

Find an advertisement. **Just one. THIS MUST BE IN A MAGAZINE AND BE HARDCOPY. DO NOT SELECT AN AD FROM THE INTERNET.** It can be one that you like; one that you hate (those can work extremely well for this project, by the way); or just one that you think would be readily analyzed. Ads that include humor, parody, or an outrageous or outlandish circumstance often make good candidates for analysis. Ads with many elements (interesting layout, text message, different images, unusual text fonts, striking colors, unexpected perspective, sharp or fuzzy focus) are actually easier to analyze than those with just a bottle of perfume or cologne reclining against a silky background.

Analyze your print ad in a short essay. Remember the sample essay. Here are a few questions to help you brainstorm.

1. What's the ad's central idea? **Everything** in that advertisement is going to have been placed there because the "authors" felt it would most effectively get that thesis across . . . believe it or not.
2. What's the ad's tone? Is it humorous, formal, serious, or sarcastic? What's its personality?
3. Ads usually arrange their elements in **space**. Break the ad into its parts. (For a print ad you can literally do this with a pair of scissors.) How much space is given to each part? What's put in the most eye-catching place? Is it the product? Something else? Does that "something else" have anything to do with the product?
4. How do these elements relate to the thesis? In other words, what do you associate with the elements? How is the ad trying to transfer these associations onto the product? Does color play a part? (Is the product even shown at all? Why or why not?)
5. Besides the obvious, are there words, designs, etc. which aren't immediately apparent, but which still might help sell the product in some way? (This question speaks to those "subliminal messages" some people claim are placed in ads . . . elements the advertisement implies rather than states right out.)
6. Who is the audience for this ad?
7. Is the ad telling a story? If so, try to put that story into words.

Or here's a slightly different set of questions to get you brainstorm.

- 1) What is the ad saying? (making an argument/sending a message/making a selling point)
- 2) Who is the ad addressing? (age group and/or consumer group)
- 3) Why is the ad saying it that way? Is it trying to be logical, ethical or emotional? Is it being humorous, flashy or serious?
- 4) What is the ad saying about the company itself? Is it trying to impress on the audience a certain "image?"

For this assignment

- Have me approve your ad
- Identify and analyze **at least 5 key elements** in your ad
- Articulate the ad's story
- State the ad's thesis. This is NOT the same thing as the ad's purpose
- Determine the ad's audience
- Use examples to develop your claim
- Use worksheets to support the process
- Develop an outline and paper
- Give your essay an **interesting title** (NOT "An Analysis of a MasterCard Ad")

This is a formal essay. Write in **third person** and **do not use contractions**. In the introduction, state the product's name and its manufacturer. Capitalize the product name. Also state where the ad appeared, as well as the target audience for both the magazine and the ad.

What **NOT** to write:

- This ad catches the reader's eye.
- This ad has a good vibe.
- The purpose of this ad is to sell perfume, cars, inner peace.
- Above all, analyze the ad instead of evaluating it. We're exploring what the pieces of the ad are and how they work. We are NOT asking if it's a good ad or if it's effective.

Requirements:

- Length 750-1000 words

- Thesis Identify and explicate
- Audience Identify the intended audience for the ad. Be specific
- Ad's approach Identify and explain how the ad pitches itself to the audience. Does it use emotions (lust, greed, shame, safety), ethics (we're saving the planet), logic (a car's horsepower and braking speed)? An ad might use more than one of these approaches.
- Narrative Does the ad tell a story? If so, what is it and why is it there?
- Analysis Identify and analyze **5+ elements** in the ad. Explain how the elements interact and support the ad's thesis
- Tutorial comments Submit the essay to a Writing Center Composition tutor or AskOnline.com. Be aware that it can take up to 48 hours (2 days) to get your marked essay back from an online tutor. Download the marked essay. Highlight and number at least three (4) corrections or comments which the reader made and which you intend to correct on your final draft. Incorporate these suggested revisions into your essay. Highlight these corrections and provide the corresponding numbers on the final draft. In other words, suggestion "1" from the tutor should match up with correction "1" on your final draft. **You gain 5 points** from your final essay grade if you indicate and include tutorial corrections. In general, the more corrections you can work into your essay, the stronger and clearer the final work will be.
- Turnitin.com Submit your paper to Turnitin.com and provide a hardcopy of the originality report. Correct any problems you see with the originality report in your final draft.
- Submission Use MLA format. Staple the pages of your essay. Submit all elements of your essay IN A FOLDER in the following order: Essay (original & revisions), Ad, editorial suggestions/revisions, Outline, Worksheets, Peer Analysis, Turnitin.com originality report.
- Due date See Class Calendar

PEER ANALYSIS:

On the day of the peer analysis bring:

- 2 copies of your rough draft. Give the other to your peer reviewer.
- Use the peer analysis handout as a checklist as you are writing your essay.
- When applying it to your peer's paper, be honest, thorough and critical without being caustic or offensive. Do not worry that you will hurt your partner's feelings. If you read carefully and provide thoughtful responses, you will assist the author. The peer analysis you write does count toward the final grade on your essay. This is yet another step in the process of critical reading and writing.
- Come with as complete an essay as you have at the time. The more you've worked on the essay, the more clearly you'll be able to communicate your thoughts and the more your reviewer will be to provide helpful comments. You'll have until at least the next class period to make additions and corrections before you turn in your final draft.

Penalties:

- Failure to submit a rough draft in class on peer revision day (10 points off of final grade for essay) (5 points for being present, 5 points for rough draft)
- Failure to submit Turnitin analysis with final draft (5 points off of final grade for essay)
- Lateness is calculated at 5 points per calendar day including weekends and holidays

Extra Credit: Incorporate at least 4 tutorial suggestions/corrections (hard copy of analysis must be submitted & corrections highlighted on both the download and Final Draft =5 points

Any late penalties (**5 points per CALENDAR day**) on the original paper will carry over to the revision. I do not accept late revisions. Failure to submit a required revision will result in a 0 for the assignment.

Come to class with your papers assembled. **I do not provide** a stapler, hole punch, folders or paper clips.

Effective papers will have a clear thesis supported by detailed evidence woven into a coherent argument.

Unmodified example of a student ad analysis:



Analysis of an Ad for Courvoisier

by Jennifer Cheng

The thesis of the ad is that Courvoisier is a magical escape to another existence; another world of dreams and fine things. The ad evokes emotions of curiosity, dreaminess, and a feeling of detachment from reality. The style of the ad is subtle, definitely not "in-your-face." Consequently, the ad possesses a persona of elegance and formality.

The composition of the ad is such that the viewer's eye is first drawn to the image of the fantastical, otherworldly tree. This is because of the artistic structure of the images, and because the people in the ad are looking intently towards the tree in great anticipation. After the tree, the viewer's eye will fall to the only element in color: the product, which is the cognac, Courvoisier. Such a composition is probably designed to create an artificial connection between the qualities of the tree, such as magic and mystery, and the product.

The color of the ad--or the lack of it--is significant. Most of the image is in black and white, with the exception of the word "Courvoisier" and the product itself. This use of color allows the ad to emphasize the product using color rather than size. Also, the use of black and white makes the exotic image seem less cluttered, less realistic, and more timeless. If the black and white images were in color, most of the mystery and the nostalgic quality of the ad would be lost. The size of the product is deliberately small; it is bright and eye-catching but not vulgar. The product seems simple and understated because it is not the direct focus of the viewer's attention. However, the placement of the product in the right bottom corner does give it due emphasis--the product is the bottom line.

Water, or some liquid (cognac?), and sky surround all the elements in the ad. This creates a fantasy-world effect. The image is shifting, anchor-less, unreal, and dream-like; the elements could be anywhere or nowhere in time and space. The water also can be seen symbolically, in the traditional interpretations of life, change, or drifting. All of these associations lend the ad an exotic and exciting atmosphere.

Next, the element of the boat gives the ad the qualities of a journey or an escape. The boat's sail gives the effect of flight; it looks like a wing. The placement of the boat is such that it points directly at the tree, drawing both the viewers and the boat away from reality, into another world.

The two people in the ad are black. Perhaps, if the people were white, they might be too light and would throw the shading off-balance. Their clothes are simple and chic, but differentiated. The man and the woman do not wear matching clothes; the woman wears a dress and the man wears a shirt and slacks. The differentiation between the genders

suggests romance. The viewers cannot see the faces of the people; this facelessness suggests that the man and woman represent Everyman and Everywoman.

Another element is the phrase "Anything is Possible in the State of Courvoisier." This phrase seems to take its syntax from the Shakespearean quote "Something is Rotten in the State of Denmark." This may prompt viewers of the ad to associate qualities of Shakespeare, such as great renown or erudition, with Courvoisier. The content of the phrase is meant to suggest that Courvoisier is a *state of being* (instead of a mere alcoholic beverage.) This is a clever play on the meanings of the word "state," and reinforces the idea of Courvoisier as an escape, as the key to another plane of existence. Furthermore, the phrase is an implied, grandiose promise that *anything*--any dream, wish or desire--is possible in this "state of Courvoisier."

The audience for this ad is most likely the rich or the upper-middle class. The ideas of escape and alluring higher plane of existence would probably appear as a welcome relief to the tedium and struggles in the world of corporate business.

NOTES:

Jennifer, I think, has done a pretty good job with this thing. For one, she's definitely fulfilled the basic definition of *analysis*:

Analysis: separating the parts of the problem, trying to see how things fit together.

If you've got a print ad out of a magazine, you can *literally* do this with scissors. Dealing with the *parts* of any argument is a great way to organize paragraphs in an essay. Jennifer, basically, has sliced the Courvoisier "argument" thusly:



While she does deal with the color (or lack of it) overall, she's also broken apart the water/liquid, the product, the "slogan," the boat, the boat people, and the tree. (In her final draft she broke down the tree again and included a paragraph dealing just with that door which has a glow emanating from it, claiming that this glow represents "spiritual re-awakening" and that this is the promise Courvoisier is making for its product. Whatever, Jennifer . . .)

For each of these parts, she describes a function: the "association" which goes along with the shape, the idea, etc. As you can see, an ad like this relies heavily on *pathos*: the emotions. I'm not sure there's a fact, example or piece of evidence anywhere on the thing. This isn't uncommon in the world of advertising, but isn't the only way ads work, of course.