

What's Between the Lines: "Text and Subtext"

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The New Mexico Literacy Project points out a number of things to look for when analyzing media artifacts in their article "Text & Subtext." Of course, the first place to start is by looking at the text, which they point out is not just written words, but also can include "written or spoken words, pictures, graphics, moving images, sounds, and the arrangement or sequence of all of these elements" (New Mexico Literacy Project, n.d., p. 1). In order to really analyze anything, they say we need to really look at all of the details. They also point out that we need to look at subtexts as well. They define those as "your interpretation of a piece of media" and go on to say, "While media makers (especially advertisers) often create texts that suggest certain subtexts, each person creates their own subtext (interpretation) based on their previous experiences, knowledge, opinions, attitudes and values" (New Mexico Literacy Project, n.d., p. 1). They give a number of questions that readers can use to help figure out the subtext and then they give an example of looking at both the text and subtext in a print ad.

One of the key things that stands out when thinking about subtext is that it will be different for each person, but there are still major things that "media makers (especially advertisers) often create texts that suggest certain subtexts" (New Mexico Literacy Project, n.d., p. 1). That is true with very simple advertising techniques like using sex to sell things. They seem very obvious and while we might be amused or drawn in by them, if we stop and think about it, we know what they are doing. The harder things to be conscious of are some of the emotional appeals. For example, many people are gullible for anything to do with cute animals or ads that are more inclusive of different people. Sometimes we fall for those kinds of ads and

don't think about how the company is using that to make us feel better about them and through that, their product.

Reference

New Mexico Literacy Project. (n.d.). *Text & subtext*. kelli dot ninja.

http://kelli.ninja/1301/e3/nmlp/Text_Subtext.pdf