



## LESSON PLAN

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| <b>Level:</b>            | Grades 10 to 12   |
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# Hype!

## Overview

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This unit helps students become more aware of the media's use of hype and its influence on them. This will be achieved through:

- class and group discussions of reactions to various examples and aspects of hype.
- a variety of oral and written responses
- a role-play scenario to investigate the ways in which hype shapes what we value in society.
- an examination of a media event.
- discussion and examination of our tendency to favor strong, emotional appeal over factual information.
- discussion and examination of the commercial aspects of hype.
- opportunities to talk about hype with a guest speaker from a marketing outfit or advertising agency.

## Learning Outcomes

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Students will:

- explore and reflect upon ways in which promotional techniques and marketing strategies determine the content of the media and the values it presents.
- appreciate the methods, strategies and techniques used by the media to create an atmosphere of excitement surrounding an event.
- understand how hype affects our relationship with, and interpretation of, the media.
- understand the commercial implications of media hype.

## Preparation and Materials

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- prepare a tape of Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype" (If you have a classroom computer with an Internet connection, you can play this directly from the Net. Or, you can photocopy the [lyrics](#) to this song.)
- collect examples of political hype



## Procedure

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To set the mood for "hype", this unit could be preceded by a promotional campaign including posters, bulletin board displays and announcements.

### Guided Discussion

Begin the lesson by playing or reading the lyrics to Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype." Once the subject of "hype" has been introduced, ask students the following questions:

- What is hype?
- What are some examples of hype in the media?
- What are some techniques or methods promoters use to hype their products? (List responses on the board.)
- Why should we not "believe the hype"?

The following activities appear in a suggested order, but need not all be attempted.

## Activities

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### Activity 1

#### Decoding Hype: Conventions, Strategies and Aesthetics

*In general, it can be said that the public no longer "discovers" movies - the public no longer makes a picture a hit. If the advertising for a movie doesn't build up an overwhelming desire to be part of the event, people just don't go. They don't listen to their own instincts, they don't listen to the critics - they listen to the advertising.*

- Pauline Kael, *The New Yorker*

Do students agree or disagree with this statement? Divide the class into groups and discuss the marketing strategies used for a recent film. Discussion could focus on how those involved with the film (directors, actors, public relations people) create the sense of "an event" surrounding its release. Ask students to consider the publicity created through:

- Talk shows
- Television advertising
- Newspaper and magazine advertising
- "Spin-off" products
- Songs or soundtrack albums
- Movie magazine profiles
- Entertainment programs on TV
- Reviews



**Activity 2****Individual Writing Assignments**

Students will investigate the promotional techniques used for a recent or current film, concert or sports event. After a week, they will hand in a brief report on their findings, along with comments on whether or not the media event lived up to its advertising.

**Activity 3****Decoding Hype: Constructions of Reality**

- Show some examples of hype in politics. (Material relating to party conventions, elections, debates, budgets, program announcements etc.)
- Students should begin by noting the promotional strategies that are used, as well as:
  - The quantity of hype
  - The party or candidate(s) involved
  - Whether the hype stresses issues or image

Ask your students:

- What is the definition of a "media event." (A media event is a reported event that appears to be news, but is actually staged by various groups or businesses. Often, it becomes a source of free advertising.)
- Discuss how a "media event" might be used by political parties.

**Activity 5****Analysing Hype: Emotional Appeal vs. Factual Information**

*Superbowl media credentials were issued to 2,200 journalists in 1988 - or to 100 members of the media for each player on the field. - Bruce Newman, Sports Illustrated*

Many sports events, especially those with dubious intrinsic sporting value, are hyped by messages with tremendous emotional appeal. One only has to watch the advertisements during the week before the Super bowl or a major prizefight to observe these promotional techniques. With this in mind, students could analyse a promotional clip for any television sports show. They could begin by noting its length, editing, audio component, camera work, graphics and probable audience.

The following questions might help focus further discussion:

- Does the clip involve many locations, or was it all shot in one place?
- Does it profile sport celebrities?
- Does it use well-known popular music? Does it look like a rock video?
- How many "jolts per minute" are there and what is their effect?
- What factual information do we receive?



**Activity 6****Hype and Music Industry Economics: Group Presentations**

- Study promotional campaigns for rock tours. What are the reasons for these tours?
- In groups, have students explore the promotion of recording artists and groups. For instance, where did they first hear about or see their favourite group?
- Have students simulate the job of a "PR" manager for a popular rock star. What information about the star would they release, plant, leak, suppress or control. The groups make oral presentations to the class justifying their decisions. The class then discusses and assesses the plan. (Allow at least a day for presentations)

**Activity 7****Guest Speaker**

- Invite a speaker in from a marketing outfit (International Management Group etc.) or an ad agency.
- It may be wise to prep the speaker on the objectives and content of unit so they may be able to focus their talk and/or answers to student questions.

**Activity 8****Group Project: A Promotional Campaign**

- In groups of three or four, students can compare their reactions to the promotional techniques they investigated in their written assignment. (See Activity 3)
- In the same groups, students are to create a promotional campaign for one of the following:
  - A varsity sports event
  - A student council presidential candidate
  - A movie about your media class
  - A school club, activity or special event

Students should consider the strategies they would use to create the sense of "an event."

- After several days preparation time, the groups of students will be expected to present an oral report complimenting and justifying the choices their group has made for their campaigns. (*Both self and peer evaluation may be considered for the evaluation of this project in order to foster a greater sense of involvement during three to four days of presentations. Class questions may lead to peer evaluation as a portion of the group mark.*)



**Activity 9****Hype and Social Consciousness**

In this activity, the class explores the phenomenon of "social conscience" events such as Live Aid, Farm Aid, the Amnesty International Tour, Our Common Future, Greenpeace Album, etc. Discussion may begin after reading the following:

*The model for today's "cause concerts" isn't the rent party or Woodstock-type festival, but the rock 'n' roll commercial. The sponsors of both events recognize rock's power to motivate the masses, and television's power to direct that motivation. Through context, television shapes the meaning of the music. In one context, a rock song about idealized teen love sells soft drinks; in another, it beats down apartheid. The event also shapes the meaning of the audience's participation. Enjoying a performance becomes a gesture of political or humanitarian solidarity.*

*At cause concerts, the cause becomes a third party in the relationship between the audience and the performer, relegating each to its role. For the performers, the role is to be rock stars, denouncing profit in order to come together for a purpose. (That, after all, is what a cause concert is.) The role of the audience, therefore, is to make the performers rock stars, to bolster their sacrifices. In return, the stars' status validates the audience's involvement in the issue.*

*From Live Aid to the Amnesty tour, from Public Enemy to Sting, rock 'n' roll has launched a new, professional class of reformers. It has redefined, or at least questioned, the role of the artist in society. The new reformers attack a cause in the best Eighties fashion: they make it famous. All we have to do is support them.*

- John Leland, *Spin Magazine*, September, 1988

Discussion may focus on the following questions:

- Is this activism? Is it enough for the public to support artists as they attack a cause by "making it famous", or does the public have other responsibilities?
- Is it the performer's responsibility to promote a cause? If so, where does this responsibility come from?

The class might also attempt a total music industry simulation, in which all members of the class are assigned roles. These would include people involved in the industry, special interest or "cause" organizers and the audience. All students are required to research their roles and to respond to the situation through both drama and writing. Through role-playing, students can explore ideas of hype and how hype can manipulate both our awareness and response to issues of social justice.

**Activity 10****Summative Discussion**

Students may compare their "most" and "least" favourite aspects of the unit, and discuss what they considered to be the most important ideas.



## Evaluation

Marks for this unit will be awarded as follows:

- Participation in group and class discussions and role play 20%
- Group and oral presentations 20%
- Individual written report 30%
- Group project - promotional campaign 20%
- Group project - oral presentation 10%



## Public Enemy: Don't Believe the Hype

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Ridenhour - Shocklee - Sadler

From *It Takes A Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back* Def Jam Recordings, CBS Canada, 1988

Back

Caught you lookin' for the same thing

It's a new thing - check out this I bring

Uh Oh the roll below the level

'Cause I'm livin' low next to the bass, C'mon

Turn up the radio

They claim that I'm a criminal

By now I wonder how

Some people never know

The enemy could be their friend, guardian

I'm not a hooligan

I rock the party and

Clear all the madness, I'm not a racist

Preach to teach to all

'Cause some they never had this

Number one, not born to run

About the gun...

I wasn't licensed to have one

The minute they see me, fear me

I'm the epitome - a public enemy

Used, abused without clues

I refused to blow a fuse

They even had it on the news

Don't believe the hype...

Yes

Was the start of my last jam

So here it is again, another def jam

But since I gave you all a little something

That we knew you lacked

They still consider me a new jack

All the critics you can hang'em

I'll hold the rope

But they hope to the pope

And pray it ain't dope

The follower of Farrakhan

Don't tell me that you understand

Until you hear the man

The book of the new school rap game

Writers treat me like Coltrane, insane



Yes to them, but to me I'm a different kind  
 We're brothers of the same mind, unblind  
 Caught in the middle and  
 Not surrenderin'  
 I don't rhyme for the sake of of riddlin'  
 Some claim that I'm a smuggler  
 Some say I never heard of 'ya  
 A rap burgler, false media  
 We don't need it do we?  
 It's fake that's what it be to 'ya, dig me?  
 Don't believe the hype...  
 Don't believe the hype - it's a sequel  
 As an equal, can I get this through to you  
 My 98's boomin' with a trunk of funk  
 All the jealous punks can't stop the dunk  
 Comin' from the school of hard knocks  
 Some perpetrate, they drink Clorox  
 Attack the black, cause I know they lack exact  
 The cold facts, and still they try to Xerox  
 Leader of the new school, uncool  
 Never played the fool, just made the rules  
 Remember there's a need to get alarmed  
 Again I said I was a time bomb  
 In the daytime the radio's scared of me  
 'Cause I'm mad, plus I'm the enemy  
 They can't c'mon and play with me in primetime  
 'Cause I know the time, plus I'm gettin' mine  
 I get on the mix late in the night  
 They know I'm livin' right, so here go the mike  
 Before I let it go, don't rush my show  
 You try to reach and grab and get elbowed  
 Word to herb, yo if you can't swing this  
 Just a little bit of the taste of the bass for you  
 As you get up and dance at the LQ  
 When some deny it, defy if I swing bolos  
 Then they clear the lane I go solo  
 The meaning of all of that  
 Some media is the whack  
 You believe it's true, it blows me through the roof  
 Suckers, liars get me a shovel  
 Some writers I know are damn devils  
 For them I say don't believe the hype  
 Yo Chuck, they must be on a pipe, right?





Their pens and pads I'll snatch  
'Cause I've had it  
I'm not an addict fiendin' for static  
I'll see their tape recorder and grab it  
No, you can't have it back silly rabbit  
I'm going' to my media assassin  
Harry Allen, I gotta ask him  
Yo Harry, you're a writer, are we that type?  
Don't believe the hype  
I got flavor and all those things you know  
Yeah boy, part two bum rush and show  
Yo Griff, get the green black red and  
Gold down countdown to Armageddon  
-88 you wait the S1Ws will  
Rock the hard jams - treat it like a seminar  
Teach the bourgeoisie, and rock the boulevard  
Some say I'm negative  
But they're not positive  
But what I got to give...  
The media says this

