

CREATING IDEAS THAT SELL

A LESSON PLAN

Being able to communicate simply, creatively and persuasively is an essential skill for all ages.

Introduce your class to the basics of art direction and copy, and help them create powerful and memorable ads.

Lesson Objectives:

- Introduce students to a piece of advertising history that helped defined creativity advertising today
- Familiarise students with the basic steps for generating and visualising ideas for advertisements

How to use this lesson plan:

This lesson plan is suitable for those studying subjects including Business, English & Creative Writing, Art & Design and History.

There are three sections A, B and C, designed to be delivered in a total session time of 45-60minutes.

Each of the sections can also be delivered as a standalone 15-20 minute session

Materials you will need:

- A stack of newspapers
- A stack of A3 newsprint paper
- Scissors
- A box of coloured markers
- Images of ads (easily obtained via a search on Google Images, details provided in the lesson plan)

A. Reason and emotion

“Our job is to bring the dead facts to life”.

Bill Bernbach, Pioneer of modern-day creative advertising

Duration:

20 minutes

What you will need:

A mix of newspapers or magazines

Optional:

Ability to show Youtube videos in class

1. Briefly explain the difference between ads that appeal to reason versus ads that appeal to human emotion.

‘Reason’ highlights product features whilst ‘emotion’ brings these features to life.

Creative advertising needs both reason and emotion to work.

For example, contrast old car ads from 1930s and 1940s with the Volkswagen ad ‘Think Small’ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_Small]*

In the 1930s and 40s all car advertisements looked the same: they only talked about the car's benefits, often in idealistic and uninteresting ways. They concentrated on the product benefit, often in descriptive clichés, using words like 'beautiful' or 'fastest' or 'quality', or images that featured dreamy scenarios and perfect people. Ads used to rely solely on giving people lots of 'reasons' to buy the product. Trouble was, most cars were essentially the same, so car ads all gave the same reasons so no ad stood out, and no car ad was memorable.



Here's how your family will find out...

IT PAYS TO OWN A DODGE

Let's say your family is the kind that wants more than you get in the "low-price" field. You want more room and comfort. You want more softness on the road. You want a car that's truly first in its deep-down quality. And most of all, you want a car you can all enjoy without going "overboard" on purchase price, or on gas and upkeep costs. So head for your Dodge dealer's—and find a revelation!

The savings start right off the bat! You feel that a big, solid Dodge Custom costs less to buy than any car that comes close to it in comfort, roominess, low-car loads and handling. Matter of fact, it pays you \$200, \$200 or more to choose Dodge over comparable models of other cars in the field.


You'll notice the difference in gas bill! In the recent Mobilgas Economy Run, a Dodge V-8 delivered an outstanding 21.74 miles per gallon. Dodge set only finished 3-2 in the low-medium price field, it also topped all other cars from the low-price V-8 field on up. A Dodge costs less to drive.

Your reaction—the "Big Pay-off!" On top of your savings on purchase price, gas economy, upkeep costs—you'll discover how much more you get in Dodge. More room, more comfort. Features like Torque-Absorb Ribs, Total-Guard Brakes and Safety-Bin Wheels—all at no extra cost.



Winner in this year's Mobilgas Economy Run '59 DODGE

When Volkswagen came along their advertising agency wanted to do something different. They felt that reasons alone did not make an ad memorable. They believed that people remembered ads mainly because of how the ads made them feel: amused, curious, surprised, so on and so forth. Such feelings could only be aroused through visual dramatization that car buyers can easily understand. In this 'Think Small' ad, the size of the car was deliberately exaggerated. The ad looked odd and surprising and therefore it caught people's attention.




Think small.

Our little car isn't so much of a novelty any more.
A couple of dozen college kids don't try to squeeze inside it.
The guy at the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes.
Nobody even stores it at our shop.
In fact, some people who drive our little

flyer don't even think 32 miles to the gallon is going any great guns.
Or using five pints of oil instead of five quarts.
Or never needing anti-freeze.
Or racking up 40,000 miles on a set of tires.
That's because once you get used to

some of our economies, you don't even think about them any more.
Except when you squeeze into a small parking spot. Or renew your small insurance. Or pay a small repair bill.
Or trade in your old VW for a new one.
Think it over.



*Optional:

You can also show your students these video car ads to demonstrate how product features were dramatized for emotional effect:

Volkswagen Star Wars ('The Force', 2011)

Mercedes-Benz ('Chicken', 2013).

(Both videos available on Youtube)

Or a more recent VW print ad:

Volkswagen park assist

https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/volkswagen_park_assist_technology_portaloohearse



Park Assist technology from Volkswagen.



2. Working in pairs, give students some newspapers and/or magazines for browsing.

Ask them to pick out a few ads and try to identify the elements within each ad that appeal to reason (product features or 'reasons to buy') versus those that appeal to emotion (humour, wit, human interest, etc).

Further learning resource:

Largest archive of UK advertising, History of Advertising Trust (HAT), maintains a useful catalogue of past ads:

<https://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/>

B. Source material everywhere

“A good idea is nothing more or less than a new combination of old elements”

James Webb Young,
Advertising Copywriter

1. Use this section to discuss what makes effective advertising and the importance of insight as the foundation of a great ad.

This section shows students that the most powerful advertising messages not only dramatise the product, they also have empathy with their audience's lives.

Originality in advertising, unlike a piece of modern art, has to be understood.

Originality in advertising is about shaping something new from the familiar. Ads can be thought-provoking or even shocking, but audiences must be able to recognise something familiar in the ad in order to understand its message. And this familiar material is often drawn from close observation of the audience and life in general.

One of the most important reasons why Volkswagen ads were memorable was because they did such a good job of relating their ads back to the everyday lives of the ordinary car owner – their target audience.

Their ads referenced the news and current affairs of that era (1950s-60s) or car use in **everyday use scenarios** everyone could relate to, e.g. breakdowns, usage for work, etc. This connection with car ownership and **everyday life in general** is also known as **insight**, a crucial ingredient used for creating great ads.

An insight for an ad brings together two things:

- a. something specific about the product;
- b. something more general about life.

Insights are usually written as a one-sentence message.

- For example: a. compared to other cars of its generation, VW beetles looked rather clunky and ugly.
- b. When astronaut Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, it was big news and everyone watch saw his spacecraft on telly, including VW ad agency. They then brought these two things together and wrote this in their next VW ad “It’s ugly, but it gets you there”.



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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.





It's ugly, but it gets you there.

© VOLKSWAGEN OF AMERICA



"It was the only thing to do after the mule died."

Three years back, the Hinsleys of Doru, Missouri, had a tough decision to make.

To buy a new mule.
Or invest in a used bug.

They weighed the two possibilities.

First there was the problem of the bitter Ozark winters. Tough on a warm-blooded mule. Not so tough on an air-cooled VW.

Then, what about the eating habits of the two contenders? Hay vs. gasoline.

As Mr. Hinsley puts it: "I get over eighty miles out of a dollar's worth of gas and I get where I want to go a lot quicker."

Then there's the road leading to their cabin. Many a mule pulling a wagon and many a conventional automobile has spent many an hour stuck in the mud.

As for shelter, a mule needs a barn. A

bug doesn't. "It just sets out there all day and the point job looks near as good as the day we got it."

Finally, there was maintenance to think about. When a mule breaks down, there's only one thing to do: Shoot it.

But if and when their bug breaks down, the Hinsleys have a Volkswagen dealer only two gallons away.



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2. Working in pairs again, ask students to pick an object they have on them, e.g. a watch, shoes, school bag, t-shirt, wallet, a tin of soft drink, snacks, etc. Lead a short discussion in two parts:

- a. something specific about the object
- b. something about life in general – news and current affairs, pop trends, culture

Combine both a. + b. into an interesting insight for the object. Write down this insight as one line.

For example, for this ad on the right:

- a. something specific about the object: these headphones are really great at cancelling out noise
 - b. Recently, President Trump has been in the news for not listening to his advisors.
- a + b. BOSE Headphones:
'Hear What You Want To Hear'

Write down as many a + b insights as they can think of.

Further learning resource:

Believe it or not, people in advertising often re-purpose, re-combine and re-use ideas from each other! The trick is to make something new out of something old. Here is an enjoyable archive of copycat advertising from around the world:

<https://www.joelapompe.net/>



C. Simplicity and play

Duration:

20 minutes

What you will need:

- Printouts or handouts of print ads in the classroom for discussion
 - Plenty of A3 sheets of plain paper and marker pens
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1. Working in pairs, ask the students to create scamps for the insights they had written earlier making sure to include at least one headline, one image and the brand logo.

Remind students of the principle of simplicity - keeping to a few elements in the ad, simple but also not to be too precious with their scamps. The drawings can be very basic.

Encourage them to play around with different combinations of images and words.

Now you have your insights, it is time to transform them into a **scamp of an ad**.

Scamps are simple, hand-drawn images that advertising folk use to **try out and play with ideas** for their ad, whether it is print or video, most ads begin life as a line drawing!

Remind students that producing great ideas requires practice, not perfection. You do not need expert drawing or Photoshop skills. Never mind that **scamps** look looked unfinished and 'ugly', what matters is the **idea** and message. In fact, British artist, David Shrigley, art directed and wrote a series of car ads for Fiat based solely on his terrible sketches! Nonetheless, Fiat used Shrigley's bad drawings anyway because they were playful, funny ads that everyone can enjoy (see right).

Simplicity is key. It is better to play around and experiment with a few elements than throwing in lot elements into your ad. That was what Krone and Koenig did for Volkswagen: **a headline, an image, the brand logo**.

Everything else is left out, even colour! The result is an ad that looks uncluttered but easily understood, even if you don't read all the small words!

The creative team that created the 'Think Small' ad, Helmut Krone and Julian Koenig, played around with two things: 1. visual elements (e.g. scale, hierarchy, typeface, layout, colour); 2. words. In advertising terms, this is also known as **art direction** and **copywriting** and these techniques are the basic building blocks of creative advertising.

Further learning resource:

Imseng D., Kassaei A. & Hahn, C. H. 2017. Ugly is only skin deep: the story of ads that changed the world.

UK: Matador.

Pompe, Joe La. 2012. 100 Visual Ideas, 1000 Great Ads by Joe La Pompe. Gestalten.

Shrigley, David. 2012. What the hell are you doing? The essential David Shrigley. Canongate Books.

Young, James Webb. 2003. A Technique for producing ideas. McGraw Hill Education

Full consumption figures for the Fiat 500 range from 0.7 (urban) to 1.0 (combined) litres/100km (2.1 (US) - 2.6 (UK) mpg) and CO₂ emissions from 99 to 110 g/km.

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500

HELLO
BONJOUR
HOLA
CIAO

We hope you find this lesson plan useful in helping your students understand more about problem solving using their creativity.

If you would like to find out more, plan a visit or ask any questions please feel free to contact us.

The Ad Team

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