

RECOGNIZING PROPAGANDA

Senator Albertson is a stubborn, inflexible, thoughtless voter on any legislation dealing with the environment.

Senator Albertson is a consistent, high-minded supporter of positive legislation dealing with the environment.

On three occasions, Senator Albertson has introduced bills to clean up harbors and rivers throughout the country.

Can you see how different each statement is? The first is a highly unfavorable comment. The second is favorable. The third states the facts. The first two are slanted statements of opinion. The last is a factual statement.

The dictionary defines PROPAGANDA as “ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one’s cause or to damage an opposing cause.” The first two statements above may qualify as propaganda. Propagandists often have a worthy goal. You yourself have undoubtedly been a propagandist at times. Though propaganda may urge you on to good actions, you should still be aware of the techniques used. Then you can choose your course of action on the basis of clear thinking. The following list gives examples of propaganda techniques.

TESTIMONIAL

Movie star Robert Newman urges you to vote for Senator Albertson.

*Robert Newman may be an expert in acting techniques, but he is not necessarily an expert in politics.

BANDWAGON

Everybody is going to the Judy Carpenter concert. Don’t be left out!

*Don’t jump on the bandwagon and do what “everybody else is doing.”

Think for yourself. The majority may be wrong. Be on guard against words like EVERYBODY and NOBODY, ALWAYS, and NEVER, ALL, and NONE. These words often try to sweep the easily influenced along.

NAME-CALLING

The first statement at the beginning of this handout is an example of name-calling. Name-calling sheds more heat than light.

GLITTERING GENERALITIES

“Virtue” words or phrases like Americanism, public spirit, friend of the people, and economical are often used to sway voters and consumers. The second statement at the beginning of the handout uses glittering generalities.

Come On, You Can Trust Me

PLAIN FOLKS

Hiya, my neighbors and good friends. It is great to be back in the heartland of America, where all you good people live.

*Here the propagandist is pretending to be just like the rest of us – down to earth, no pretense, a regular fellow.

SNOB APPEAL

This exclusive handbag, as shown in the expensive shops of London and Paris, is for the discriminating woman.

*This device reverses the appeal of PLAIN FOLKS. Instead, this one tries to flatter the consumer by making her think she is special.

SCIENTIFIC SLANT

Seven out of ten doctors interviewed preferred NOPANE to ordinary aspirin.

*Appealing to science and scientists is a popular advertising device. In the example above, who knows how the interviewed doctors were chosen? Sometimes scientific names like HEXACHLOROPHENE are introduced to make the claims sound more impressive.

STEREOTYPES

My opponent was once a professional football player. We all know that football players are brutal, insensitive wild men.

*Stereotype is a term taken from printing. It is an oversimplified mental picture of an entire group. Off the field, a football player may be a thoughtful, sensitive, highly intelligent individual. Giving an individual a label in advance is prejudice. Not all nurses, for example, are kind and compassionate. Not all teenagers are flighty, mixed-up, and unpredictable. Not all poets are dreamers. Not all young brides are poor cooks. Not all gruff old men have hearts of gold. Television often perpetuates stereotypes of family members, police personnel, soldiers, criminals, small-town citizens, “street people,” and other groups.

PROPAGANDA COLLAGE GRADE SHEET

1. Propaganda technique is identified as title.
1 10
is not identified is clearly identified

2. Poster board is completely covered in collage fashion.
1 10
not covered sparsely covered almost covered completely covered

3. Ads included are appropriate to technique.
1 20
most are not some are most are all are

4. Ads come from a variety of sources.
1 10
one source used two sources used three or more sources used

5. Explanation of collage is clear and demonstrates understanding of
propaganda technique identified.
1 10
explanation unclear partially correct thoroughly clear

YOUR SCORE /60 points