertisement? Is there a lot of 'white space' or is it full of graphic and written elements?
5. What signs and symbols do we find? What role do they play in the ad's impact?
6. If there are figures (men, women, children, animals) what are they like? What can be said about their facial expressions, poses, hairstyle, age, sex, hair color, ethnicity, education, occupation, relationships (of one to the other)?
7. What does the background tell us? Where is the advertisement taking place and what significance does this background have?
8. What action is taking place in the advertisement and what significance does it have? (This might be described as the ad's "plot.")
9. What theme or themes do we find in the advertisement? What is it about? (The plot of an advertisement may involve a man and a woman drinking but the theme might be jealousy, faithlessness, ambition, passion, etc.)
10. What about the language used? Does it essentially provide information or does it try to generate some kind of emotional response? Or both? What techniques are used by the copywriter: humor, alliteration, definitions" of life, comparisons, sexual innuendo, and so on?
11. What typefaces are used and what impressions do they convey?
12. What is the item being advertised and what role does it play in American culture and society?
13. What about aesthetic decisions? If the advertisement is a photograph, what kind of a shot is it? What significance do long shots, medium shots, close-up shots have? What about the lighting, use of color, angle of the shot?
14. What sociological, political, economic or cultural attitudes are indirectly reflected in the advertisement? An advertisement may be about a pair of blue jeans but it might, indirectly, reflect such matters as sexism, alienation, stereotyped thinking, conformism, generational conflict, loneliness, elitism, and so on.

Excerpted from *Signs in Contemporary Culture: An Introduction to Semiotics* by Arthur Asu Berger (Longman: White Plains NY: 2007)

\*Center for Media Literacy <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/how-analyze-advertisement>

# The Language of Advertising Claims

by Jeffrey Schrank

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*In the essay that follows, Jeffrey Schrank gives a list of the techniques advertisers employ to make claims for their products. Written by a teacher, this selection should serve as a tool: its classification of advertisers' promises and claims can be used to analyze and evaluate the fairness of the language in many ads. As you read it, consider additional ad claims that fit within each of Schrank's categories.*

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Students, and many teachers, are notorious believers in their immunity to advertising. These naive inhabitants of consumerland believe that advertising is childish, dumb, a bunch of lies, and influences only the vast hordes of the less sophisticated. Their own purchases are made purely on the basis of value and desire, with advertising playing only a minor supporting role. They know about Vance Packard and his "hidden persuaders" and the adwriter's psychosell and bag of persuasive magic. They are not impressed.

Advertisers know better. Although few people admit to being greatly influenced by ads, surveys and sales figures show that a well-designed advertising campaign has dramatic effects. A logical conclusion is that advertising works below the level of conscious awareness and it works even on those who claim immunity to its message. Ads are designed to have an effect while being laughed at, belittled, and all but ignored.

A person unaware of advertising's claim on him or her is precisely the one most defenseless against the adwriter's attack. Advertisers delight in an audience which believes ads to be harmless nonsense, for such an audience is rendered defenseless by its belief that there is no attack taking place. The purpose of a classroom study of advertising is to raise the level of awareness about the persuasive techniques used in ads. One way to do this is to analyze ads in microscopic detail. Ads can be studied to detect their psychological hooks, they can be used to gauge values and hidden desires of the common person, they can be studied for their use of symbols, color, and imagery. But perhaps the simplest and most direct way to study ads is through an analysis of the language of the advertising claim. The "claim" is the verbal or print part of an ad that makes some claim of superiority for the product being advertised. After studying claims, students should be able to recognize those that are misleading and accept as useful information those that are true. A few of these claims are downright lies, some are honest statements about a truly superior product, but most fit into the category of neither bold lies nor helpful consumer information. They balance on the narrow line between truth and falsehood by a careful choice of words.

The reason so many ad claims fall into this category of pseudo-information is that they are applied to parity products, products in which all or most of the brands available are nearly identical. Since no one superior product exists, advertising is used to create the illusion of superiority. The largest advertising budgets are devoted to parity products such as gasoline, cigarettes, beer and soft drinks, soaps, and various headache and cold remedies.

The first rule of parity involves the Alice in Wonderlandish use of the words "better" and "best." In parity claims, "better" means "best" and "best" means "equal to." If all the brands are identical, they must all be equally good, the legal minds have decided. So "best" means that the product is as good as the other superior products in its category. When Bing Crosby declares Minute Maid Orange Juice "the best there is" he means it is as good as the other orange juices you can buy.

The word "better" has been legally interpreted to be a comparative and therefore becomes a clear claim of superiority. Bing could not have said that Minute Maid is "better than any other orange juice." "Better" is a claim of superiority. The only time "better" can be used is when a product does indeed have superiority over other products in its category or when the better is used to compare the product with something other than competing brands. An orange juice could therefore claim to be "better than a vitamin pill," or even "the better breakfast drink."

The second rule of advertising claims is simply that if any product is truly superior, the ad will say so very clearly and will offer some kind of convincing evidence of the superiority. If an ad hedges the least bit about a product's advantage over the competition you can strongly suspect it is not superior--may be equal to but not better. You will never hear a gasoline company say "we will give you four miles per gallon more in your car than any other brand." They would love to make such a claim, but it would not be true. Gasoline is a parity product, and, in spite of some very clever and deceptive ads of a few years ago, no one has yet claimed one brand of gasoline better than any other brand.

To create the necessary illusion of superiority, advertisers usually resort to one or more of the following ten basic techniques. Each is common and easy to identify.

## 1. THE WEASEL CLAIM

A weasel word is a modifier that practically negates the claim that follows. The expression "weasel word" is aptly named after the egg-

eating habits of weasels. A weasel will suck out the inside of an egg, leaving it appear intact to the casual observer. Upon examination, the egg is discovered to be hollow. Words or claims that appear substantial upon first look but disintegrate into hollow meaninglessness on analysis are weasels. Commonly used weasel words include "helps" (the champion weasel); "like" (used in a comparative sense); "virtual" or "virtually"; "acts" or "works"; "can be"; "up to"; "as much as"; "refreshes"; "comforts"; "tackles"; "fights"; "come on"; "the feel of"; "the look of"; "looks like"; "fortified"; "enriched"; and "strengthened."

#### *Samples of Weasel Claims*

"*Helps control dandruff symptoms with regular use.*" The weasels include "helps control," and possibly even "symptoms" and "regular use." The claim is not "stops dandruff."

"Leaves dishes *virtually* spotless." We have seen so many ad claims that we have learned to tune out weasels. You are supposed to think "spotless," rather than "virtually" spotless.

"Only half the price of *many* color sets." "Many" is the weasel. The claim is supposed to give the impression that the set is inexpensive.

"Tests confirm one mouthwash *best* against mouth odor."

"Hot Nestlé's cocoa is the very *best*." Remember the "best" and "better" routine.

"Listerine *fights* bad breath." "Fights," not "stops."

"Lots of things have changed, but Hershey's *goodness* hasn't." This claim does not say that Hershey's chocolate hasn't changed.

"Bacos, the crispy garnish that tastes just *like* its name."

## **2. THE UNFINISHED CLAIM**

The unfinished claim is one in which the ad claims the product is better, or has more of something, but does not finish the comparison.

#### *Samples of Unfinished Claims*

"Magnavox gives you more." More what?

"Anacin: Twice as much of the pain reliever doctors recommend most." This claim fits in a number of categories but it does not say twice as much of what pain reliever.

"Supergloss does it with more color, more shine, more sizzle, more!"

"Coffee-mate gives coffee more body, more flavor." Also note that "body" and "flavor" are weasels.

"You can be sure if it's Westinghouse." Sure of what?

"Scott makes it better for you."

"Ford LTD--700% quieter."

When the FTC asked Ford to substantiate this claim, Ford revealed that they meant the inside of the Ford was 700% quieter than the outside.

## **3. THE "WE'RE DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE" CLAIM**

This kind of claim states that there is nothing else quite like the product being advertised. For example, if Schlitz would add pink food coloring to its beer they could say, "There's nothing like new pink Schlitz." The uniqueness claim is supposed to be interpreted by readers as a claim to superiority.

#### *Samples of the "We're Different and Unique" Claim*

"There's no other mascara like it."

"Only Doral has this unique filter system."

"Cougar is like nobody else's car."

"Either way, liquid or spray, there's nothing else like it."

"If it doesn't say Goodyear, it can't be polyglas." "Polyglas" is a trade name copyrighted by Goodyear. Goodrich or Firestone could make a tire exactly identical to the Goodyear one and yet couldn't call it "polyglas"--a name for fiberglass belts.

"Only Zenith has chromacolor." Same as the "polyglas" gambit. Admiral has solarcolor and RCA has accucolor.

## 4. THE "WATER IS WET" CLAIM

"Water is wet" claims say something about the product that is true for any brand in that product category, (for example, "Schrank's water is really wet.") The claim is usually a statement of fact, but not a real advantage over the competition.

*Samples of the "Water is Wet" Claim*

"Mobil: the Detergent Gasoline." Any gasoline acts as a cleaning agent.

"Great Lash greatly increases the diameter of every lash."

"Rheingold, the natural beer." Made from grains and water as are other beers.

"SKIN smells differently on everyone." As do many perfumes.

## 5. THE "SO WHAT" CLAIM

This is the kind of claim to which the careful reader will react by saying "So What?" A claim is made which is true but which gives no real advantage to the product. This is similar to the "water is wet" claim except that it claims an advantage which is not shared by most of the other brands in the product category.

*Samples of the "So What" Claim*

"Geritol has more than twice the iron of ordinary supplements." But is twice as much beneficial to the body?

"Campbell's gives you tasty pieces of chicken and not one but two chicken stocks." Does the presence of two stocks improve the taste?

"Strong enough for a man but made for a woman." This deodorant claims says only that the product is aimed at the female market.

## 6. THE VAGUE CLAIM

The vague claim is simply not clear. This category often overlaps with others. The key to the vague claim is the use of words that are colorful but meaningless, as well as the use of subjective and emotional opinions that defy verification. Most contain weasels.

*Samples of the Vague Claim*

"Lips have never looked so luscious." Can you imagine trying to either prove or disprove such a claim?

"Lipsavers are fun--they taste good, smell good and feel good."

"Its deep rich lather makes hair feel good again."

"For skin like peaches and cream."

"The end of meatloaf boredom."

"Take a bite and you'll think you're eating on the Champs Elysées."

"Winston tastes good like a cigarette should."

"The perfect little portable for all around viewing with all the features of higher priced sets."

"Fleishman's makes sensible eating delicious."

## 7. THE ENDORSEMENT OR TESTIMONIAL

A celebrity or authority appears in an ad to lend his or her stellar qualities to the product. Sometimes the people will actually claim to use the product, but very often they don't. There are agencies surviving on providing products with testimonials.

*Samples of Endorsements or Testimonials*

"Joan Fontaine throws a shot-in-the-dark party and her friends learn a thing or two."

"Darling, have you discovered Masterpiece? The most exciting men I know are smoking it." (Eva Gabor)

"Vega is the best handling car in the U.S." This claim was challenged by the FTC, but GM answered that the claim is only a direct  
mseffie@mac.com Sandra Effinger http://www.mseffie.com

quote from *Road and Track* magazine.

## 8. THE SCIENTIFIC OR STATISTICAL CLAIM

This kind of ad uses some sort of scientific proof or experiment, very specific numbers, or an impressive sounding mystery ingredient.

### *Samples of Scientific or Statistical Claims*

"Wonder Break helps build strong bodies 12 ways." Even the weasel "helps" did not prevent the FTC from demanding this ad be withdrawn. But note that the use of the number 12 makes the claim far more believable than if it were taken out.

"Easy-Off has 33% more cleaning power than another popular brand." "Another popular brand" often translates as some other kind of oven cleaner sold somewhere. Also the claim does not say Easy-Off works 33% better.

"Special Morning--33% more nutrition." Also an unfinished claim.

"Certs contains a sparkling drop of Retsyn."

"ESSO with HTA."

"Sinarest. Created by a research scientist who actually gets sinus headaches."

## 9. THE "COMPLIMENT THE CONSUMER" CLAIM

This kind of claim butters up the consumer by some form of flattery.

### *Samples of the "Compliment the Consumer" Claim*

"We think a cigar smoker is someone special."

"If what you do is right for you, no matter what others do, then RC Cola is right for you."

"You pride yourself on your good home cooking...."

"The lady has taste."

"You've come a long way, baby."

## 10. THE RHETORICAL QUESTION

This technique demands a response from the audience. A question is asked and the viewer or listener is supposed to answer in such a way as to affirm the product's goodness.

### *Samples of the Rhetorical Question*

"Plymouth--isn't that the kind of car America wants?"

"Shouldn't your family be drinking Hawaiian Punch?"

"What do you want most from coffee? That's what you get most from Hills."

"Touch of Sweden: could your hands use a small miracle?"

## DECONSTRUCTING AN ADVERTISEMENT

» For a print advertisement

### STEP 1: MAKE OBSERVATIONS

» Think of five adjectives that describe the ad.

» Look at the ad and evaluate its aesthetics:

- Are there people depicted in the ad? What gender is represented? What race? What do the people look like (young, old, stylish, etc.)? What are their facial expressions?
- Estimate what the camera angle was. Was it far from the subject or close to it? Was it above, eye-level, or below the subject?
- Take note of the lighting used in the ad. Does it appear to be natural or artificial? Why or why not? Are certain parts of the ad highlighted while others are not? If so, why do you think this is? Are there shadows? If so, how big are they?
- What colors are used? Are they bright? black and white? in sharp contrast to each other?
- If the ad has text or copy, how does it look? What kind of font is used? Is more than one type of font used? How big is the text? What color is the text? Is there more than one color used? What does the text actually say? What does the large text say? The small text?

### STEP 2: DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE AD

» Remember that the purpose of an ad is always to sell a product!

» What product is being sold?

» Do you find the product appealing? Why or why not?

» Who is the target audience for this product? Children? Teens? Adults? The elderly?

» What feelings or emotions is the ad trying to associate with the product? Did it work? Why or why not?

*(continued on next page)*

## DECONSTRUCTING AN ADVERTISEMENT

(continues from other page)

### STEP 3: DETERMINE THE ASSUMPTIONS THE AD MAKES & THE MESSAGES IT SENDS

» Assumptions may not be contained directly in the ads themselves, but in the messages that are produced from them

■ What assumptions does the ad make about gender? (*i.e. Women are powerful when they hold a hair dryer in their hands. Men like to drink beer. Women are primary caregivers, etc..*) Are these assumptions realistic? Why or why not? Do these assumptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about gender identity?

■ What assumptions does the ad make about race (*i.e. African Americans are excellent athletes. Latinos are sensual and passionate. Etc.*)? Are these assumptions realistic? Why or why not? Do these assumptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about racial identity?

■ What assumptions does the ad make about class (*i.e. Wealthy people are happy and trouble-free. Poor people are always looking for a handout, etc..*)? Are these assumptions realistic? Why or why not? Do these assumptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about class?

### STEP 4: CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE MESSAGES

» What are some possible consequences? (long-term and short-term)

» Do the messages create unrealistic expectations for people? Why or why not?

» How do the messages in this ad counter or undermine social change?

» Is this ad socially responsible? How or how not? What does it mean for an ad or a company to be socially responsible?

» In the closing comments of the video *Killing Us Softly 3*, Jean Kilbourne states that change will depend upon “an aware, active, educated public that thinks for itself primarily as citizens rather than primarily as consumers.” What does it mean to think of oneself primarily as a citizen rather than primarily a consumer? Can one be both a citizen and a consumer? How? Reflect on this ad with the above statement in mind.

May 30, 2000

THE MEDIA BUSINESS: ADVERTISING

## **THE MEDIA BUSINESS: ADVERTISING; The A.C.L.U. is taking a provocative Madison Avenue route to raise support for its causes.**

By Patricia Winters Lauro

THE advertisement features a photograph of Martin Luther King Jr. on the left and one of Charles Manson on the right.

"The man on the left is 75 times more likely to be stopped by the police while driving than the man on the right," says the headline in bold type. The ad goes on to explain that around the country police regularly stop drivers based on their skin color rather than on the way they are driving.

The paid ad, which begins running on Sunday in The New York Times Magazine and the next day in The New Yorker, is a message from the American Civil Liberties Union. Founded in 1920 and probably best remembered -- at least by baby boomers -- for its role during the anti-Vietnam war protests of the 60's and 70's, the A.C.L.U. is taking a consumer marketing approach to build new awareness and support for its causes.

And consumer-style advertising and Web-based marketing, including a Web store, is all part of it.

"You can't reach a significant number of people by only speaking at bar associations and Elks lodges and universities," said Ira Glasser, the A.C.L.U.'s executive director in New York. "Advertising and Web-based communication has to be part of it."

"We have taken to advertising for the same reason people who market products have taken to advertising in a dramatic and splashy and visible way," he added. "We want to get the message into people's consciousness without forcing them to have to read a law review article."

The organization has advertised in the past, but its approach has either been event-driven -- the mass arrests of antiwar protesters -- or, in recent years, all text ads about issues that ran on op-ed pages in newspapers.

But the group's polling found that the A.C.L.U. was still largely misunderstood, Mr. Glasser said. The group is often remembered for its most sensational and titillating cases -- defense of the free speech rights of the Ku Klux Klan, for example -- and not for the other 5,000 to 6,000 cases handled each year, he said.

"Generally, people don't know what the A.C.L.U. does, and they have a rather distorted image of what the organization stands for," Mr. Glasser said. "This is also an attempt to educate people about the issues and inform the public of our core values."

The A.C.L.U. late last year hired DeVito/Verdi in New York -- its first consumer ad agency, and one that is known for its provocative work for clients like ecampus.com and causes like the Pro-Choice Public Education Project. The agency also creates advertising for Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign for the Senate.

Mr. Glasser said he also hopes the advertising will draw people to its Web site, which offers information on a host of issues. The site's store sells books and items like A.C.L.U. T-shirts, caps and mugs.

Racial profiling is just one issue that the A.C.L.U. is taking on in advertising. The group will run ads that support abortion rights and gay rights.

And it will take aim at the practice of trying juveniles offenders as adults with a campaign that uses the headline: "They finally found an answer to overcrowded prisons. Smaller prisoners."

Ellis Verdi, president of DeVito/Verdi, said all the issues "resonated with people" in its polling as the topics of the day.

Actually, the ads are the second phase of the campaign, which was started in December with a print ad on the death of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed Bronx man who was killed by New York City police in a fusillade of 41 bullets. The ad was condemned by New York City's Patrolmen's Benevolent Association as prejudicial pretrial publicity and was later cited by a judge as among the reasons for a change in venue from the city to upstate New York. The A.C.L.U. maintains that the ad did not take a legal position, and only highlighted "the latest unjustified killing of a person of color."

Racial profiling is a volatile issue around the country, but it is unclear whether police groups will respond to this latest ad. The National Association of Police Organizations, a coalition of police unions and associations in Washington, was unavailable for comment.

The Diallo ad was risky and was criticized. But Victor Kamber, president of the Kamber Group in Washington, which creates advocacy advertising for labor unions and other causes, said that the A.C.L.U.'s campaign needs to be controversial to provoke its "liberal, progressive and somewhat shrinking" audience to act.

"I don't think they are advertising to get general public recognition," said Mr. Kamber. "If they wanted that, they'd run a neutral ad about how they support good causes. Their goal is to get people angry and excited, and I think they achieved it."

But Mr. Verdi said the agency is not setting out to be controversial, though it does want to be noticed. The A.C.L.U. has a \$1 million ad budget -- big for the organization but minuscule by Madison Avenue standards, said Mr. Glasser.

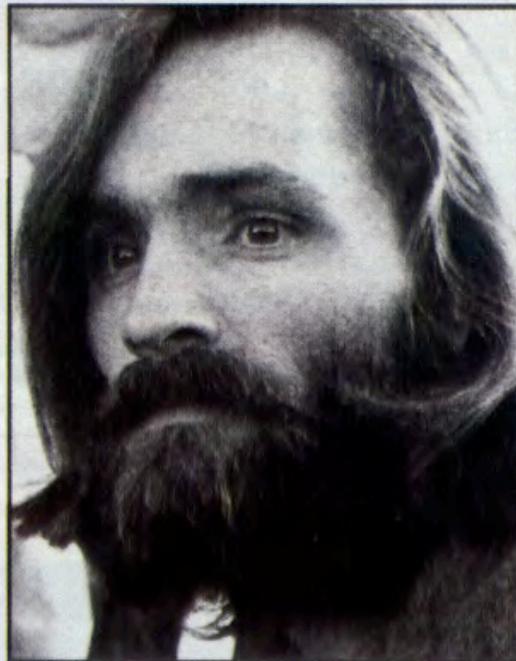
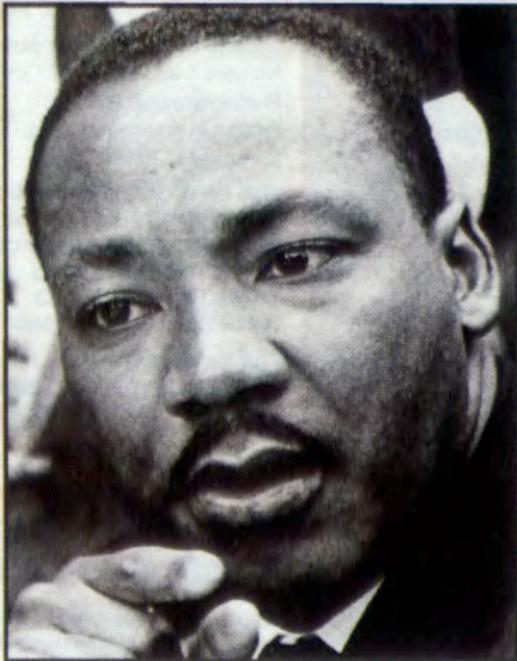
"A public service ad has to move you emotionally and intellectually," Mr. Verdi said. "If you don't get a chill, it's a total waste of money."

Photo: An ad in the American Civil Liberties Union's campaign against racial profiling by the police.

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# **THE MAN ON THE LEFT IS 75 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE STOPPED BY THE POLICE WHILE DRIVING THAN THE MAN ON THE RIGHT.**

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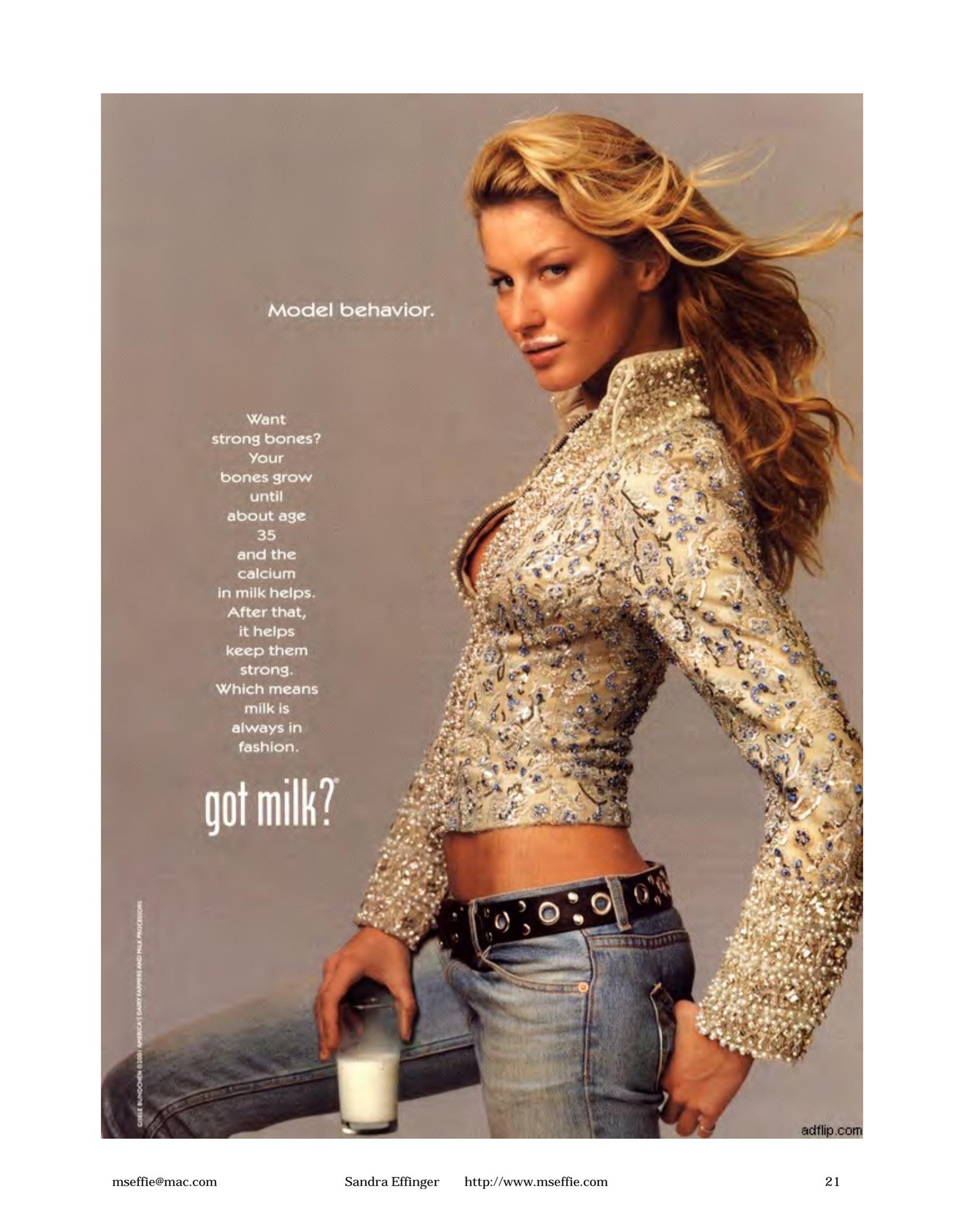
It happens every day on America's highways. Police stop drivers based on their skin color rather than for the way they are driving. For example, in Florida 80% of those stopped and searched were black and Hispanic, while they constituted only 5% of all drivers. These humiliating and illegal searches are violations of the Constitution and must be fought. Help us defend your rights. Support the ACLU.

---

a m e r i c a n   c i v i l   l i b e r t i e s   u n i o n

125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, NY, NY 10004 [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)





Model behavior.

Want  
strong bones?  
Your  
bones grow  
until  
about age  
35  
and the  
calcium  
in milk helps.  
After that,  
it helps  
keep them  
strong.  
Which means  
milk is  
always in  
fashion.

got milk?

© 2001 AMERICA'S DAIRY FARMERS AND MILK PROCESSORS

adflip.com

In the future,  
cities will become deserts,  
roads will become battlefields  
and the hope of mankind  
will appear as a stranger.

# THE ROAD WARRIOR

"THE ROAD WARRIOR"

A KENNEDY MILLER PRODUCTION

Starring MEL GIBSON Music by BRIAN MAY  
Written by TERRY HAYES, GEORGE MILLER with BRIAN HANNANT  
Produced by BYRON KENNEDY Directed by GEORGE MILLER

**R** RESTRICTED  
Under 17 requires accompanying  
parent or adult guardian

Original soundtrack available on  
VARSE SARABANDH records

PANASONIC  
DOLBY DIGITAL  
DOLBY DIGITAL  
DOLBY DIGITAL

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**"THE ROAD WARRIOR" EXPERIENCE STARTS SOON!**



**TAKE A CUT-UP CHICKEN\***  
**TAKE A CAN OF SOUP**  
**NOW**  
**LOOK WHAT YOU CAN DO**



\*Or 2 lb. chicken parts; thaw, if frozen.

## **MUSHROOM CHICKEN**

Put chicken (skin-side down) in baking dish (12 x 8 x 2"); pour 2 tbsp. melted butter over. Bake 20 min. at 400°F.; turn; bake 20 min. more. Stir 1 can Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup till smooth. Top chicken with soup, ¼ cup toasted slivered almonds. Bake 20 min. 4 to 6 servings.

## **TOMATO CHICKEN**

Put chicken (skin-side down) in baking dish (12 x 8 x 2"); pour 2 tbsp. melted butter over. Bake 20 min. at 400°F.; turn; bake 20 min. more. Pour 1 can Campbell's Tomato Soup over chicken; sprinkle with ¼ tsp. leaf oregano, dash garlic powder. Bake 20 min. more. 4 to 6 delicious servings.

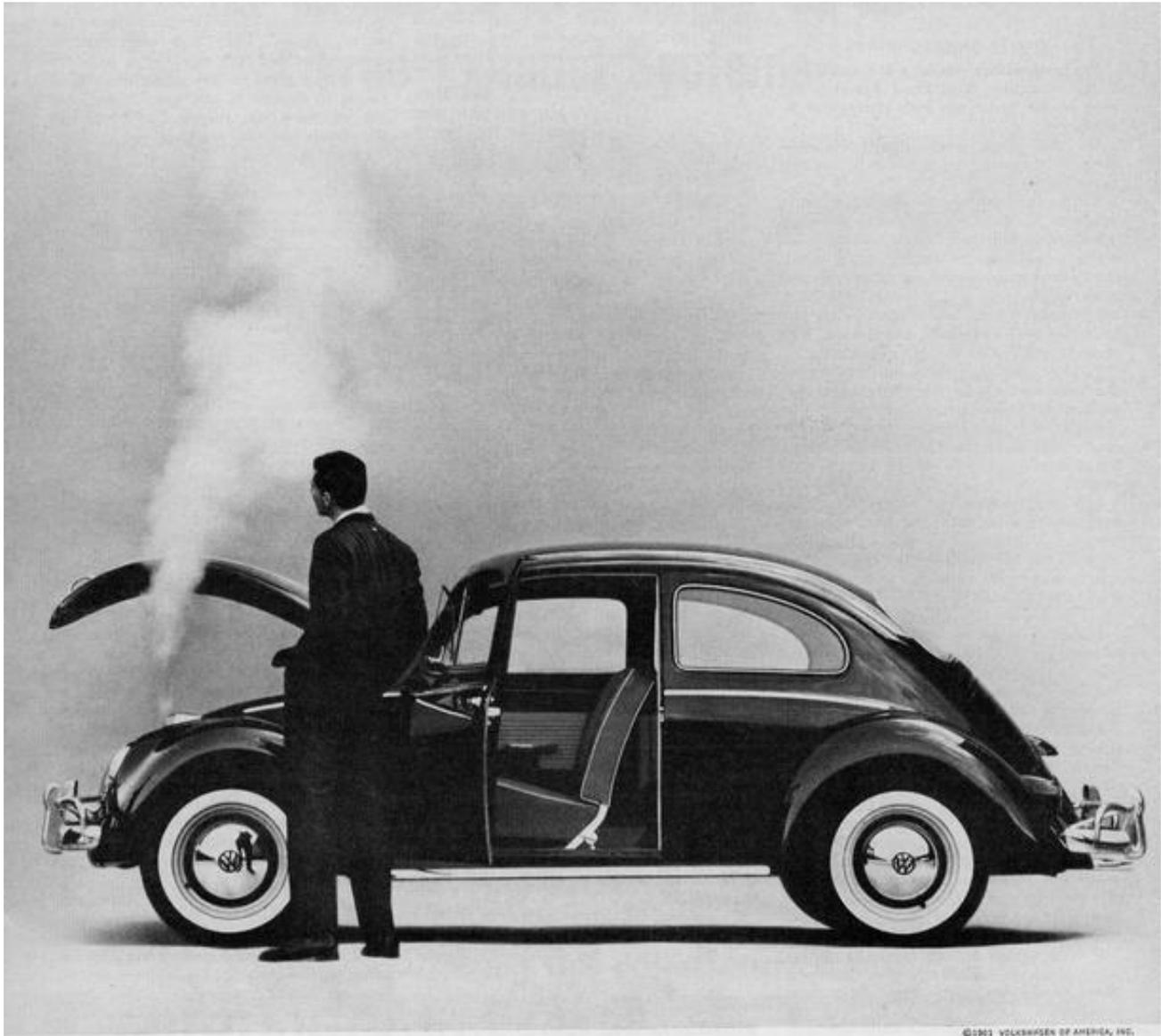
## **CELERY CHICKEN**

Put chicken (skin-side down) in baking dish (12 x 8 x 2"); pour 2 tbsp. melted butter over. Bake 20 min. at 400°F.; turn; bake 20 min. more. Stir 1 can Campbell's Cream of Celery Soup till smooth; pour over chicken; sprinkle with 2 tbsp. chopped parsley. Bake 20 min. more. 4 to 6 souper servings.



M'm! M'm! Good! When the soup is *Campbell's*

adflip.com



©1961 VOLKSWAGEN OF AMERICA, INC.

## Impossible.

A Volkswagen can't boil over.  
It's physically impossible.

The reason is absurdly simple: the VW's rear engine is cooled by air, not water.

Since air can't boil, neither can the car.

If you had to, you could drive a VW all day at top speed through a desert. Or edge along in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the hottest day of the year.

You may get all steamed up, but not your Volkswagen.

Chances are you'll appreciate the air-cooled engine even more in winter. Air can't freeze any more than it can boil. So you don't need anti-freeze. (You couldn't put any in a VW even if you wanted to; there's no radiator. And so no hoses to leak. No draining. No flushing. No rust.)

In the past, a few VW owners have been amused to find a perplexed gas station attendant with a bucket of water and no place to put it.

But we've taken care of that in our '61 model. This year, a windshield washer is standard equipment.

It uses water.

Let the man fill it up.



[adflip.com](http://adflip.com)

# LOST?

Suddenly you find yourself ready to choose a diamond ring. And all you know about carats is that your mom made you eat them when you were little.

But you really don't need to be a diamond expert. You just need to go to the people who are: Zales.

Zales controls every diamond, every step of the way. We select our stones in the rough and cut them for maximum brilliance.

We polish and mount them by hand, in settings selected as carefully as the diamonds themselves. We even stand behind each ring with our ninety-day refund policy, a promise we wouldn't make if we thought you'd want to take us up on it.

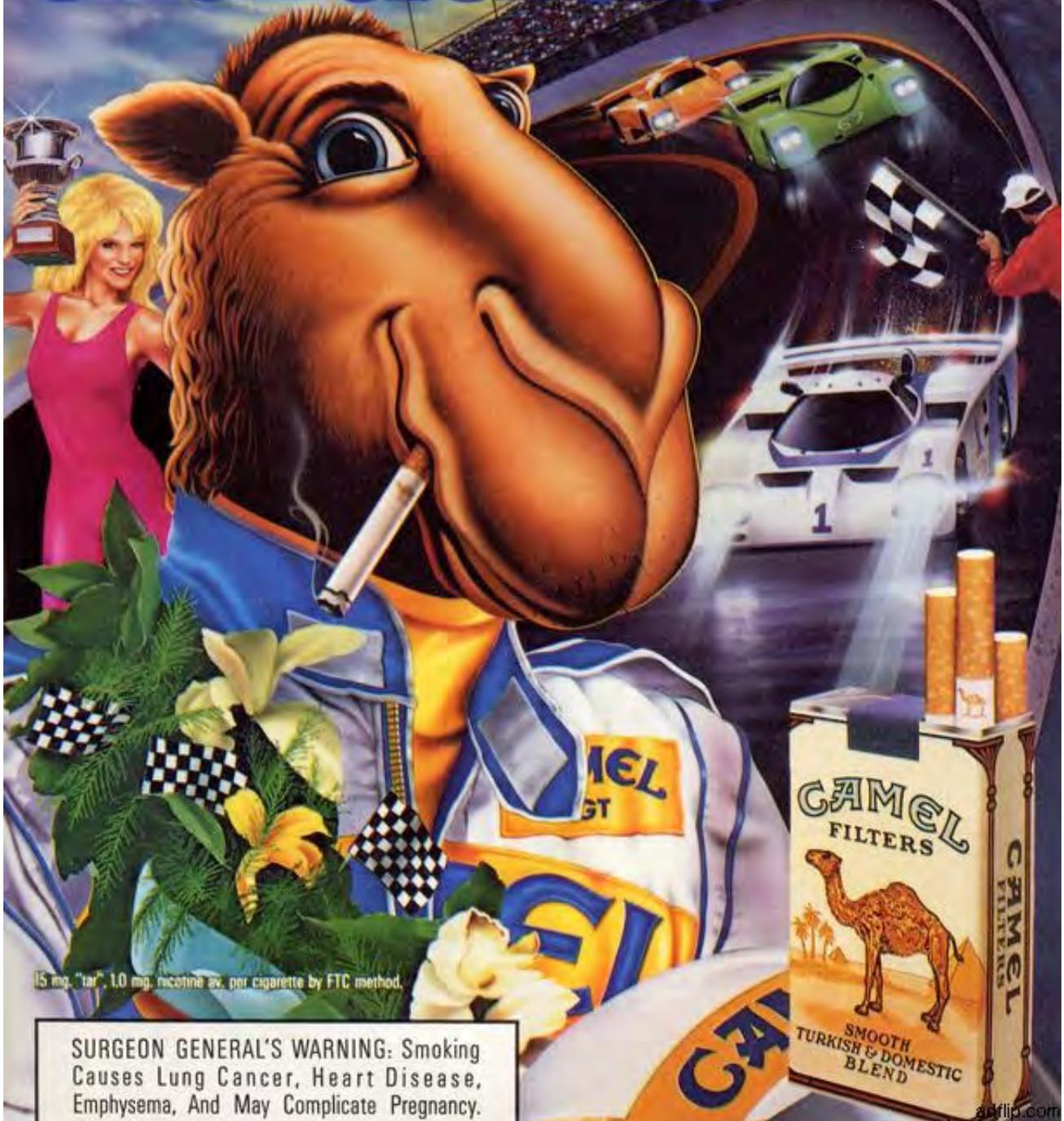
Still don't know carats from carrots? That's okay. You'll never really be lost as long as you can find your way to Zales.

Rings shown priced from \$760 to \$16,025.

**ZALES**  
THE DIAMOND STORE

IS ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

# Smooth character.



15 mg. "tar", 1.0 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.**

# Visual Literacy: News Media

## Reading Media Photographs

<b>WHAT DO YOU SEE? (Observations)</b>	<b>WHAT DOES IT MEAN? (Inference)</b>
Nonverbal gestures (arms, hands, fingers)	
Facial expression (head, eyes, mouth)	
Body language (distances, code matching)	
People (age, gender, ethnicity)	
Clothing (type, color)	
Background (objects, setting)	
Camera angle	

©Debbie Abilock 4/21/2002

<http://www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/newsmedia/polphoto.pdf>



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You are currently a guest of adflip. To become a member click here for info. Have a look around. You may be suprised at what you might find!

Screen Savers

Members Login

Subscribe

What's Up



about

find

top 25

e-cards

contact

top 100

What are you looking for?  go Search by year 1940 go

Search for your favorite slice of pop culture and relive great memories from six decades. Simply click on a decade below to start...

### Today's IO

- ★ A real success story
- ★ Where's your daughter?
- ★ Who needs a minivan
- ★ Conspicuous consumption
- ★ It helps him slow down
- ★ The world's least experienced airline
- ★ Eat candy, lose weight!
- ★ Served in leading hospitals
- ★ More like the Little Wheel
- ★ The insult that made a man out of Mac



### publications

Archie go

Better Living	Mar 53
Esquire	May 65
Family Circle	Jan 48
Gentlemen's Quarterly	Oct 68
High Times	Oct 02
Rosie	Sep 02
Saturday Evening Post	Oct 55
Vanity Fair	Jan 03
Wired	Sep 02
YM	Oct 02

### categories

- Automotive
- Business
- Computers
- Education
- Electronics
- Entertainment
- Everything Else
- Fashion
- Food & Beverage
- Health & Beauty
- Hobbies
- Home & Hardware
- Jewelery
- Motorcycles
- Music
- Photography
- Travel

### my adFlip

- Top 25 Daily Ads
- Top 100 Weekly Ads
- Ads As Art
- Advocacy
- Comic Book Ads
- European Ads
- Provocative
- Soda Fountain
- Times Have Changed
- What Ever Happened To?

### what's hot

- The Full Monty
- Lipton Onion Mashed Potatoes
- Subaru Outback
- Gucci
- Target
- Toyota MR2 Spyder
- Absolut Hors D'oeuvre
- Tiffany

### FAQ etc...

- New to adflip?
- How do I find ads?
- Send e-cards
- Contact us?

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Ad\*Access Project. <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/>>  
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HarpWeek:19<sup>th</sup> Century Advertising. <<http://advertising.harpweek.com/>>  
Popular Culture: Advertising. <<http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/pop/ads.html>>  
Truth in Advertising: Vintage Cigarette and Tobacco Ads. <  
<http://www.chickenhead.com/truth/>>

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AdGallery: National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign.  
<<http://www.mediacampaign.org/mg/television.html>>  
AdvertisementAve.com. Hundreds of Real Player and Windows Media Players ads.  
<<http://www.advertisementave.com/>>  
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<<http://www.japander.com/japander/>>  
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<<http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/index.php>>  
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<<http://www.usatvads.com/>>