Message Under the Microscope

Analyze persuasion, evidence, and audience impact.

9.C.4 "Examining Media Messages Determine the purpose of the media message and its effect on the audience. Analyze the persuasive techniques used in diverse media formats (e.g., name calling, innuendo, glittering generalities, card stacking…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that a reader could check in another source. Circle words or image details that try to shape feelings, identity, or choice, and number the three media formats 1, 2, and 3.

The Later Start Debate

(1) On Monday, bright green posters appeared near the cafeteria as the school board considered a later start time. A huge alarm clock sat above the words, "Choose Energy. Choose Success." A smaller line read, "Join the students who are ready for change." The poster showed a smiling teen in a varsity jacket, but it gave no schedule details, research, or name of the group that paid for it. At lunch, several students photographed the poster and posted it with the hashtag #StartSmart on social media that afternoon.

(2) The next day, Riverbend Daily published an editorial titled "Later Bells, Longer Problems." Its writer argued that the board should keep the current schedule. The piece quoted a "transportation worker" who expected confusion if bus routes changed. It also cited a district report from 2018, linking readers to the report's first page. A chart showed the cost of adding one bus, but the article did not discuss other schedule options. In the comments under the article, readers debated the proposal while awaiting the board vote.

(3) That Friday, a local station aired a feature about the proposal. It displayed the board's meeting agenda, interviewed a coach, a parent, and two students, and included a sleep scientist explaining teen sleep patterns. A student council poll of 420 students, taken before the posters appeared, found that 38 percent favored a later start. A second poll of 401 students, taken four days after the posters, editorial, and broadcast, found 52 percent in favor. The feature identified its polling dates but did not say whether the same students answered both polls.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the poster's purpose? Identify two persuasive techniques it uses and explain one likely effect on its audience.

2. What details make the Riverbend Daily editorial less reliable as a full account of the issue? What viewpoint does the editorial favor?

3. Which details in the station feature strengthen its credibility, and what limitation should a careful viewer notice?

4. What possible relationship do the two polls suggest between media coverage and student opinion? Why do the polls not prove that coverage caused the change?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school issue. Write a 45 to 60 word social-media post that uses one persuasive technique. Then write exactly two sentences that name the technique, state the post's purpose and likely effect, and identify one fact or viewpoint a reader should check before accepting it.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 9 · 9.C.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that a reader could check in another source. Circle words or image details that try to shape feelings, identity, or choice, and number the three media formats 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the poster's purpose? Identify two persuasive techniques it uses and explain one likely effect on its audience.	**Its purpose is to persuade students to support a later start time. It uses glittering generalities in "Choose Energy. Choose Success" and bandwagon language in "Join the students." It may make support seem positive, popular, and connected to student success.**
2	What details make the Riverbend Daily editorial less reliable as a full account of the issue? What viewpoint does the editorial favor?	**The source is identified only as a "transportation worker," the report is linked only to its first page, and the chart covers only one bus-cost option. The editorial favors keeping the current schedule.**
3	Which details in the station feature strengthen its credibility, and what limitation should a careful viewer notice?	**It shows a board agenda and includes several kinds of sources, including a coach, parent, students, and a sleep scientist. Viewers should notice that the polls used different-sized groups and the feature does not say whether the same students took both polls.**
4	What possible relationship do the two polls suggest between media coverage and student opinion? Why do the polls not prove that coverage caused the change?	**Support rose from 38 percent before the media messages to 52 percent afterward, suggesting that coverage may be related to increased support. The polls cannot prove cause because they may have included different students and several media messages appeared during that time.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Bring covered bike racks to our school. Students who ride should not arrive with soaked backpacks or rusted chains after a storm. Join the growing group asking the principal to protect every rider's gear. A small roof can make rainy mornings safer, calmer, and more organized for everyone who chooses to bike. The post uses bandwagon language in "Join the growing group" to persuade students and the principal to support bike racks. It may make riders feel included, but readers should check the cost, available space, and the viewpoints of students who do not bike.

Accept other reasonable technique labels and audience effects when students support them with passage details. For Question 4, require a cautious claim about a possible relationship, not a claim that the media coverage definitely caused the opinion change.