



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2010 Volume I: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Consumer Culture

The Shroud of Choice: A Psychological Look at Consumer Culture

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.01.10

by Robert F. Rhone

What is consumer psychology? Think about the last time you went into a store, to purchase an item like a bottle of soda. You went right to the place in the store that has the beverages, you chose your favorite brand, and purchased it. This action, simple as it sounds, is loaded with complexities and questions. For example, why did you choose this soda? How could other soda companies persuade you to buy their drink? How does this soda make you feel? These are the kinds of questions that consumer psychology attempts to answer.

The purpose of this unit is to inform students that producers use psychologists' ideas about how humans think and behave to market their products as effectively as they can. Through understanding this idea students can become more informed consumers and make choices that are in their best interest. Of course consumption is necessary in our modern world. We need to buy food if we want to eat, and clothing if we want to be socially accepted. Our general question is: How can we prepare ourselves to make rational decisions when we shop?

(Recommended for Social Studies, Psychology, and Economics, grades 11 and 12)

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