

Name _____



Advertising: Fact or Opinion?

By Cindy Grigg

How can we tell if the book we're reading is fiction or nonfiction? Fiction books are made-up stories. They may have facts in them that are true. But the story has been made up. The characters are not real, either.

For example, the book *Charlotte's Web* is a fiction book. How do we know? We know that spiders, pigs, and rats can't talk. Spiders cannot spin words into their webs. Fiction comes from someone's imagination. Sometimes the picture on a book will be a clue that the book is fiction. If we see a picture that shows little green men living on Mars, we know that is fiction.

Companies send messages to get people to buy their products. These messages are called advertising. Companies try to convince you that their product is the best. They try to convince you that you need it. Advertising is one of the strongest influences on consumers. A consumer is anybody who buys goods or services.

You see a lot of ads every day. Ads come in lots of different forms. They can be in the form of TV ads. They can be ads on the radio. They can be pictures on billboards or in magazines. It can be a company's name or logo on shoes, clothing, or shopping bags. A logo is a sign or symbol that represents a company's name. The company hopes that when you see it, you instantly know the company it represents.

Even packages are advertising! Packaging is made to catch our eye in the store. It is the seller's last chance to convince us to buy their product instead of another one like it.

Advertising, like books, can be true. Advertising may also be opinion. Opinions are someone else's beliefs about something. If a statement is true, it is a fact. It can be proven true or false. An opinion cannot be proven. Some of the words and pictures used in



advertising may be fact. But some of them are opinion.

Here are some statements in ads that are fact.
This hamburger is 100% beef.
This hamburger has a quarter-pound of meat.
This hamburger costs only 99 cents.

These statements in ads are opinion.
This hamburger is the best tasting hamburger you will ever buy.
This hamburger is better than hamburgers made by other companies.
This hamburger will make you grow big and strong.

Ads can tell people prices and information that may help them decide what to buy. But you should know that ads are slanted by sellers to show a product in the best light. Ads may talk only about the good things. They may ignore the negatives of what they are selling. Ads can be misleading. You might think that someone's opinion is a fact. You might think that because a product works for one person, it will do the same for every person.

Another common trick used in ads is exaggerated claims called "puffery." Ads "puff up" or exaggerate what the product can do. It is up to the consumers to separate facts from opinions and exaggerations. Being able to tell the difference between fact and opinions or puffery can help you make smart choices.

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Questions

- _____ 1. This bike is the most fun to ride.
 - A. opinion
 - B. fact
- _____ 2. Our toys are 20% off this weekend.
 - A. opinion
 - B. fact

