



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 7 to 10  
**About the Author:** MediaSmarts

# Selling Tobacco

## Overview

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In this lesson, students explore how tobacco advertising has evolved over the past sixty years. They begin by discussing advertising techniques used by the tobacco industry; and then they compare ads from the 1940s, '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s, with more recent tobacco advertising. Using online databases of tobacco advertisements, each student will research and prepare an essay on a selected topic, such as the advertising history of one brand, how tobacco advertising has changed over time, gender representation in tobacco ads, and strategies geared to a particular target audiences.

## Learning Outcomes

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Students will demonstrate:

- an awareness of the strategies used by tobacco advertisers to engage customers
- an understanding of the gap between messages in ads and reality
- an awareness of how advertisers use different strategies to engage specific target groups
- an awareness of how tobacco advertising has changed over the last sixty years

## Preparation and Materials

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Photocopy the student handouts:

- *Tricks of the Trade: Strategies for Tobacco Advertising*
- *Cigarette Advertising: 1930s, 1940s, 1950s*
- *Cigarette Advertising: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s*
- *Modern Cigarette Advertising* (Or, students might bring to class their own samples of recent cigarette advertisements, collected from magazines.)

## Procedure

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Distribute the *Tricks of the Trade: Strategies for Tobacco Advertising* handout, and review the advertising strategies with students.



Draw the following Venn diagram on the board:



Distribute the *Cigarette Advertising: 1930s, 1940s, 1950s* and *Cigarette Advertising: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s* handouts. As students review the ads, assign a note-taker to record the various strategies and methods of persuasion used by tobacco marketers during 1930-1960 and 1960-1990. Once this is done, identify strategies that were used consistently throughout these time periods and list them in the center of the diagram as "shared strategies."

Ask students:

- What are the marketers saying about smoking in each ad?
- How do they make smoking appear to be a desirable activity?
- How do they downplay the negative side effects of smoking?
- Who is the target audience for each ad?
- What methods of persuasion are used?

Distribute the *Modern Cigarette Advertising* handout (or collected ads) to students. Referring to the completed Venn diagram on the board, discuss which traditional advertising strategies for tobacco are still being used today. Ask students to identify trends and strategies in more recent advertisements that differ from those used previously.

### Activity

#### Online Exercise

In this exercise, students will deconstruct tobacco advertisements from collections found on the Internet. *The Richard W. Pollay 20th Century Tobacco Advertising Collection* is an extensive online database of over 8000 tobacco ads. Presented by the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, this catalogue of images can be searched by brand, form of advertising, year, company, and product type.



The *Truth in Advertising Gallery* is a collection of cigarette ads from the 1930s to the 1950s. Included with each ad is a detailed write-up of its "small print."

The Stanford School of Medicine Ad Gallery highlights recent ad campaigns and has a database searchable by brand, manufacturer, ad campaign, country, tobacco type, format and date.

Advertisements from these websites are copyright-cleared for educational use, so students may download and include images in their assignments. (Instruct students on how to properly cite these sources.)

Have students choose one of the following topics for research:

- The advertising history of one brand
- How tobacco advertising has changed over time
- Gender representation in tobacco ads over the past 60 years
- Strategies geared to a particular target audience, such as youth, racial minorities, men or women over the past 60 years

Once students have chosen a topic, have them write an essay that includes:

- A general overview of tobacco advertising strategies relating to their topic
- Sample advertisements
- Deconstruction of selected advertisements, including specific advertising techniques

## Evaluation

- Student essays



## Tricks of the Trade: Strategies for Tobacco Advertising

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Tobacco advertisers use many different methods to get consumers to buy their products. Often, what they try to sell is less the product itself, and more a lifestyle or image. Although tobacco advertising is no longer permitted in magazines published in Canada, Canadian kids and teens often buy American editions – which don't have to follow Canadian rules.

Here are some tobacco advertising “tricks of the trade:”

**The Cool Factor.** By associating celebrities and “ideal” people with fun, excitement and attitude, tobacco advertisers work hard to convince consumers that if they don't smoke, they're not cool. (There's even a brand of cigarette called “Kool”!)

**Celebrity Smokers.** Although tobacco companies can't use celebrity spokespeople in their ads, researchers have noted an increase in smoking by characters in movies – especially movies with teen appeal. Magazine photos of musicians, models and actors smoking also promote the idea that smoking is glamorous.

**Dreams and Insecurities.** Tobacco advertisers use different strategies to attract males and females. Cigarette ads geared to young women play on the idea of being “liberated” and in control – while at the same time playing on insecurities about body image. Brands geared towards women often have words like “slim” or “slender” in the product name, or use extremely thin models in their ads. Cigarette ads geared to young men use rugged, independent, masculine-looking models, such as the classic image of the Marlboro Man. These models are usually shown participating in sports or outdoor activities, or surrounded by beautiful women.

**Facts and Figures.** Tobacco advertisers have been known to use statistics and “pseudo-science” to give the impression that smoking is safe and to enhance their products' credibility.

**Friends, Fun and Excitement.** Tobacco ads feed the notion that everyone smokes – and has lots of fun while doing it. Images of happy smokers at parties, in restaurants and even in the great outdoors reinforce the connection between smoking and good times.

**Humour.** Tobacco ads often use tongue-in-cheek humour to attract customers. Because smoking is becoming less acceptable in society, humour in tobacco ads frequently pokes fun at non-smokers, or at those who feel that smoking is unhealthy.

**Ideal People.** Models in tobacco ads appear to be perfect. They're usually fit, attractive and cool-looking. Women in tobacco ads tend to be sexy and alluring, while the men are tough and masculine.

**Individuality.** Tobacco ads – especially those that try to attract young people – often portray smoking as a sign of independence and rebellion. The Virginia Slims slogan “Find your own voice,” is an example of this strategy.

**Omission.** It's no secret that tobacco advertisers don't give you the full story about cigarettes. Nobody ever sees a cancer patient, or a person with lung disease, in a tobacco advertisement.



**Positive Lifestyle Advertising.** Cigarette firms have long used “pictures of health” in cigarette ads to foster smoking as an acceptable, healthy lifestyle. Ads like these want consumers to associate smoking with outdoor sport and recreational activities such as tennis, bicycling, sailing and horseback riding.

**Product Placement.** Cigarette ads can pop up in the most unusual places, such as video games. This is especially true of racing or driving games, where players drive by virtual “billboards” advertising cigarettes.

**Scale.** Tobacco advertisers will often use tricks of scale to make their product look bigger – and hence more appealing.

**Sponsorship.** Although Canadian tobacco advertisers are no longer allowed to sponsor events, they are still permitted to do so in many countries around the world -- including the United States. Sponsorship is very appealing to tobacco companies. If you want to associate your product with daring, speed and wealth, what better way than to sponsor a racecar driver – splash your logo on his car, uniform and helmet? If you want your product to epitomize “cool,” why not sponsor a jazz or blues singer?



## Cigarette Advertising: 1930s, 1940s, 1950s



### Camels: 1930

Athletes say- "Camels don't get your wind!" Small print: So Mild! You can smoke all you want!

Source: "Trinkets and Trash"

<http://www.trinketsandtrash.org>

### Juleps: 1940s

"New miracle mint in Juleps freshens the mouth at every puff. Even if you chain-smoke, your mouth feels clean, sparkling all day long!"

Small print:

"Here's how to smoke all you want. If you really enjoy smoking, yet feel you smoke too much, you don't have to cut down and deprive yourself of smoking pleasure! Follow the lead of thousands of others - switch to new Julep Cigarettes. Smoke all you want without unpleasant symptoms of over-smoking! A smoking miracle? Yes, it's the triple miracle of mint. (1) Your mouth doesn't get smoke-weary! (2) Your throat doesn't get that harsh, hacking feeling! (3) Your breath avoids tobacco-taint! Get Juleps today - get more joy out of smoking!"

Source: "Truth in Advertising Gallery"

<http://www.chickenhead.com/truth/index.html>



### Chesterfield: 1940s



Small Print:

"Reading their copy are Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth, now starring in 'You'll Never Get Rich' - a Columbia Picture"

"Like millions who have read it, Chesterfield believes that you too will enjoy TOBACCOLAND, U.S.A. ... the only complete picture story telling you all about the making of a great cigarette. TOBACCOLAND gives you all the interesting facts... from the planting of findecigarette tobaccos on through to the final stages of modern cigarette manufacture. The more you know about cigarettes the more you'll enjoy Chesterfields."

Source: "Truth in Advertising Gallery"

<http://www.chickenhead.com/truth/index.html>





**Chesterfield: 1950s**

**"AND NOW - CHESTERFIELD FIRST TO GIVE YOU SCIENTIFIC FACTS IN SUPPORT OF SMOKING.**

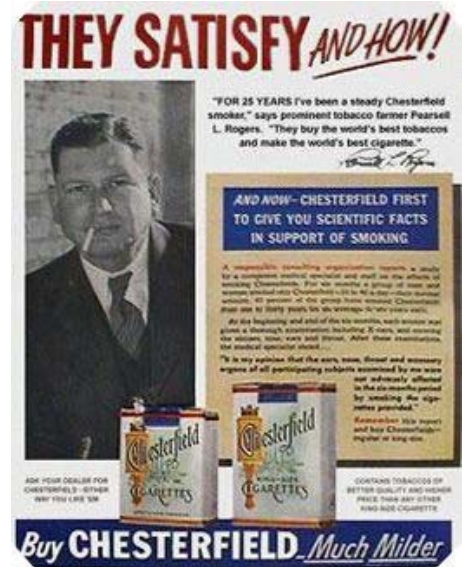
"Small Print:

"A responsible consulting organization reports a study by a competent medical specialist and staff on the effects of smoking Chesterfields..."

"It is my opinion that the ears, nose, throat and accessory organs of all participating subjects examined by me were not adversely affected in the six-month period by smoking the cigarettes provided."

Source: "Truth in Advertising Gallery"

<http://www.chickenhead.com/truth/index.html>



**Philip Morris: 1956**

**More vintage tobacco makes PHILIP MORRIS so popular with younger smokers**



**"More vintage tobacco makes PHILIP MORRIS so popular with younger smokers.**

"Small print:

"More delicate in flavor, too... for those with keen, young tastes. Only a perfect balance of sunshine and moisture produces vintage tobacco - with its qualities of gentleness and delicate flavor. These qualities tell why PHILIP MORRIS has made so many friends among younger smokers - with their fresher, unspoiled tastes. Follow Young America's lead. Enjoy PHILIP MORRIS in the convenient Snap-Open pack."

Source: "Truth in Advertising Gallery"

<http://www.chickenhead.com/truth/index.html>



Camel: 1955

"It's a psychological fact: Pleasure helps your disposition."

"ROCK HUDSON AGREES with Camel smokers everywhere: 'I've tried 'em all... but it's Camels for me!

"Small Print:

"There is more pure pleasure in Camels! More flavor, genuine mildness! Good reasons why today more people smoke Camels than any other cigarette."

"Remember this: Pleasure helps your disposition. And for more pleasure - have a Camel!"

Source: "Truth in Advertising Gallery"

<http://www.chickenhead.com/truth/index.html>





## Cigarette Advertising: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s



**Virginia Slims: 1969**

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

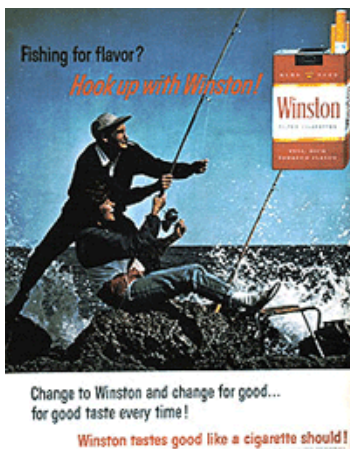
"In 1912, Lucille Watkins had to sneak out to the chicken coop to smoke a cigarette. You don't have to play hide and smoke anymore. Now there's even a cigarette for women only."



**Virginia Slims: 1978**

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

"Back then, every man gave his wife at least one day a week out of the house. You've come a long way, baby. Virginia Slims - Slimmer than the fat cigarettes men smoke."



**Winston: 1965**

"Fishing for flavor? Hook up with Winston! Change to Winston and change for good... for good taste every time!"



**Marlboro: 1971**

"Come to where the flavor is, Come to Marlboro Country."





Camel: 1972

"Would he walk a mile for me?"



Camel: 1977

"One of a kind."



Camel: 1980

"Where a man belongs."





**Lucky Strike: 1983**

"Lucky Strikes Again. The filter says mild. The name says taste."



**Benson & Hedges: 1988**

"For people who like to smoke... because quality matters."

Source for all the images in this handout: "The Richard W. Pollay 20th Century Tobacco Advertising Collection," [http://tobaccodocuments.org/pollay\\_ads/](http://tobaccodocuments.org/pollay_ads/)





## Modern Cigarette Advertising



Images from the Richard W. Pollay 20<sup>th</sup> Century Advertising Collection and the Stanford School of Medicine Ad Gallery.

