Energy industry public relations campaigns can be a hit-and-miss proposition. An amateur journalist might be able to spot the stock photographs that the coal industry used to create the image that everyone in the region supports coal miners and mining. But, other communications might be very sophisticated. During the Beijing Olympics of 2008, GE aired a CG animation ad in its 'Ecomagination' series in which a crane takes flight along a beautiful Chinese coastline and transforms into a jumbo jet. Others wait patiently in line for take-off while sea turtles (i.e., ground traffic) cross the pristine beach. The narration prompts audiences to "imagine a way to fly that not only helps save millions of gallons of fuel, but actually reduces emissions." The metaphorical power of the images and the short duration of the ad make it likely that audiences will forget to ask how such technical advances might be achieved. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle level students will evaluate an energy industry ad which hinges on a single device: the personification of the fossil fuels industry itself.

Ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of an energy industry message

AHA!: This video talks about an important environmental issue, but it's still trying to win me over to the advertiser's point of view.

Grade Level: 6-8

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?
Your Date with Fossil Fuels?

Written by mlmoment
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Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

Materials: Computer with high-speed internet connection, LCD projector and screen.
Advertisement from the Environmental Policy Alliance, "Breaking Up with Fossil Fuels Is Hard to Do," at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A6j1r3Kbuo

Activity: Ask students if they can recall any energy industry ads they've seen in the recent past. How did they react to them? Why? Screen the fossil fuels ad at least twice. What did they like about the ad. What didn't they like? Did they find it persuasive? Why or why not? Discuss the corresponding relationship between the character of Joe and themselves as audiences for the ad. What did it mean for them to be on a "date" with fossil fuels? How did they react to that? Did they find this use of personification persuasive? Why or why not?

Extended Activity: Using this advertisement and any other examples as source materials for analysis and reflection, ask students to construct what they believe to be a persuasive pro-industry ad. Note: the GE ad mentioned above ad can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2JUFTU5Lhg

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, ©2002-2015.