The Chicken and the Egg is a flexible resource, but may be particularly interesting for students in Design, History, Media Studies or English looking at the nature and purpose of advertisements, images or texts. The aim is to look deeper into the design and presentation of advertisements, using examples from the Museum of Childhood’s collections, in particular the British Toy Making Project archive. Students will consider the various influences on design choices, such as the target market and societal trends. Students can question the idea that context and demand influences toy manufacturers, and consider the idea that the reverse is true – that advertisements, and the products we buy, influence the market. Are advertising and mass-produced items a reflection of society, or do they have an influence upon society?

At a glance
Age  KS3 – 5
Subjects DT (Advertising and Design), Citizenship (Advertising and Image), History (Use of Sources), English (Persuasive Writing), Media Studies (Representation and Advertising)

Learning Outcomes
- To identify what messages are present in an image or text, and how these messages are communicated.
- To analyse how these messages may link to society (both contemporary and in the past), and if they can tell us anything about the society in which they were produced.
- To begin to explore the extent to which design and advertising is a reflection of society, or an influence on it.

Resources Required
Contemporary advert example, 10 source images with accompanying ‘What if?’ questions, layers of inference sheets, Design/Degrees sheet.

In this Pack
Teachers notes, lesson resources (as above excluding contemporary advert example) and PDF presentation.

Overview
Starter 10 mins
Deconstructing a contemporary ad campaign, looking for features that stand out (for example design features, product and message), and how they are communicated.

Body 35 mins
Introducing the British Toy Making archives and sequentially examining the archive images for elements of design and message. Then developing a more in-depth understanding with ‘What if’ scenarios. This will provide greater insight into the possible reasons for the design choices, and how these communicate a message.

Conclusion 15 mins
Introducing the question; does the message reflect the concerns of society, or if it influences and generates new concerns. Which comes first: advertising or demand?
British Toy-Making project

Background Information
The V&A Museum of Childhood holds a fascinating archive of material donated by major British toy manufacturers from the past 90 years. These unique holdings include photographs, advertisements and trade catalogues. They are supplemented by further material relating to toy manufacturing, the social history of childhood and education systems, providing a fascinating record of the British toy-making industry and the social context of different periods.

Funded by the HLF, the British Toy-Making project was undertaken over four years. Its main aims were to catalogue, conserve and make these archive holdings more accessible to researchers.

In addition, the project has also collected over forty oral history interviews with individuals who have worked in the toy industry over the past fifty years. Other outcomes include community and learning programmes, exhibitions and study days.

More information about the British Toy-Making project can be found on the V&A Museum of Childhood’s website www.museumofchildhood.org.uk

Manufacturer’s information

Lines Bros. Ltd.
Images 1, 3, 4, 10 and 11 are of publicity material produced by Lines Bros. Ltd.

In 1919, the brothers William, Arthur and Walter Lines established Lines Bros. Ltd. They registered the name Tri-ang Toys in 1924.

In the early 1960’s Lines Bros. was considered one of the largest toy manufacturers in the world, with factories in a number of sites around Britain (in particular Merton, South London) and Ireland, France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. It acquired a number of companies (including International Model Aircraft Ltd. in 1932, Simpson Fawcett in 1957, and Meccano in 1964), and founded others (including Pedigree Dolls and Soft Toys and Pedigree Prams). As such, their product range was extensive and included some of the best-known British toys, including Sindy, Scalextrics, Meccano, Hornby trainsets and Dinky cars. They also produced FROG aircraft (the first range of flying model aircraft), Penguin kits (the first range of non-flying scale-model aircraft kits) the MINIC range of model cars, bicycles, pushchairs and prams (both full-size and versions for children), and a large range of dolls houses. Lines Bros. also acquired Hamleys toyshop in 1931.

Lines Bros. ceased trading in 1971. Its assets were bought by a range of companies, including Airfix and Dunbee Combex Marx.

Paul and Marjorie Abbatt Ltd.
Images 5, 7 and 8 are of publicity material produced by Paul and Marjorie Abbatt Ltd.

Paul and Marjorie Abbatt were pioneers of innovative educational toys in the 1930s. They set up in business in 1932 selling toys by mail order from their flat at Tavistock Square, London. Demand was such that in 1936 they opened a shop at 94 Wimpole Street, London, designed by the modernist architect Erno Goldfinger. The Abbatts were concerned with the play needs of children in general, and in 1951 were instrumental in setting up Children’s Play Activities Ltd. to promote excellence in toy design and manufacture, and were later involved in the International Council for Children’s Play. After Paul Abbatt died in 1971 the business was bought by the Educational Supply Association.

The Abbatts had strong ideas about the value of play, and the type of toys that children should be encouraged to play with. They believed that the design of toys should be child-centric, in terms of durability, size, proportions and colour. They also believed that a simplicity of form led to a versatility of function, and that good toys allowed children to reconnect with nature, while also giving them the means of practicing in simple form the arts and techniques of ‘modern man’.

The Abbatts were influenced by the increasing study of child development in the 1930s, and by European educational practices such as those developed by Montessori and Franz Cizek. They were also involved with The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, a youth movement which aimed to reconnect children with the natural environment. Modernism, in particular the idea of functionalist purity, was also important in their toy design.
The Lionel Corporation
Image 2 is from a catalogue produced by The Lionel Corporation, a North American toy company best known for its toy train sets, which it produced between 1901 and 1969, when the company went bankrupt.

Leon L'Hollier
Image 6 is the front page of a catalogue produced by Leon L'Hollier, a major manufacturer of a range of products based in the Midlands. Originally a manufacturer of perambulators and baskets, L’Hollier also became involved in the early motor car industry, and part-owned the Anglo-French Motor Carriage Company of Birmingham.

Bassett-Lowke Ltd
Image 9 is the front page of a catalogue for Bassett-Lowke Ltd. Basset-Lowke, a toy company from Northampton founded in the late 1890s. It was best known for its model railways, but also produced scale models of ships, for which this is a catalogue. The original company went out of business in 1965.

More information about these toy manufacturers can be found on the V&A Museum of Childhood's website and through the V&A ‘Search the Collections’ database: http://collections.vam.ac.uk
Lesson Plan

The aim of this section is to introduce the idea that elements of design are carefully considered to convey particular, sometimes subtle, messages. Select a current advertising campaign, either in print or film media, show the advert, and follow with questions to elicit ideas of the messages communicated by the advert. It is important to select an advertisement that will appeal to the students and they are likely to be familiar with, for example a touch screen tablet or mobile app advert that uses children and the concept of family.

Example Questions

Start with the obvious descriptive elements and narrative.

Move on to more general messages that are being communicated. If necessary, prompt students with words such as ‘reliability’, ‘safety’, ‘comfort’, ‘happiness’, ‘security’, ‘warmth’, ‘happiness’, ‘fun’ etc. You can also introduce possible concepts to think about, such as gender, class, wealth etc.

Lastly, ask students to consider what would happen if some of the elements of the advert were changed to the opposite of what they are. For example, how would the messages be changed if gender of characters was swapped, if the weather were different, if the music / soundtrack / narration changed, if the location of the action changed, if the colours used were different? etc.

The aim is to elicit the idea that purpose can be seen behind the surface, and that this may be deliberate or accidental.

Resources

Print out the source images included in the resource pack. There are 10 different images so that each group can have different images to work with.

Print out the layer of inference sheets. This diagram may be used to guide each section of the lesson. Each layer represents a sequential section.

Print out a Design/Degrees word sheet for each group. This is a prompt sheet with relevant terms that the students can use when analyzing the images.

Print out a ‘What if?’ sheet for each group. There is a generic ‘What if?’ sheet as well as individual sheets specific to each image.

Starter

Analyse and deconstruct a current ad campaign

Show your selected advert before beginning the PDF presentation

What do you see in this ad? What happens in the ad?

What are some of the messages that are being communicated in this advert? What is the central theme of this advert?

Would it make a difference if? What would happen if the ... were different?
Examining the Source Images
Using examples of advertising from the past, the aim of this section is to encourage students to:
Identify design elements in advertising, such as colour, prominence of different elements, typeface etc.
Consider how these design elements communicate messages.

The British Toy Making Project
Introduce the V&A Museum of Childhood’s British Toy Making Project (BTM).

The V&A Museum of Childhood holds a fascinating archive of material donated by major British toy manufacturers which are no longer in operation. These unique holdings include photographs, advertisements, financial information and trade catalogues.

Design Elements / Mind Map
The aim of this section is to model the activity and analysis that the students will undertake independently later (to be conducted in front of the whole class, but which may include thinking time or an interactive whiteboard for more movement).
Using one of the images from the BTM archive, elicit the design elements in the image. If necessary, refer back to the discussion created about the contemporary advert. Possible elements to consider would include:
- Use of colour
- Typeface and size
- Imagery used
- The relative positioning or prominence of parts of the image

Record the responses on the board (e.g. theme, prominence, positioning, colour). Record also the particular things the students say – the prominence of family, the use of feminine or masculine colours etc. At the end of this section split the class into your desired groups and distribute the pre prepared images and ‘layers of inference’ handouts.

Design
The aim of this section is to encourage students to identify the design elements present within 2-3 advertisements from the BTM archive.

Individually, in pairs or groups, students consider the design elements of each of their advertisements, and record these in the first box surrounding the image on the ‘Layers of Inference’ sheet. This activity can be extended or enhanced by using the ‘Design / Degrees’ sheet

Message
The aim of this section is to encourage students to consider the messages communicated by the design elements identified in the previous section.

Refer back to Mind Map on the board – this time focussing on the message rather than the design elements. If necessary, the following concepts could be introduced as prompts for the students discussion: Gender, Class, Audience.

Students now return to their examples to consider the possible messages that are conveyed by the elements they have identified. These are recorded in the second box surrounding the image on the ‘Layers of Inference’ sheet.
Design / Message elements to consider for specific images

1. Wealth, open air, sunny day, a church in the background, smiling baby, well-kept gardens, pastel, spring or summer colours, cloud-like surround to the company name.

2. Generation gap, realism, smoke and steam, from the USA, ideas of heritage (age) combined with progress (modern engine design), the product (toy train) is not prominent.

3. Generation gap, father/son relationship, close physical connection, caring, family, 'quality time', well-dressed/well-groomed, both looking at the train set in the same way, strong colours of background, small size of the product in relation to the whole image.

4. The large factory is at the heart of the image, well-organised, regimented, prominence of 'England' and 'British', no products shown, strong colours and shapes.

5. A more stylised drawing has been used, the child is surrounded by nature, use of a minimal white as a background, the child is happily on their own in the woods.

6. The amount of text, the predominance of the factory and showrooms, the directness, rather than subtlety, of the message.

7. Absence of adults, children engrossed in a creative activity, the use of rectangles of colour behind the central image.

8. Modernist-inspired design, layout and design as important as the products, absence of adults in the images, strong emphasis on monochrome, sharp, geometrical design.

9. Strong colours, powerful, abstract design, absence of text other than the company name, focus on the mechanical structures, nothing child-friendly.

10. Use of image of baby on it’s own, light blue eyes, use of speech marks – the child is talking to us, eliciting of sympathy and nurturing.

What If…?
The aim of this section is to further encourage students to consider the messages communicated by the design elements, by considering how these would be changed if the elements were changed.

Refer back to the image deconstructed as a class in the mind map exercise, this time encouraging the class to consider how altering certain design elements would affect the message.

Introduce the ‘What if…?’ questions for each of the images. These can either be given to students on the sheet or divided up and placed with/on the back of the specific sources in envelopes. Students record these ideas in the final outer layer of the Layers of Inference Sheet).

This activity can be extended by asking students to identify which elements of the message may be deliberate and which may be accidental.

Plenary (optional)
A possible plenary would be to tie together the design and message elements through a small writing or annotation exercise in which students linked design elements to their purpose and techniques.

Conclusion
A deeper exploration into the power of advertising
Use questions to encourage the class to discuss the relationship between industry advertising and consumers.

As a class discuss the questions posed (click to reveal the questions one at a time). Ask students to illustrate their answers with examples from the sources they’ve used, and/or focus on a small number of particularly revealing sources.

Do the elements we’ve been looking at reflect something about the society in which they were produced?
What can advertisements tell us about how society has changed?
Can advertisements create a demand in society where one was not present before?
Can images influence ideas?
Catalogue, Lionel Trains, front cover. The Lionel Corporation, 1935. Archive ref. MATO 40/1
Catalogue, Abbatt Toys, front cover. Paul and Marjorie Abbatt Ltd. ca.1934. Archive ref. ABBA 1/1/1/1
Archive ref. MATO 27
PAUL & MARJORIE ABBATT
LIMITED
94 Wimpole Street • W • I

CI EASEL. Very steady, has ply-
wood drawing surface, 2 ft. square,
and stands 42 in. high. Box along
base to hold paint-jars and
brushes. Double 25/-, Single 21/-
(Carriage 2/6).
1. Climbing Frames (opposite). This is not only a delight for the child, but it also develops the whole imagination of the child. It is a part of the environment that encourages outdoor play. The climbing frame is designed to be safe and stable, allowing children to climb and reach different levels. It also encourages creativity and problem-solving.

2. Swing (below). A high of 10" in 1" thick steel. Designed to withstand wind. The swing is attached to the frame using a metal bracket, ensuring stability and safety.

3. Balancing (below). Suitable for 5-7 years old. The frame is designed to encourage balance and coordination, essential for young children.

Catalogue, Abbatt Toys, pp. 18-19. Paul and Marjorie Abbatt Ltd. 1962
Layers of Inference

Resources

Designing the Message

What if?

Design

Message
Layers of Inference

Resources

Designing the Message

Design

Message

What if?
Layers of Inference
Resources
Designing the Message

What if?

Design

Message

ABBATT TOYS
Layers of Inference

Resources

Designing the Message
What if?

Design

Message

Layers of Inference
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Designing the Message

What if?

Design

Message

“I’ve got a Pedigree Pram”
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Generic ‘What if?’ questions

**What if?**

What if the elements were different sizes?
What if different people were included?
What if some of the elements were absent?
What if the most prominent elements were changed?
What if the colours used were different?
What if the gender of the people shown were different?
What if the age of the people shown were different?
What if the style were different?
What if?

...the pram was inside?
...the baby was crying?
...the colours were darker or stronger?
...it was a man pushing the pram?
...there was a pub in the background?
...the pram was being pushed down a busy street?
...it was raining?

Image 1

What if?

...it was a grandmother showing the boy the train?
...it was a girl holding the model engine?
...they weren’t looking at the full-sized engine?
...the image was a photograph rather than a painting?
...the engine was black, not white?

Image 2

What if?

...it was a mother and son looking at the train?
...the background was a different colour?
...the father wasn’t dressed so smartly?
...the train was larger, the people smaller?
...a third person were included in the image?
...the father was looking in another direction?
What if?
…the factory was shown in the heart of a city?
…the products were made in Japan?
…the colours were different?
…the company logo was a cuddly toy?

What if?
…the drawing was more realistic and less stylised?
…the animals weren’t included?
…more colours had been used?
…an adult had been included in the image?

What if?
…the colours used were more summery?
…photographs of the buildings were used?
…the buildings were absent?
…there was less text?

What if?
…a drawing rather than a photograph of the children was used?
…the easel was set in a realistic background?
…there were two girls rather than a girl and boy?
…a parent was also included?
…the children were covered in paint?
**What if?**

...the main image of the climbing frame was inside?
...the photographs were in colour?
...pastel colours had been used?
...adults had been included?
...the children were covered in paint?

*Image 8*

**What if?**

...there were more text?
...the colours were changed to lighter blues, greens and yellows?
...the image was less abstract?

*Image 9*

**What if?**

...the child wasn’t looking straight out of the image?
...different colours were used?
...the child didn’t have blue eyes?
...the child had a different expression?
...a photograph was used instead of a drawing?
...the drawing was black and white?

*Image 10*