

Differentiating Advertisements from Articles – Revision

I want to take this opportunity to remind you all of one of the most important points about dealing with persuasive prose: An advertisement is always trying to sell you something - a product, a brand or a service. Even if the advertisement does not tell you directly to buy something, it will be trying to sell you something. If you cannot identify whether the text you are being asked to analyse is an advertisement or not, look for the product name, brand name or company name. If you cannot find one, then it is probably safe to assume that you are not dealing with an advertisement.

An example to illustrate my point: Big Mac is a product name. When McDonalds wants to sell their Big Mac burgers in an advertisement, they will always mention them by their name. McDonalds is a brand name. When McDonalds advertises their restaurants as good places to go and eat, they will always mention McDonalds by name. Hamburger is not a product name or brand name. If you are analysing a text that discusses why hamburgers are a good source of nutrition, it may seem like an advertisement, but it is actually an article that is trying to persuade you to eat more hamburgers, rather than selling you a specific product.

Always remember this simple rule, as nothing will hurt your analysis more than misinterpreting an article as an advertisement, since the way you approach an analysis of an advertisement is different to the way you approach the analysis of an article.