

# Images



**Jamie Keddie**  
examines a ubiquitous  
resource.

**H**ow many advertisements are we subjected to each day? It is impossible to say, but 3,000 for the average American is a figure that I see reported from time to time.

Whether you are in the supermarket, at the airport or online, someone somewhere is setting out to connect seemingly unrelated ideas in your head (mobile phones and freedom, cowboys and cigarettes, deodorant and sex, etc) or convince you that their product will improve your life.

Ultimately, the millions of visual messages that are communicated to us in our lifetime will contribute to who we are as individuals and as a society. Most of us are aware of the potentially detrimental side of this: stereotyping, bad diets and even anorexia, to name a few examples, may to an extent be attributed to advertising.

The activities in this article aim to get students thinking, talking and writing about the adverts that bombard them in their day-to-day lives. Hopefully this can contribute to an acquired understanding of advertising culture and how our lives are affected by it – a goal which may be particularly important for young learners.

## Activity 1: Banksy

- Write *Banksy* on the board and ask your class if anyone has heard of this contemporary British artist.

- Pre-teach any new or potentially problematic vocabulary/language from the text below.
- Give out copies of the text and ask your students if they can work out the word that fits in all three gaps (the answer is *graffiti*).
- If your students can't guess the word, tell them that Banksy is the artist's nickname and the public don't actually know his true identity. This might give them a clue.
- If they still can't get the word, use it to play hangman.
- Show your students examples of the artist's work at either of the following sites:

[www.banksy.co.uk](http://www.banksy.co.uk)

<http://flickr.com/groups/imagesforlanguagelearning/>

\_\_\_\_\_ is not the lowest form of art. Despite having to creep about at night and lie to your mum it's actually the most honest artform available. There is no elitism or hype, it exhibits on some of the best walls a town has to offer, and nobody is put off by the price of admission.

The people who run our cities don't understand \_\_\_\_\_ because they think nothing has the right to exist unless it makes a profit. But if you just value money then your opinion is worthless.

They say \_\_\_\_\_ frightens people and is symbolic of the decline in society. But the people who truly deface our neighbourhoods are the companies that scrawl their giant slogans across buildings and buses trying to make us feel inadequate unless we buy their stuff. They expect to be able to shout their message in your face from every available surface but you're never allowed to answer back.

Banksy 2005 (from *Wall and Piece*)

- If you and your students live in an environment with a lot of graffiti, take a few pictures of the examples you see around and show them in class. In each case, have everyone decide if the piece in question is decoration or desecration.

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### Activity 2: The bubble project

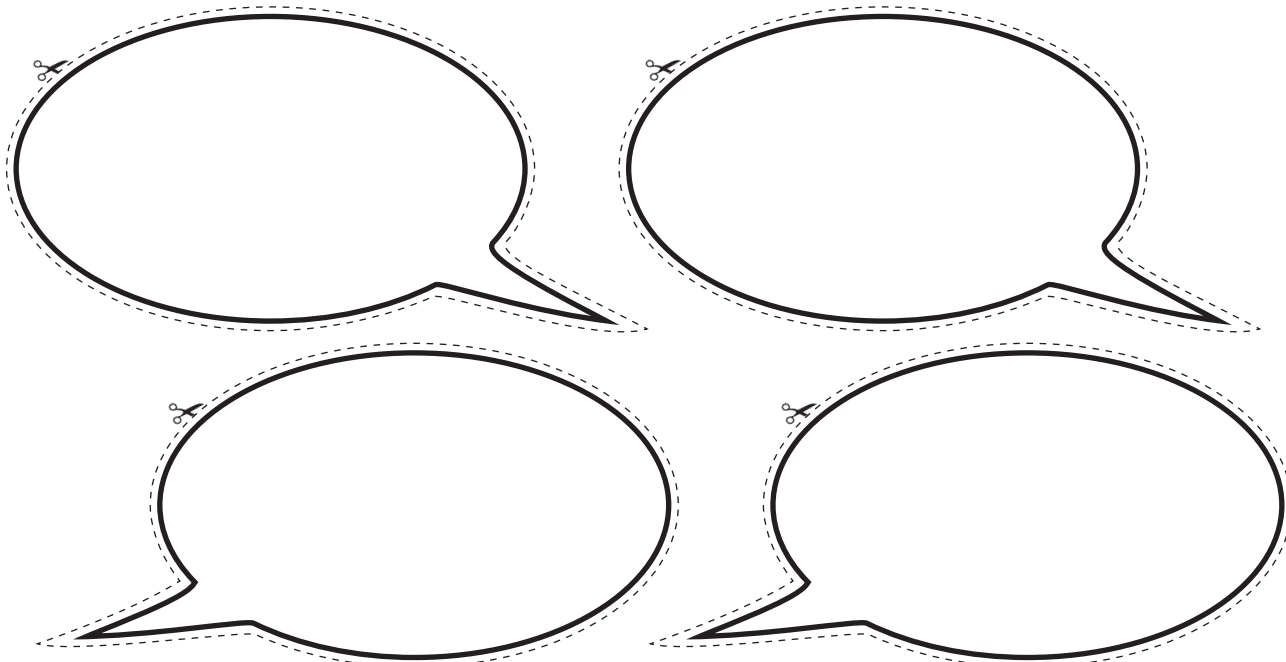
- Photocopy the speech bubbles given here and cut them out. You will need at least one speech bubble for each advert that your students find (see below).
- Pre-teach any new or potentially problematic vocabulary/language from the text in the box above and then dictate it to your students.
- Ask your students what they think happened next. What was Ji Lee's reason for putting the speech bubbles on adverts?
- Show your students the two photographs given here.
- Show your students more images from [www.thebubbleproject.com](http://www.thebubbleproject.com).
- Turn your classroom into an advert gallery: take in a big pile of newspapers and magazines and have everyone find

Have you ever felt frustrated with your job? In 2002, New York advertiser Ji Lee felt frustrated with his. He described the work he was creating as 'often boring and offensive to the public's intelligence' and he decided that he had to do something different.

Ji Lee spent \$3,000 printing 30,000 stickers in the shape of speech bubbles. He then cycled around New York and stuck them on bus stops, telephone booths, subways, billboards, walls and anywhere else that he saw street adverts containing pictures of people.

adverts containing pictures of people. Get them to cut or tear these out and put them up on the classroom walls.

- Stick the speech bubbles to the adverts on the walls, making them appear to come from the people pictured. Invite your students to go round the gallery and fill in the speech bubbles creatively.
- Correct the language whenever necessary and have a vote for the best speech bubbles.
- Take photographs of the best advert/speech bubbles and put them on a class blog if you have one.



### Activity 3: Using slogans

- Select about 12 good adverts with slogans from magazines or newspapers and cut them out.
- Type all the slogans into a Word document and print off copies for your students.
- Blot out the slogans on the adverts with a thick black marker pen, number them and then put them up on the classroom walls.
- Get your students to go around the gallery and attempt to guess what the missing slogan is in each case.
- Have everyone sit in a circle and share and compare their ideas.
- Give out copies of the actual slogans and get your students to match them with the adverts on the wall.

### Activity 4: Variations on a theme

- One excellent way of gaining insight into the minds of advertisers and the tricks and techniques that they employ is to compare a number of adverts for similar products (perfume, cars, watches, etc).
- Turn your classroom into a themed advert gallery. A good way to do this would be to obtain a women's magazine and a men's magazine and cut out all the ads for perfume, for example, number them and stick them on the classroom walls.
- Get your students to browse the gallery in pairs and ask them to decide exactly who or what type of person each advert is aimed at. Get them to write a brief outline of how they came to their conclusion. In doing so, they may want to describe any or all of the following factors:

- Colour
- Shapes and lines
- Objects
- People
- Animals
- Places
- Actions
- Emotion
- Symbolism
- Font and slogans



Fictitious campaign poster, complete with spelling mistake!

### Activity 5: Create a campaign

I can't recall exactly how old I was when I made the poster shown above, but I certainly remember enjoying and learning a lot from the project that it was a part of. Our art teacher had given the class an outline of a fictitious new product (a soft drink) and our task was

to develop the brand and create an advertising campaign for it.

A large part of the project involved discussion and brainstorming. We looked at and analysed real campaigns of the time and considered how each of us may have been affected by them.

Of course, I don't remember the exact task that we were given but it could have been something like this:

You are working in the marketing department of a soft drinks company. Your product development team has just created a new drink, which amazingly stays cold at all times (in other words, it doesn't have to be kept in the fridge). The drink also contains a recently-discovered ingredient which you have named Polarine. This ingredient, which may (or may not) have health benefits, is found naturally in polar bear urine, although yours is obtained from a different source. You are going to create a campaign for this new product. You must do the following:

- Decide who you are going to aim the product at (children, adults, sporty types, bar drinkers, etc).
- Decide what you are going to call it.
- Decide how it is going to be packaged (can, carton, etc) and create a design.
- Create a slogan.
- Create an advertising campaign (TV advert, billboard poster, etc).
- Think of other ways to promote this new product.



Banksy Wall and Piece Century 2005  
[www.thebubbleproject.com](http://www.thebubbleproject.com)



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