



INSTITUTE FOR
HUMANE EDUCATION

MAGAZINE SCHEME: ARE WE HERE?

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PURPOSE

Students explore articles, images and ads in magazines targeted to teen girls to explore messages about women and girls and the effect of those messages on young women and men.

GRADES

7-12

TIME

2 class periods of 45-60 minutes each

MATERIALS

- magazines for teen girls
- paper and writing utensils

SUBJECT AREAS

Language Arts, Media Literacy, Psychology and Social Studies/History

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Forthcoming

PREPARATION

Gather several copies of the same popular magazine geared toward teen girls.



Image courtesy of TheeErin/Flickr.

PROCEDURE

1. Divide the class into three groups and pass out the magazines. Let them know that they'll be using the entire magazine: articles, photos and advertising. Explain each group's assignment to them (you may want to have written down their reflection questions so that they can refer back to them).
2. Group 1's assignment is to find examples of girls and women in the articles, photos and ads who reflect the following interests: shopping/fashion, looking for boyfriends/dating, and aiming to be a diva, pop-star, or princess (or at least pretty and popular). Have the group evaluate the articles, images and ads and reflect on and respond to questions like these:

Were these examples easy or challenging to find? What messages are the ads or articles conveying to girls and young women? To boys and young men? What interests of girls are excluded? How could girls tell the world about those interests?

3. Group 2's assignment is to find examples of girls and women in the articles, photos and ads who reflect the following kinds of characteristics: athletic, smart, skilled, adventurous, outspoken, scientists, politicians, entrepreneurs, heroic. Have the group evaluate the articles, images and ads and reflect on and respond to questions like these:

Were these examples easy or challenging to find? What messages are these kinds of ads or articles conveying to girls and young women? To boys and young men?

4. Group 3's assignment is to examine the women and girls in the photos, making note of characteristics like: racial/ethnic background, body shape/size, ability level, type of dress, socioeconomic status, type of religion, career or interests, etc. Ask them to reflect on questions such as:

What are the most common kinds of characteristics portrayed? Why do you think that is? How much diversity was present in the photos? Why do you think that is?

5. Bring the groups together and ask each group to briefly share a summary with the full group of what they learned.

6. Lead a discussion, asking students to consider questions such as:

- Do the magazines reflect the girls and women that you know?
- Do the magazines accurately reflect your characteristics and interests?
- What kind of magazine would better serve you and your peers? Does such a magazine exist?
- How can you let the magazine editors and advertisers know how you feel about the messages their content portrays?
- How does what we see in magazines influence our perceptions about ourselves, about others, and about what we value?
- What women do you admire and why?

As a group, write down on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper the reasons people tend to admire women. Consider the responses and discuss: What do women tend to be admired for most? What kinds of messages does that send to women and young girls?

7. Ask students to write a letter to a friend, family member, mentor, faith leader, magazine editor or public relations office sharing what they've

learned and suggesting at least one possible solution that could be implemented to better portray women and girls in magazines.

Note: You can repeat this exercise with a men's magazine appropriate for your students and alter the questions to reflect an exploration of the images and messages portrayed about men and boys.