



Are you ready to write Touchstone 2.2?

The informative essay below provides an example of a proficient level composition for prompt A: Image Analysis. As you read through the informative essay, notice the techniques that the author used to appropriately breakdown the image. This sample informative essay is generally focused and well organized, with support for the essay's thesis, but does include room for improvement. The answers to the reflection questions that follow the informative essay show that the author has thoughtfully examined his own writing. Color-coding has been used to indicate key components of the essay, according to the dictates of the assignment.

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Flipping through a magazine while sitting in a waiting room, hearing ads on the radio, or being exposed to billboards and television commercials are daily occurrences for most people. In fact, it's difficult to escape advertisements in our daily lives. How does this onslaught of persuasive rhetoric affect people? And how can consumers resist being manipulated into believing a certain product or service can improve their lives? A careful analysis of advertisements can reveal the techniques advertisers use, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of those techniques. I think we should all learn to analyze images so that we can better understand their meanings and possible effects. By examining the individual components of an advertisement, I can more easily understand the overall meaning and effect of the ad on consumers.

Comment [SL1]: Watch your spelling here. This should be "ads."

Comment [SL2]: Remember that this essay is informative, so your language must remain objective. This sentence isn't really necessary for the paragraph to function properly, and thus could be removed entirely.

Comment [SL3]: You could make this thesis statement more specific— what individual components are you referring to? Replace "I" with "one" to maintain an objective tone.

This advertisement for Clear shampoo targets a female audience. This is evident through the central placement of a female figure and her glorious, shining mane of hair. Many ads use beautiful women in their advertisements. The model's dark hair and dark clothing, along with the muted, shadowy background, invite the audience to look for visible signs of white, flaky dandruff. Of course, there are none, which reinforces the advertisement's textual message of "Zero dandruff." Visually, the ad succeeds in making a clear link between the shampoo itself and the promise of no dandruff.

Comment [SL4]: This detail is not relevant to your analysis of this particular advertisement.

Other signs pointing toward a female audience are more nuanced. The overall look of the ad is sleek and soft. Aside from the model and her hair, the most prominent image is the block of text which addresses the audience directly. Using a persuasive tone, the text encourages the audience to contact the company for tips on managing hair plagued by dandruff. Also an offer of a free product sample, a technique that appeals to many consumers. This context is an opportunity for the company, both in the visual components of the ad and through the promised text message, to extol the virtues of its own shampoo. Clear shampoo, it promises, is powered by Cleartech Soft" (whatever that means) and essential oils, which will make hair up to 4 times softer and shinier. The model in the ad does indeed

Comment [SL5]: So far your topic sentences have done a nice job of communicating the main idea of each paragraph.

Comment [SL6]: Revise this fragment to ensure sentence completeness.

Comment [SL7]: Remember to stick to academic language. This is too informal, and should be removed.

Comment [SL8]: This is a good use of specific language from the ad, but remember to use quotation marks around words that aren't your own.

have hair which appears to be very soft and shiny, underscoring this point. In this way, the ad successfully links the context and imagery to effectively target a female audience that may be interested in – or in need of - a dandruff shampoo.

The text in the center of the advertisement – “Say no to dandruff” – suggests that women have the power to choose beautiful, shiny hair over limp or problem hair. This is an empowering idea that will likely appeal to a young woman concerned with her appearance. I don't think being overly concerned with your appearance is necessarily a good thing, but I know many women are. Simply by using this product, women can take control of how they are perceived by the world. It is the woman who makes the choice, and she makes the choice by not accepting anything less than gorgeous, perfect hair. The model's enigmatic expression reinforces this idea of the woman being in control.

As a whole, the ad appears soft and subtly compelling. Its simplicity targets key stereotypes of women as the intended audience: women are soft, emotionally and physically. The text encourages women to stand up for themselves and just “say no,” playing into the stereotype that women are not assertive enough and too often passively accept things rather than try to change them. The link between physical appearance and emotional well-being is clearly implied, and specifically targeted at women. Appeals to stereotype are not particularly attractive when broken down in this manner, but at a brief glance, these techniques are extremely effective in advertising. The application may be different in different ads, but the result is the same: playing on stereotypical attributes of women in order to send clear signals about the intended audience of the product.

The advertisement relies on a dark background, a prominent image of a dark-haired model, and a smaller, but still noticeable, image of the product. The image draws clear parallels meant to evoke a response in the audience: the model has shiny, healthy looking hair; she uses Clear shampoo; if I use

Comment [SL9]: This is another example of non-objective language that can be removed.

Comment [SL10]: You could add more supporting details about stereotypes here. What other stereotypes are reinforced by the ad?

Clear shampoo, I will also have shiny, healthy-looking, dandruff-free hair. In this way, the ad is successful in its mission to relate the primary benefits of the product in a way which is memorable and clear.

Comment [SL11]: This is a great summary of the preceding body paragraphs.

A close analysis of the components of this advertisement reveals that the visual image, along with the chosen context, clearly targets a female audience. The color scheme, image placement, product information, and choice of a dark-haired, mysterious model appeal to certain aspects of a gender stereotype. Women are presented with a visual image along with information for how to contact the company, which implies that women (should) think more deeply about the products they buy. Women are also encouraged to focus on how they will look and feel as a result of using the product. The advertisement successfully exploits these arguably stereotypical ideas in targeting women, and a stereotypical female consumer may well react favorably to them.

Comment [SL12]: This is an effective concluding paragraph. You provide a good interpretation of the ad's purpose and likely effect on consumers.

Think About Your Writing:

1. What is the significance of your essay? Why should your reader care about what you have written? (2-3 sentences)

I think readers will care about this essay because it demonstrates how we are influenced by advertisements everyday. As consumers, we are targeted for certain advertisements which play up certain stereotypes. Even something as simple as a shampoo advertisement can be broken down and analyzed for the messages it is attempting to convey.

2. What areas of your draft do you think will benefit most from revision? (2-3 sentences)

I had a difficult time maintaining an objective tone throughout the essay. I had my own ideas and opinions about the stereotypes being represented in the advertisement, and sometimes it was challenging to articulate those without presenting my own opinions.

3. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of your writing. How can you capitalize on your strengths and improve on your weaknesses in future essays? (3-4 sentences)

I think that, overall, I am good at coming up with an interesting introduction and organizing my essay in a way that is logical and has good flow. I sometimes struggle with maintaining a consistent tone in my essay, and developing a well articulated thesis statement. I think that forcing myself to be constantly aware of my purpose and audience will help me to improve the consistency of the tone in my essays, and further practice writing thesis statements will help me better understand how to write a good one.

SCORING APPEARS ON THE NEXT PAGE

SCORING for Sample Touchstone 2.2

The sample essay was evaluated according to the Touchstone 2.2 Rubric, which includes either the Image Analysis OR Expanded Definition Essay. This particular essay was written using the image analysis approach. The rubric evaluates the image analysis, the working thesis statement, organization, style and tone, focus, conventions, and responses to the “Think About Your Writing” questions. Each rubric area is evaluated according to the performance level.

Image Analysis

The writer has met the criteria established for writing an image analysis. The writer has selected an appropriate advertisement and drawn effective conclusions about the audience and effectiveness of the ad.

Area Score: Proficient

Working Thesis

The essay has working thesis located in the introductory paragraph: “By examining the individual components of the advertisement, I can more easily understand the overall meaning and effect of the ad on consumers.” The thesis is appropriately narrowed and states the central claim of the essay. However, it should be revised to use more objective language and could be improved by adding more specificity as to what “individual components” are examined.

Area Score: Acceptable

Organization

The essay has an introduction with a thesis, an adequate number of body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Body paragraphs contain a topic sentence and supporting details. The topic sentences are generally well written; however, some supporting details are less relevant to the paragraph and can be removed to increase the flow of the essay.

Area Score: Proficient

Style and Tone

Generally the writer does use effective style and word choices. However there exist multiple instances in which the writer uses, a non-objective tone, or includes personal observations which are not effective for informative writing.

Area Score: Acceptable

Focus

Overall, the writer does a nice job including relevant details and making connections between the working thesis statement and supporting details. However, there are some sentences which include personal detail, as noted in the annotations. These sentences detract from the focus of the essay and should be edited.

Area Score: Acceptable

Conventions

The writer has made few spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, or mechanics. The errors made were minor and did not detract from the essay.

Area Score: Proficient

“Think About Your Writing” Questions

The answers to the questions are thoughtful. The answers effectively address the question and adhere to the length guidelines. Additionally, the writer appropriately color coded his thesis and topic sentences.

Area Score: Proficient

TOTAL SCORE: 32/40

On the whole, this informative essay does a nice job of breaking down and analyzing the advertisement selected by the writer. The breakdown of the image is detailed and well thought out. The writer attempts an informative style while maintaining a clear focus on the topic. Some improvements can be made to remove irrelevant details and make the tone overall more informative. Overall, the composition meets the requirements of the prompt and offers a compelling analysis of an advertisement.