



Hot Holiday Gift

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why do we gotta-have-it ?

This unit examines the marketing, and social interactions around ‘must-have’ gifts (HHG) occurring at birthdays or graduations, or those occurring at special occasions. It is intended for students in Grades 6 to 12.

The activities provide students with opportunities to demonstrate expectations from all English literacy strands. The exercises can be easily adapted to meet specific students’ abilities, and interests.



Students will:

- Δ demonstrate knowledge, and skills from each of the English literacy strands
- Δ understand how, and why people choose, and use HHG
- Δ observe and analyze a marketing event, using appropriate terms
- Δ research and understand human responses to the marketing event
- Δ examine cultural, socio-economic, and religious aspects of gift-giving
- Δ apply knowledge and understanding of their research and discussions to the creation, and promotion of their own HHG

A. Background

From spud-guns, and hoola hoops in the 50s to Cabbage Patch dolls in the 80s, and, more recently, MP3 players, and Playstations, there are always *Hot Holiday Gifts* (HHGs)—toys, clothing, or accessories that become a “must-have” for the holiday season. At least one feature movie (*Jingle All the Way*, with Arnold Schwarzenegger) has been devoted to examining this phenomenon. Most retailers count on the holiday season to ensure their year-end profits, so advertisers go to special efforts to encourage a “must-have” feeling in children and parents.

Unfortunately, these feelings might obscure other aspects of the holiday season—family time, reflecting on the pleasures and accomplishments of the past year, etc. HHG campaigns might also unintentionally exclude or punish children who, for economic, cultural, or religious reasons, do not participate in holiday gift-giving. HHG mass marketing might also devalue simple or home-made gifts, or frustrate the efforts of cultures in which gift-giving occurs as a year-round expression of appreciation and love rather than seasonally.

Some people might get caught up in the process of choosing and hunting for HHG without considering the larger implications: advertising, economics, cultural differences, and pleasure. This unit is designed to help students examine and understand some of those issues.