Behind the Message

Read a transit campaign for methods that influence behavior.

S.7.7 "Define propaganda and discuss the methods of propaganda used to influence social behavior."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the definition of propaganda, circle words in each of the three posters that try to sway behavior, and number the two details the leaflet leaves out.

The Bellport Bus Campaign

1. Propaganda is communication designed to shape people's beliefs or behavior by steering their feelings or choices, often through selective or emotionally charged messages. It is not always false, and its goal may even be popular. A bandwagon appeal suggests that many people already support an action, while a testimonial borrows the status of a respected person. A fear appeal emphasizes a threatening outcome. Selective presentation highlights favorable facts while leaving out relevant information. These methods can appear together in one message. To evaluate a claim, ask who created it, what action it encourages, and what information it leaves out.

2. In a fictional city called Bellport, the transit office wants more residents to ride the bus downtown. Its poster says, “Your neighbors are leaving their cars at home. Don't be the last driver on the block!” It does not provide a count of those neighbors. Another poster shows a local soccer captain saying, “I ride the bus to every home game, so you should too.” The captain's popularity might make the suggestion feel trustworthy, although athletic skill says little about whether a bus route fits someone else's schedule. Both posters urge a change in daily travel, not just awareness of the bus system.

3. A third Bellport poster warns, “Drive downtown today, and you could spend your whole evening trapped in traffic.” Its dramatic possibility may make driving feel risky, but it gives no estimate of how often such delays occur. A leaflet praises the bus as a cheaper choice, using a fare comparison with downtown parking prices, yet it omits the cost of getting to the bus stop and the time a transfer can add. Those missing details might matter to a commuter. A useful comparison would show sources, typical travel times, and costs for several routes, allowing residents to judge their options.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why do Bellport's posters fit the passage's definition of propaganda rather than simply listing bus information? Use one poster detail.

2. Which words in the first poster create a bandwagon appeal, and how might that appeal affect a reader's choice?

3. How does the soccer captain's message use a testimonial, and what limit does the passage point out?

4. Identify the fear appeal in the third poster and one detail the leaflet leaves out. How could each affect a commuter's decision?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences for a fictional campaign that tries to change one school behavior using two propaganda methods from the passage. Then write two sentences that name the methods and explain how each could influence students.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Message

HIGH SCHOOL · S.7.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the definition of propaganda, circle words in each of the three posters that try to sway behavior, and number the two details the leaflet leaves out. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why do Bellport's posters fit the passage's definition of propaganda rather than simply listing bus information? Use one poster detail.	**They try to change travel behavior by steering feelings or choices. For example, the first poster pressures readers not to be the last driver on the block.**
2	Which words in the first poster create a bandwagon appeal, and how might that appeal affect a reader's choice?	**"Your neighbors are leaving their cars at home" suggests that others already ride the bus. A reader might follow what seems to be the group's choice.**
3	How does the soccer captain's message use a testimonial, and what limit does the passage point out?	**It uses the captain's popularity to make bus travel seem trustworthy. Athletic skill does not show whether the bus fits another person's schedule.**
4	Identify the fear appeal in the third poster and one detail the leaflet leaves out. How could each affect a commuter's decision?	**The warning about spending an evening trapped in traffic could make driving feel risky without showing how often that happens. Leaving out transfer time could make the bus seem more convenient than it is for some commuters.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Join the students who return library books on time. Picture missing the book you need because someone else kept it past the due date. The first sentence uses a bandwagon appeal to make timely returns feel like a group norm. The second uses a fear appeal to make the cost of late returns feel personal.

Accept different quoted words or missing details when the student accurately connects each to a method and its possible effect. For Part 3, look for two distinct methods and an explanation of each, not just their names.