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Lesson 2

Smoking Patterns in the United States

Objectives

- To show the patterns of tobacco use in American society
- To realize how these patterns are encouraged and manipulated by the tobacco industry

Teacher Notes

Use of tobacco products among teenagers is a growing problem in this country. The sale of tobacco to anyone under the age of eighteen is illegal in all fifty states. Vending machines are labeled that they are to be used by persons over eighteen years old. Merchants post signs and are supposed to check identification to be sure the purchaser is over eighteen. Stores can be fined for selling to minors. Occasionally, local police or television stations will run sting operations to see if stores are selling to minors. These usually take place at the beginning of a new school year. Nevertheless, young people have no problem in procuring cigarettes, snuff, and chewing tobacco.

This lesson illustrates how ingrained the use of tobacco is in our society and how the tobacco manufacturers strive to perpetuate the myths of smoking as desirable and a rite of passage to adulthood.

In this lesson, students read and discuss the portrayal of smoking as glamorous and adult in the mass media. They discuss how such tactics as product placement are used to stimulate the market for tobacco products among young people.

Procedure

1. Tell students that they are going to test their tobacco I.Q. Ask the following questions:
 - Is it a crime for teens to purchase cigarettes?
(Yes, in all fifty states, no one under the age of eighteen can legally purchase tobacco products.)
 - Why is the sale and purchase of tobacco regulated by the government?
(The sale and purchase of tobacco is regulated because it can be harmful to a person's health. Also, governments on local, state, and national levels derive revenue from the sale of tobacco products.)

- Do you know anyone who has serious health problems because of smoking?
(Have students briefly relate their own experiences.)
- Is smoking depicted favorably in the media?
(It is shown to be glamorous, exciting, adult, and cool.)
- Why did tobacco companies deny for years that tobacco was addictive?
(They did not want tobacco to be classified as a drug by the Food and Drug Administration.)
- Why would the tobacco industry want to hook teenagers on tobacco?
(They are a source of future income.)

This last question is essential to the understanding of this entire group of lessons. Be sure that students understand the manipulation of the teen market by tobacco companies by asking questions about how they perceive tobacco marketing techniques.

- Do you think that tobacco ads are designed to appeal to young people?
(Yes, the cartoon character Joe Camel is an example. Also, the sponsoring of contests with prizes of adventure vacations is designed to appeal to a younger audience.)
- Do you think that tobacco advertising is designed to show that smoking and chewing tobacco are sophisticated and cool? What other attributes are suggested in the ads?
(Yes, the depiction of people smoking in evening clothes and standing by a private lake or on a yacht or sailboat gives the subliminal message that young, wealthy, educated people smoke. The depiction of a cowboy in ads for smokeless tobacco gives off the message that rugged, manly men chew tobacco.)
- Do you think that an increase of smoking in movies and on television (known as product placement) has influenced you and/or your friends to experiment with cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or snuff?
(Students can answer yes or no and give reasons.)

This would be a good place to define *subliminal* and *product placement*. (Subliminal means *below the conscious level* and product placement means *to show one's product in a nonverbal but favorable light*.)

2. Distribute **Handout 3**, and have students read it. Have students discuss how and why attitudes toward smoking and chewing tobacco have changed over the past 150 years. Ask the following questions to stimulate discussion:
 - Is smoking now considered a moral evil? (*Most people do not consider it to be morally wrong.*)
 - Is it considered socially acceptable for women to smoke? (*In general, women may smoke in public or at home without any social consequences. There is a social stigma to smoking while pregnant, however.*)
 - Is chewing tobacco now an acceptable form of tobacco use among young people? (*Yes, many athletes use chewing tobacco because they think it does not affect their lungs and performance in sports.*)
3. Distribute **Handout 4** and have students take the quiz. Have students exchange papers and correct the quizzes. Use students' answers to spur discussion.

Suggested Responses:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>d</i> | 5. <i>c</i> |
| 2. <i>a</i> | 6. <i>e</i> |
| 3. <i>f</i> | 7. <i>g</i> |
| 4. <i>b</i> | |

4. Have students research print media for tobacco ads and bring them to class. Divide students into groups. Have each group discuss its ads, and select one ad to present and explain to the rest of the class. Use the ads to stimulate discussion on how smoking is portrayed.
5. Have students research articles on smoking-related illnesses and deaths. Instruct students to bring the articles to class and use them to stimulate discussion. Use the small groups or have selected students or volunteers present and explain their findings.
6. Distribute **Handout 5**. Have students write an essay (250–500 words) about their feelings about tobacco ads and how they feel about being manipulated to smoke or chew tobacco. Provide class time to share and discuss completed essays.

Enrichment/Extension

1. Write, act out, and videotape (if possible) your own antismoking commercial. Show your commercial to the class.
2. Interview a medical person (doctor, school nurse, etc.) about the physical outcomes of smoking. Write an article based on your interview and submit it to the school paper for publication.

American Smoking Patterns

Read the following information, and be prepared to discuss it.

Although tobacco has been used in one form or another since early colonial days, the use of cigarettes did not become popular with American men until after the Civil War. A small pouch of shredded tobacco and a pack of papers in which to roll the tobacco were much more convenient to carry than a cigar that could get broken or a plug of chewing tobacco. The cigarette could be made and smoked quickly. A cigar takes a longer time to smoke. So cigarettes were much more suited to the faster pace of life in post-Civil War America. This led to a decline in the use of chewing tobacco, although cigars remained popular. Until late in the nineteenth century, most men rolled their own cigarettes. However, improvements in manufacturing technology around the turn of the century led to the mass production of cigarettes. They still look much the same today. Major tobacco companies such as Lorillard, Brown and Williamson, and American became large producers of cigarettes at this time. The tobacco-producing southern states, in particular, became heavily dependent on the income from growing and curing tobacco to rebuild their shattered economies after the Civil War.

Filters were a later innovation designed to improve the health of the smoker by filtering the smoke as it was inhaled. Also, filters made smoking more appealing to women because they did not get tobacco shreds in their mouths. In the early decades of the twentieth century, cigarette holders became fashionable and served the same function.

In the decade following World War I, many of the old social taboos against tobacco use, particularly by women, began to fall. Smoking was seen as sophisticated and glamorous. Movie stars were seen smoking in films and appeared in ads endorsing various brands. Cigarettes were now socially acceptable for both sexes.

During the 1930s, the country experienced a severe economic downturn known as the Great Depression. Even though many people had no jobs and could not buy food, the sale of cigarettes continued. People were able to buy two or three cigarettes from a pack. In this way, the tobacco companies tried to ride out the tough economic times by maintaining their consumer base. Even the president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was shown smoking using a cigarette holder.

During World War II, soldiers overseas received cigarettes whether they smoked or not. Many of the young soldiers picked up the habit at this time. They used smoking to ease the stress of being in combat and as a way to pass the long hours of boredom while waiting to go into battle. Cigarettes were a small, portable pleasure they could enjoy. Once the habit was picked up, these young men and women maintained it when they went home after the war. This led to a huge increase in the number of smokers. However, there were often shortages of cigarettes on the home front.

After the war, radio and the new medium of television provided tobacco companies with unprecedented access to the American home. Television ads in the 1940s and 1950s portrayed smoking in beautiful settings. Rugged men and beautiful women used cigarettes. Stars of the top television shows of the time, such as *I Love Lucy*, smoked during the show. They also produced ads for the tobacco companies that sponsored these shows. It was a seamless fit. Menthol cigarettes, touted as safer and better tasting, came on the market at this time. Filtered cigarettes gained in popularity at this time also. It was the heyday of King Tobacco.

In 1969, the Surgeon General's office issued a report that devastated King Tobacco. Exhaustive and extensive research showed a link between smoking and cancer of the lungs,

throat, stomach, and esophagus. After this, all packs of cigarettes sold in the United States had to have a warning that smoking was hazardous to your health.

Two prominent Americans—John Wayne, the actor, and Edward R. Murrow, the reporter and television personality—were found to have lung cancer. For years, both of these men were seldom seen in movies or on television without a cigarette.

In the 1970s, all the expensive and lovely ads disappeared. Cigarette commercials were banned from television and radio, and there was a marked decline in the portrayal of smoking in films and on television. However, cigarettes could still be promoted in print ads and on billboards. Some of these advertising campaigns used cartoon characters. Joe Camel is one such character. However, the Master Settlement Agreement of 1998 specifically banned the use of this kind of character in relation to cigarette marketing.

In the 1980s, American tobacco companies sought to expand their overseas markets to make up for lost revenues in the United States. Smoking American cigarettes became a status symbol in many developing nations.

In the 1990s, many states filed lawsuits against the tobacco companies, seeking to recover the costs of caring for people with smoking-related illnesses. These lawsuits resulted in a huge settlement being paid to each state for the purpose of funding antismoking campaigns. The state and federal governments also sharply increased the price of cigarettes by adding so-called sin taxes to the price of each pack. Many large public stadiums and other sports venues were built using the money from these taxes.

In the twenty-first century, tobacco, both smoked and chewed, seems to be making a comeback among young people. Depictions of smoking in films and on television are on the rise. Tobacco companies are finding new ways, such as contests and premiums, to attract new smokers.

Tobacco Milestones

Match the year to the event that took place in that year.

Year

_____ 1. 1866

_____ 2. 1920

_____ 3. 1942

_____ 4. 1950

_____ 5. 1960

_____ 6. 1970

_____ 7. 1990s

Event

- a. Women obtain the right to vote, and old social taboos fall.
- b. Ads in print and on radio and television attempt to glamorize smoking.
- c. First health warnings appear on cigarette packs.
- d. Use of cigarettes becomes popular for men after the Civil War.
- e. Ads are banned from television and radio but are still permitted in print.
- f. Cigarettes are provided to GIs, but there are shortages of tobacco at home.
- g. Lawsuits are filed by states against tobacco producers.

Advertising Essay

Write a short essay (250–500 words) concerning how you feel about tobacco advertisements and/or how you feel about being manipulated to buy and use tobacco products. Be prepared to share your essay with classmates. Remember to back up your opinions with facts.