

1940's-1950's Ad Analysis Essay

Directions, Checklist, and Sample Paragraphs

Introductory Paragraph

- ☐ Begins with a hook that is interesting and not too general
- ☐ Provides more specific and relevant background information in the next few sentences
- ☐ Intro concludes with a thesis statement that makes a clear assertion about what the ad explicitly and implicitly is selling to the target audience. The thesis should also identify the specific target audience.
- ☐ Thesis may be more than one sentence but should be easy to read the first time.

Thesis Helps:

Here is a possible thesis template. *You don't have to use it--it's just to get you started.* View it as your "training wheels," then tweak it to suit your style and needs.

The _____ ad explicitly sells _____, but it implicitly sells _____ to _____.

Sample Thesis:

The 1942 Palmolive beauty bar advertisement explicitly sells facial soap, but it implicitly promises much more. The ad uses the emotionally-charged promises of continued youth and beauty to appeal to middle-aged, middle class women with children.

The explicit messages are the obvious messages. The ad obviously sells beauty soap.

The **implicit messages** are the less overt and hidden messages—these are the promises the advertisement seems to make to the consumer. In the Palmolive ad, the advertisers seem to say, "If you buy this product, you will continue to have a youthful appearance, looking like a "schoolgirl" instead of looking middle aged. Of course, this is the arguable part of your thesis, and another may pick up upon a different claim. The point is that you must prove whatever you claim.

Body Paragraph Claims:

1st Body Paragraph Claim: States target audience

This body paragraph should then give evidence for supporting the target audience while also describing the format and visual aspects of the ad. For example, you might explain how the ad looks, who or what the ad features, and what colors appear in the ad.

2nd & 3rd Body Paragraph Claims: Identifies a type of persuasive technique (logical, ethical, or emotional) and an appeal that each paragraph will prove.

This body paragraph should then provide specific evidence that supports the claim. After this, it should provide commentary that explains HOW the evidence proves the claim.

4th Body Paragraph Claim: Something compelling about this culture that is different from our own as evidenced by the ad.

This body paragraph should then provide specific evidence that supports the claim.

After this, it should provide commentary that explains HOW it proves the claim.

Conclusion

- ❑ The conclusion should lightly touch back to earlier ideas/thesis but in a fresh way.
- ❑ The conclusions should provide an authentic thoughtful “take away” for the reader.

Other Criteria

- ❑ The essay must adhere to MLA format precisely. Consult slides for links to sample pages.
- ❑ The essay must include a Works Cited page listing the source of the ad.
- ❑ The essay must quote text at least two times in the body paragraphs (total).
- ❑ Each quote should be punctuated and framed properly. (intro/context, quote, then commentary) As there is only one reference (the ad), you do not have to include page citation info after the quote.
- ❑ There is no minimum word count, but there should be a minimum of six paragraphs.
- ❑ As a rule, a paragraph should be at least 4 sentences and anything longer than 6 or 7 sentences, you may opt to subdivide if there is a logical reason to do so. People have short attention spans these days, and it allows them to catch their breath.
- ❑ Find a great editor and give them ample time to read and suggest changes.

Because models can be super helpful, I’m including some sample paragraphs to give you an idea of how your essay might take shape. By reading these sample paragraphs, you may gain a better idea of how to set forth a thesis and push it into motion with claims, evidence, and commentary.

Sample Intro, first and second body paragraph--NOT in MLA format.

In the 1940’s appearance-oriented culture, a woman’s beauty is not merely in the eyes of her husband but also may be remarked upon by her children. Even if her husband is off fighting World War II, the children are around to notice mom’s youthful glow. Such is the narrative set up of a 1942 Colgate-Palmolive advertisement that appeared in a popular women’s magazine of the era, *The Ladies Home Journal*. In this ad, the company explicitly touts their popular beauty bar soap, Palmolive. But, underneath the promise of quality bar soap lies the more elusive and emotion-based appeals of youth and a more natural approach to beauty.

The ad strives to catch the eyes of their target audience, middle-aged mothers, by featuring a half-page color illustration of a beautiful young mother holding her pajama-clad toddler close. The two are looking lovingly into each other’s smiling eyes, while the boy’s hand reaches up to touch her face. In big, casually styled white font, he exclaims, “Gee Mummy, but you’re pretty!” This off-the-cuff compliment is clearly the promise and premise of the ad--even though mom may be growing older, middle-aged, she can still be admired and stylish..Her bright red lipstick, diamond earring, and hints of a black sleeveless dress, suggest mom is not only beautiful, but a socialite. She clearly has plans for a glamorous evening out while her son sleeps.

The emotional appeal to continued youthfulness is set forth at the bottom of the ad by the all white, all capitalized slogan, “Keep that schoolgirl complexion.” This famous Palmolive slogan

was first introduced in the Roaring Twenties when youth entertainment and the expanding media became a growing reality. Even though this mom is no longer in school, the slogan promises that her youthful complexion can be maintained by the use of this beauty soap. The lower section of the ad also hyperbolically promises to tell “The Sweetest Story That Was Ever Told,” and begins with comforting affirmation that, “There need be no age-limit on loveliness,” further establishing the promise of perpetual youth and beauty. The next line associates “the Debutante’s glamour” with “Mother’s glowing charm,” emphasizing that they are alike. Linking a fashionable and wealthy young woman’s first coming out into society with a married mother’s glow creates a powerful emotional image for mothers who may miss the freedom of their former single life and the attention they garnered as a schoolgirl.

Feel free to email me with questions, or if you wish to run your thesis by me. I can’t promise to give feedback to all, but I’m happy to give feedback if you reach me early in the cycle, and I have a free moment.

I know you’ve got the tools and ability--put them in motion one last time this school year! Do excellent work that you are proud of!