

# Symbolism, Bias and Propaganda

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Understanding the Visual Language

# Bias

- Sometimes, we feel so strongly about something, we want to persuade others to share our feelings.
- Authors sometimes try to persuade their readers.
- **Bias is an unfair preference for or against something.**
- Why unfair? It is based on an opinion or generalization—not on solid facts.

## Examples of Bias:

- “Cats are not good for anything.” (bias against cats)
- “I don’t like soccer anymore. Last year I broke my arm playing soccer.” (bias against soccer because this person thinks about her broken arm when she thinks about soccer)
- “I like all sports, but none are as good as football.” (bias favoring football)

# Propaganda

- Propaganda is **information used to influence** the way people think to:
  - gain support for a cause.
  - convince them to buy something.
  - convince them to do something.
- Propaganda techniques will twist facts to sell readers on an idea—to convince them to agree with the writer.
- Propaganda is common in politics and advertising.
- Propaganda will usually include some type of bias, sometimes extreme.

# Media Techniques

- Audiovisual presentations using special colors, camera angles, and sounds to influence the viewer

*Examples:*

*Scary movies use loud, scary music to set the mood.*

*Seeing commercial for food on TV makes you want to eat.*

## Name-calling

- Attack on person instead of issue

## Bandwagon

- Tries to persuade reader to do, think, or buy something because it is popular or because "*everyone is doing it*"

## Red Herring

- An attempt to distract the reader with details NOT relevant to the argument

## Emotional Appeal

- Tries to persuade the reader by using words that appeal to the reader's emotions instead of to logic or reason

## Testimonial

- Attempts to persuade the reader by using a famous person to endorse a product or idea (for instance—celebrity endorsements)

## Repetition

- Attempts to persuade by repeating a message over and over again

# Stereotyping

- Makes an oversimplified statement about a GROUP based on limited information

# Circular Argument

- States a conclusion as part of the proof of an argument

# Statistics

- Attempts to persuade the reader by showing how many people think something is true



## Examples

### Which persuasive technique is being used?

Bias

Red Herring

Stereotype

Bandwagon

Testimonial

Statistic

1. Pro-Activ features Jessica Simpson on their commercials.
2. A friend tells you that you need a Smart phone because *everyone* has one.
3. A toothpaste commercial states that their product is 25% more effective than the leading brand.
4. Only tall people can play basketball.

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1. Pro-Activ features Jessica Simpson on their commercials.

Answer: Testimonial

2. A friend tells you that you need a Smart phone because *everyone* has one.

Answer: Bandwagon

3. A toothpaste commercial states that their product is 25% more effective than the leading brand.

Answer: Statistic

4. Only tall people can play basketball.

Answer: Stereotype

## Question #1

Hello? Yes, I am Ms. Taylor's reference. Oh, she was a terrific employee. I highly recommend her work. She showed up on time, finished projects quickly, and had a lot of new ideas. I couldn't have been happier with her work. She shined above all the other employees even though she is so young. I'm so proud of her. I remember when she was little, she could read before all the other little kids. She's always been like that; can you believe it? You should hire her. What? The same last name? Well, yes, we do have the same last name.

The person speaking is Ms. Taylor's mother. Most employers do not accept family members as professional references. Based on this example, what is the most likely reason employers do not accept family members as references?

- A.** Family members might not be biased.
- B.** Family members might be positively biased.
- C.** Family members might be negatively biased.
- D.** Family members aren't interested in being references.

Answer: B

Bias is something we have to think about when a person gives his or her opinion.

Because this reference is from the perspective of a mother, she has a *positive bias* toward her daughter and might not give an accurate or objective reference.

## Question #2

Which is the best example of the use of propaganda?

- A. A newspaper article quotes a visitor who said that Americans are too concerned with material things.
- B. A television news program reported that American planes dropped food for starving refugees.
- C. The President of the United States declared that the U.S. will defend itself against any act of war.
- D. A foreign radio broadcasts that Americans are evil, wicked, and sinful.

Answer: D

Propaganda is a deliberate effort to spread ideas to influence opinion.

In this example, the foreign radio broadcasts will spread negative ideas to a large number of people, therefore influencing their opinion of Americans.