Discussion Questions

The questions in this section can prompt discussion after viewing "The Persuaders." In all cases, students should identify the evidence on which they base their opinions.



GENERAL


* What in "The Persuaders" surprised you? Name one new thing you learned about marketing or politics from watching the film. Name one new thing you learned about yourself from watching the film.



MARKETING PRODUCTS


* "The Persuaders" begins by questioning the increase in the amount of advertising we typically encounter in our daily lives. How would you assess the amount of advertising you see? Too much? Too little? Just right? In your view, what difference does it make to know that people today see much more advertising in their daily lives than people 20 or 30 years ago?
* What surprised you in the descriptions of how much demographic information marketers have about potential customers? What kinds of information would you be willing to share about yourself or your family in order to: enter a contest? Get a discount? Get online? Get a cell phone? Use a credit card? Would you be willing to reveal your name, address and phone number? What music you listen to or your favorite snacks? The grades on your last report card? How much your parents earn? What medications people in your family take? What kinds of information would you want to keep private and why?
* In "The Persuaders," marketer Kevin Roberts uses the term "lovemarks" to identify brands to which people are loyal even when devotion is not logical. Are there brands (or music) to which you are devoted? When you stop to think about it, is your loyalty to any particular brand logical or a "lovemark"? If purchasing a particular brand isn't logical, why would you (or other people) do it?



MARKETING CULTURE


* Douglas Rushkoff asks, "What happens when advertisers assume the roles of our writers, journalists, and entertainers?" How would you answer him?
* Advertising executive Douglas Atkins argues that purchasing branded merchandise now provides that same sense of belonging that was once provided by community institutions like schools, churches, civic groups, or fraternal orders. What provides you with a sense of belonging or identity? What role, if any, does marketing play in what you identify with or where you hang out the most?



MARKETING POLITICS


* Political consultant Frank Luntz tells his clients that, "80 percent of our life is emotion and only 20 percent is intellect. I am much more interested in how you feel than how you think." Contrast this with Thomas Jefferson's notion that democracy requires an "informed citizenry." What is the potential impact of Luntz's political strategy recommendations on the health of democracy?
* Rushkoff says that political strategist Frank Luntz" has built his career on a simple idea: It doesn't matter what you want to tell the public, it's about what they want to hear." Do you think the phrases that Luntz develops to "sell" political positions help clarify the issues or mislead voters?
* Douglas Rushkoff asks, "What does it mean when we begin to merge our once separate roles as consumers and citizens?" How would you answer Rushkoff's question? Given that the U.S. economy is based on consumer spending, is it patriotic to shop?
* "The Persuaders" points out that there are laws governing truth in advertising for products and services, but that "politicians can legally say whatever they want." Should political ads be governed by the same kinds of laws that govern product ads? Why do you think there aren't such law