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I'd Like to Teach the World to Buy: Advertising Jingles in America

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We can all hum them, and sometimes we can even remember all the words. However trivial jingles may seem, they are successful at getting us to remember a product, to buy the product and even make us think we NEED the product to be popular or successful. Can a jingle really influence how successful a product is? Effective commercial jingles are an important part of the image of any brand. A successful jingle promotes a positive image, making the consumer more likely to want to purchase the product. Ever since the first jingle was heard in 1926, they have been an important part of any advertising campaign. Jingles are nothing more than short clips of music designed to make the product being advertised more appealing, yet they are a part of our lives.

Jingles are written to be easy to remember. The idea is to be short and repetitive and to pop into one's mind when viewing products. They are designed to remain in your brain for years and they are difficult to forget. When perusing the cold cut section, most people will immediately remember the "My bologna has a first name..." jingle for Oscar Meyer.

Psychologists who have studied the effects of music on the brain have found that 15-30 second pieces of music or jingles, known as earworms, work best at "infiltrating" the mind. The term earworms was made popular by James Kellaris and it means "those melodies that burrow into your head and won't leave". ¹

Truly great jingles are not only remembered, but can also be reinvented decades later. The Big Mac "two all beef patties, special sauce..." that was so popular in the '70's is making a comeback in 2010.

In the words of long time jingle writer Steven Karmen, jingles are "...a short, custom-made melody with original lyrics about a product specifically designed to catch and hold a consumer's attention...its job is to make the commercial stand apart from the program it is placed in". ²

In a world where children are constantly bombarded by messages about which sneakers will make them cool, the correct fast food to eat and which soft drink is "in", the jingle is often the most memorable part of the commercial. Three little words with four little notes, "I'm lovin' it", immediately bring to mind McDonald's burgers and famous fries.

We live in a world of consumerism. From the time a child can watch television, he or she becomes aware of the catchy commercials. Without understanding why, children immediately know they want a Happy Meal. As they go to school and interact with other children they need to own a pair, or several, of Nikes because LeBron James and Michael Jordan wear them. Will they be able to play basketball like these celebrities if they wear

Nikes? No but they are status symbols and they gain status by wearing the sneakers. Status is everything in the world of consumers and catchy jingles often create that status.

Rationale

This unit will help students become aware of how much they are influenced by a commercial with a catchy jingle. They will learn about the history of commercial jingles from their inception in radio commercials through television commercials and why they are such an important part of American consumerism. They will discover and explore how jingles such as the Hilltop Coke commercial and the Big Mac song can remain in the brain and in the culture long after the commercial has been aired.

This unit will be comprised of three sections. The first will challenge students to match famous jingles to their commercials. They will also be able to list their favorite jingles and examine why they are favorites. The second will utilize readings as a way to make the students aware of how great ideas become reality. I am going to focus on "The Hilltop Ad" and the "Big Mac Ad": how, where and when they were made and why they were so successful. This lesson will also include how a commercial that was made in the '70's could be remade and appeal to today's youth. The third section will require small groups to invent a product and write a jingle for that product. They will perform their jingle for the class and be rated for both the visual (actual product invented) and aural (the jingle) quality of their commercial.

The activities in this unit are designed to make students aware of the advertising jingle. They will explore what it is about a specific jingle that catches their attention. The culminating activity will allow students to create a product, write both the jingle and commercial for that product, and finally perform that commercial for the class. A camcorder will be used to record the performances. Students will then have the opportunity to view their own performances and critique them.

When this unit is finished, I expect my students to understand the important role that jingles play in advertising, what goes into creating and producing a commercial, and what the future of commercial jingles might include.

History of Radio Jingles

I want to give my students a brief history lesson about where the first jingle came from and who wrote it. It is interesting to note that the first "modern" jingle was played over the radio in December 1926. The song "Have you tried Wheaties?" was sung by the Wheaties Quartet in an effort to increase sagging sales. It was a simple song:

"Have you tried Wheaties?
They're whole wheat with all of the bran.
Won't you try Wheaties?"

For wheat is the best food of man."

While adults and children alike may laugh at this today, at the time it was first aired, consumers loved the song and bought the product. In the regions where the commercial was heard, sales did indeed increase. Today, everyone has heard of Wheaties cereal, has seen their commercials, and recognizes the box in the cereal aisle in the store; yet before the jingle increased sales, General Mills had decided to discontinue the production of Wheaties. This was the first jingle composed for a product.

The first song to be used in a commercial was "In My Merry Oldsmobile", written in 1905. The song was written long before radio existed, but Oldsmobile decided to pick up the song for their advertising campaign in the late 1920s. This became the first popular song to be licensed for advertising.

It did not take long to realize that commercial time could be sold to advertisers and their sponsors. Jingles immediately began selling everything that audiences could imagine. Singers and musicians, who were already performing on the radio, became jingle performers.

The other important jingles in radio that deserve mentioning are known as radio call letters. These letters date back to the late 1800's and can be traced to Heinrich Hertz and Guglielmo Marconi and their work with the "wireless" telegraphic signaling between ships and land. To avoid confusion and also to identify each other, land and ship stations were assigned three letters, or call letters. These identified the broadcast stations. In 1923, radio stations east of the Mississippi River would have letters beginning with "w" and those that were west of the Mississippi would begin with "k". In order for listeners to remember which stations they preferred, the stations started using catchy jingles with their call letters. The more recognized a radio station was, the more its commercial time was worth, therefore station jingles that were memorable became increasingly important. ³

The Rise of PAMS

In 1947, a musician by the name of Bill Meeks was working on a radio station in Dallas, Texas. He created commercials and jingles for the sponsors of the show. People liked what they heard and what he did for their sales and they wanted him to devote more time to their advertising campaigns. In 1951, Meeks formed his own agency, PAMS. This stood for Production Advertising Merchandising Service.

He soon realized that many radio stations would become more successful if they had their own identifying call letters. To accomplish this, PAMS designed a jingle package and called it "Series 1" The premise was that stations would hear the demonstration tape (demo), and re-write the lyrics to suit their individual needs. PAMS would then get their singers to re-sing the jingles using the new words over the already-existing background. As PAMS became better known, they eventually established themselves on both coasts.

In 1971 a man named Jonathan Wolfert started working for PAMS. Three years later he decided to start his

own company. JAM (from the initials of John And Mary, his wife) was created in November of 1974. Until the 1980's, they primarily worked with radio stations.

During the 80's they began doing television commercials. Today, JAM has clients from all over the world. In addition to their regular staff, they also employ freelance writers, singers and musicians. ⁴

The Television Jingle

With the invention of television, live TV shows competed with live radio shows. Suddenly, consumers could not only hear but they could see what was being advertised. At first, most commercials were presented as part of the actual show. Television show hosts (Jack Parr and Jack Benny, to name a few) as well as their guests, "integrated product plugs into their performances". ⁵

One of the first television jingles to appear in the mid-1950s was for Winston cigarettes. "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should" remained popular throughout the 1960s. Jack Benny's show character, Rochester, actually joined the Sportsman Quartet and sang the Lucky Strike jingle. Raymond Scott, who wrote the jingle, realized how important the jingle had become and stated, "to me, they've become as much a part of the American scene as any native art form". Time magazine went one step further and claimed that "the singing commercial has become as entrenched in U.S. culture as the madrigal in the Italian Renaissance". ⁶

One of the highlights in jingle history came in October 1956, when Nat King Cole performed the Rheingold beer jingle from New York's Philharmonic Hall. The beer company was a regional brand and chose songs from a public domain because they were free. What is now remembered as the "quintessential German Beer Hall tune" with images of raised beer steins and all singing in unison, was actually the Estudiantina Waltz by written a Frenchman. ⁷ It is the section that most people remember when they remember the commercial. However, just because the song was free did not mean that the advertisers "skipped" on production.

As advertising became more competitive and demanding, big-name talents formed their own production companies. Jingle-writing became more professional. There was so much interest in jingle writing that it attracted Broadway composers. Rival composers started their own jingle firms and kept big name talent on their staff.

Advertisers wanted to get the attention of television viewers and what better way than to use musical commercials. "Music gives a product emotional memorability. It also gives an image of a company". ⁸

In 1971 when Coca Cola launched the "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing", it was re-recorded, had more verses added, and became a hit on the pop charts. Cover bands tried to re-record songs for commercials, however licensing costs were too high for this to be feasible.

In 1985, Burger King used the original recording of Aretha Franklin's "Freeway of Love" in a commercial. This was followed by Nike using "Revolution" by the Beatles. Songs have been used to illustrate a point about a product (such as Bob Seger's "Like a Rock" for Chevy trucks). They have also been used where the original meaning of the song becomes totally irrelevant or even opposite to what is being advertised (such as Iggy Pop's "Lust for Life" for a cruise ship line). The song is actually about heroin addiction.

Originally, musicians/singers objected to the use of the music in commercials. They viewed it as "selling out". Today, artists actively try to sell their songs for commercials, which has increased the popularity and sales of the music. ⁹ There is an eagerness of labels and artists to allow their songs to be licensed for commercial use. One example of this: in 1980 Sting refused to allow the lyrics of "Don't Stand So Close To Me" to be used for a deodorant campaign. In direct response to this use, Neil Young wrote "This Note s for You" in 1988. It was about artists who "sell out" allow their songs to be used in commercials. The song specifically mentions the products Coke, Pepsi, Miller, and Bud. In 2000, Jaguar featured Sting meditating in the back of an S-type to "Desert Rose". That song had been released the previous year, practically unsuccessfully, yet after the ad, it "rocketed up the charts".

Jingles today

Advertisers today are moving away from the jingle and towards actual songs. "Jingles, meaning an original, happy melody written about a product that extols the benefits, qualities, and excitement that come from owning or using that product, are no longer considered honest". ¹⁰ Advertisers have to be honest and make their ads real. Music that is real makes ads that are real. Pop songs are able to entice the market of 16-34 year olds as jingles can no longer do. There is less originality today and the phrase "Everyone is doing it" is safe and normal. But the jingle, as anyone with a television knows, is a vanishing art form. It has become too quaint, too corny, for our ironic times. Naming your product in a commercial that is actually about your product is just tacky, say advertising executives. Modern pitchmen prefer pop songs that create a mood or spark an emotional association that if all goes as planned, attaches to a product and translates to a sale. ¹¹

Even though national jingles are fading, they are still thriving in local and regional venues. While everyone knows about Pepsi and Burger King, the local pizza place needs to tell people where they are and catchy radio or television jingles are quite effective at getting that message across to the consumers.

The future of jingles

With commercials being able to be virtually erased due to TiVo and digital video recorders, (DVR's), it is likely that all commercials will be eliminated and advertising will be take place in the actual television show. For example, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition advertises Sears, Kenmore, and Home Depot by using the products from these companies. ¹²

The other way advertising is being done is to overlay the ads on the bottom of the screen, blocking out some of the picture. These are known as Banners and function much the same way as severe weather alerts.

As much as advertising is changing, advertisers are wondering what the future might look like. Fads and trends come and go and return again. All it would require would be for one advertising jingle to work for one company and we will have the return of the jingle as we used to know it. And that means, years from now when the original companies no longer remain, we will still remember and be able to sing their jingles.

Lesson Plan:

Objective:

1. Students will be able to describe favorite commercial jingles.
2. Students will describe why it is memorable to them and what makes it so.

Activity One:

Without thinking too much, list the first five jingles that pop into your head and the product associated with it, then can you identify the one that is the least favorite.

For each jingle, please answer the following questions:

1. What is the commercial about?
2. Who is in it?
3. Why do you like it?
4. What appeals most to you?
5. How does the jingle affect the tone of the commercial? (serious, funny etc.)
6. What makes the jingle so effective? (words, catchy tune etc).
7. Did you try the product because you heard the jingle?

Students will then share what they have written. Results should be posted on the board to see what similarities/differences they come up with.

Wrap-Up/Homework

Pick one commercial that you like and try to find background music that would be effective for selling the product. In other words, the commercial will be watched with only the background music being heard. Be creative and use various genres of music outside your comfort zone.

During class, ask students to explain why they chose a particular piece of music. Get feedback from the class.

Activity Two:

Before doing the matching section, have students view select commercials via YouTube (found under the specific jingle in the matching section) and answer the following questions:

1. Does the music go with the video? Why or why not?
2. What message does the video hope to convey to the viewer?

3. What did you think about when watching the video?
4. Does watching this commercial make you want to buy the product?

Manufacturers create jingles to encourage consumers to think about their product. Here are some top jingles of the twentieth century. Can you match the jingle to its product? If I sing the first phrase, can anyone sing the next phrase? Better yet, can you sing the entire jingle?

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <p>___ 1) "You deserve a break today"</p> | <p>a. Oscar Meyer</p> |
| <p>___ 2) "Be All That You Can Be"</p> | <p>b. Doublemint Gum</p> |
| <p>___ 3) "M'm. M'm Good"
(www.youtube.com/watch?v=28vpj897xds)
(7/10/2010)</p> | <p>c. U.S. Army</p> |
| <p>___ 4) "So s-o-g double o-d good"</p> | <p>d. Lay's Potato Chips</p> |
| <p>___ 5) "My Bologna Has A First Name"
(www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmPRHjd3HI)
(7/10/2010)</p> | <p>e. McDonald's</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <p>(www.youtube.com/watch?v=yd3wvji5lQy&feature=related)
)
(7/10/2010)</p> | <p>f. Campbell's Soup</p> |
| <p>___ 6) "Double Your Pleasure, Double Your Fun"</p> | <p>g. Peter Paul</p> |
| <p>___ 7) "Sometimes You Feel Like A Nut,
Sometimes You Don't"

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjVKUap1HgU)
(7/02/2010)</p> | <p>h. Kit Kat Bar</p> |
| <p>___ 8) "Gimme That Fillet of Fish"</p> | <p>i. McDonald's</p> |
| <p>___ 9) "Give Me a Break, Give Me a Break"

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFW9nUZZUk4)
(7/02/2010)</p> | <p>j. Kentucky Fried Chicken</p> |
| <p>___ 10) "Betcha can't eat just one"
(slogan, not a jingle)</p> | |

Activity Three:

As an extension of the previous activity, see if the students can make up their own matching game, with the

object being to see who can stump the most classmates. They can set this up in 2-4 teams. After they are finished, they can recite or sing a jingle and if no one can figure out the product they can write it on the board. The team who has the most unrecognized jingles wins

Case Study: The Hilltop Coca Cola Commercial

One of the most popular and successful commercial jingles of all time was the "I'd like to teach the world to sing" for Coca-Cola. In 1971, the song came about as the result of a plane making an emergency landing due to fog.

Bill Backer was the creative director for the Coca-Cola account, and as he recalled in his book *The Care and Feeding of Ideas*,

In that moment...I began to see a bottle of Coca-Cola as more than just a drink and the words, "Let's have a Coke" as actually a way of saying, "Let's keep each other company for a little while. And he could hear those words being said throughout the world. So that was the basic idea: to see Coke not as it was but as a tiny bit of commonality between all peoples, a universally liked formula that would help to keep them company for a few minutes .¹³

Lesson Plan:

Objectives:

1. Read aloud, taking turns, "The Hilltop Ad: The Story of a Commercial" found in "Fifty Years of Coca Cola Advertisements" which can be found at:
2. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ccmphtml/colaadv.html> . (7/15/2010)
3. View the commercial and answer questions pertaining to the commercial.
4. Learn about the "Two All Beef Patties..." Big Mac commercial.
5. View the commercial at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=en4muUSIRT4. (6/25/2010)

Activity Four:

Depending on the individual class being taught, it may be necessary to condense it for your students. If at all possible, I prefer to have my class read the entire selection. This reinforces reading skills which my students can definitely benefit from.

Students will then be able to view the Hilltop Coca Cola commercial jingle and decide what aspects of that jingle made the product appealing. For most, if not all, of these students, this will be the first time they have seen this commercial. This can be viewed on

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvTqW6on8MA. (6/25/2010)

This commercial was such a great success, that there have actually been at least three re-makes of it. ¹⁴

They will answer questions about the commercial and write down what their reaction to it was. They will then decide if watching this commercial would have any affect on their purchasing of the product.

Questions to be answered pertaining to the Hilltop video:

1. Does the music go with the video? Why or why not?
2. What message does the video hope to convey to the viewer?
3. What did you think about when watching the video?
4. If you could change anything about the video, what would it be?
5. Does watching this video make you want to have a Coke?
6. What special techniques were used in this video? (special lighting, bright or dull colors, filming tricks) How do these affect the mood of the commercial?
7. Do you find the song/music catchy? Why or why not?
8. What do you think made this commercial so catchy that it was able to be successfully remade a decade later?

The second commercial jingle that we will learn about is the McDonald's "Two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun" This was written and performed for McDonald's in 1974 by Mark Vieha. His intent was to turn the ingredients into a tongue twister. After he sang it, then it was sung by actors, but it became even more popular when McDonald's decided to use real people. In 2003, American Greetings and Carlton Cards released a Christmas ornament of a Big Mac, on which the slogan was both printed and played aloud by pulling a string. ¹⁵ This can be viewed on www.youtube.com/watch?v=en4muUSIRT4. (6/25/2010)

There were contests that offered a free Big Mac if a customer could sing the jingle. It actually became the number one requested song on the radio, and it wasn't even a song.

The jingle was so successful it was brought back by McDonald's in 1996 and then once again in 2003. For Big Mac's 40th anniversary, McDonald's started a campaign on

MySpace.com/BigMacChant to get customers to do a remix of the song. Big Mac still remains a high volume product. The Big Mac is still marketed as a core product of McDonald's.

Students will then answer the same questions, this time pertaining to the Big Mac song.

1. Does the music go with the video? Why or why not?
2. What message does the video hope to convey to the viewer?
3. What did you think about when watching the video?
4. If you could change anything about the video, what would it be?
5. Does watching this video make you want to have a Big Mac?

6. What special techniques were used in this video? (special lighting, bright or dull colors, filming tricks) How do these affect the mood of the commercial?
7. Do you find the song/music catchy? Why or why not?
8. What do you think made this commercial so catchy that it was able to be successfully remade a number of times?

Lesson Plan:

Objectives:

1. Students will create their own product, either a soft drink or a fast food product.
2. Students will compose a four line jingle for their product
3. Students will perform their jingle and pitch their product for the class
4. Students will generate their own class rubric

Activity Five:

After viewing and answering questions about both commercials, students will separate into small groups (3-4) and they will have the opportunity to create a product, either a

soft drink or a fast food. This will be on a poster board. They will then compose a 4 line jingle, either lyrics and a melody, or a rap, selling their product. The form for the words

will be rhyme forms ABAB, ABBA, or AABB. Each group will be expected to perform their jingle and "pitch" their product for the class. The class will rate the content of the jingle, the quality of the poster product, as well as the actual performance on the following criteria:

1. How well the product picture is designed.
2. How neatly the picture is colored in.
3. How well the jingle is formatted (using above criteria).
4. How well the jingle is performed.
5. Would you purchase this product?

Each of the criteria mentioned above for the finished product will be given a three point rating for a total of 15 points.

15-12 points A, 11-8 points B, 7- 4 points C, 3-1 points D, 0 points F.

A requirement of the New Haven School District is that the students create their own rubric. As a class we will

generate a rubric for the above criteria.

This assignment is meant to be fun, as my students all love to draw and are artistically creative. I am hoping that the jingle writing, while it is meant to be light and fun, also taps into their grammar and spelling skills.

Activity Six:

While reading PAMS and JAM, I thought it would be interesting for my students to formulate questions they might have for these companies. This is in fulfillment of the district's requirement that all students complete exposition writing. This activity is essential as it will give students the opportunity to engage in a direct correspondence with actual jingle/commercial writers. This also allows students to investigate the possibilities of a future career. Again, I would do this in groups of 3-4 and limit the questions to five. Below is a website that will answer the student's questions.

<http://www.jingles.com/jam/radiods/jamtalk.html> (5/17/2010)

If they are having trouble forming questions, or simply don't know what to ask, here are a few sample questions:

1. Where do you find your singers?
2. How do I go about becoming a jingle writer/singer?
3. Can you help promote my band?
4. Where can I get a demo from JAM?
5. Can someone come speak to our class?

These are sample questions and hopefully they will come up with more pertinent questions by themselves. After they receive information and answers, it would be fun to share the questions they asked and the answers that they received.

Appendix:

I teach K-8 at John S. Martinez School in New Haven, Connecticut. This is an inner city school where the population is of mostly Hispanic descent. I will be aiming this unit at the 6-8 grade population. When the term jingle is mentioned, they immediately respond with "5 dollar foot long", so they are all aware of the impact of jingles in their lives. The students are able to sing and dance their way through the more catchy jingles.

I meet with each class for one forty-five minute period per week. Therefore this unit will take approximately ten to twelve weeks. The first and second sections should take about three weeks for each. Depending on the length of each commercial and the feedback afterward, the third section should take about four weeks.

It is my job to teach to the National Music Standards. The specific standards that relate to this unit are as follows:

- Singing alone and with others. While I realize that it is almost impossible to get middle-school
1. students to sing in front of a group, of their peers no less, they will be expected to perform in their groups. This will include both their original jingles and any others brought up in class
 2. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines. The students will be creating their own raps/jingles using a specific format a rubric.
 3. Reading and notating music. Those students that choose to compose a melodic jingle will notate that jingle.
 4. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music. Students will be listening to two popular commercial jingles from the 1970's and they will be answering questions about them.
 5. Evaluating music and music performances. Each jingle from Activity two will be evaluated both by their peers and by the teacher using a rubric created by the class.
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture. By understanding the history of the
6. jingle, students will gain knowledge about the advertising world and how they are influenced by jingles.

Endnotes

¹ <http://money.howstuffworks.com/commercial-jingle.htm/prinable>

² Steve Karmen. "Who Killed the Jingle? How a Unique American Art Form Disappeared" (Milwaukee:Hal Leonard Corporation,2005) 19.

³ <http://www.pams.com/history2.html> (4/23/2010)

⁴ <http://www.jingles.com/jam/jaminfo/about.html> (5/17/2010)

⁵ Lawrence Samuels, Brought to You By Postwar Advertising and the American Dream (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001) 102

⁶ *ibid*, p.112

⁷ www.classicthemes.com/50'sTVThemes/themePages/rheingoldTheater.html (7/22/2010)

⁸ Lawrence Samuels, "Brought to You By Postwar Advertising and the American Dream" (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001) p.166

⁹ www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Television-commercial (5/15/2010)

¹⁰ Steve Karmen. Who Killed the Jingle? How a Unique American Art Form Disappeared (Milwaukee:Hal Leonard Corporation,2005) 21

¹¹ Joan Anderman, "The irresistible, singable, stick-in-your-mindable jingle is dead" Boston Globe, January 9,2005.

¹² www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Television-commercial (5/15/2010)

¹³ <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ccmphtml/colaadv.html>. (7/15/2010)

¹⁴ <http://www.siu.edu/EDUCATIONAL/AAM/lesson/gallagher/AAM> (3/18/2010)

¹⁵

www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Two-all-beef-patties,-special-sauce,-lettuce,-cheese-pickles-onions-on-a-sesame-seed-bun (4/21/2010)

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