

THE BUY-ME GENERATION TEACHER'S GUIDE

What teachers need to know:

According to John DeGraaf, co-author of the book (and creator of the term) *AFFLUENZA*:

"*Affluenza* is an obsession with stuff, never being satisfied with the things one has, always needing the latest, the newest...and in many cases, the name brand. It cuts across all socio-economic levels and age groups and is spread by the advertising community, peer pressure and self imposed pressure. Those caught in 'affluenza' define themselves by their possessions and their ability and desire to have more things."

Consider these facts:

- 93% of teenage girls say shopping is their favorite pastime.
- The average college student has \$3,000 in credit card debt.
- Children ages 12 and under influenced more than \$500 billion of their parents' purchases in the year 2000.
- Kids aged 12-19 spent \$155 billion of their own money in 2001.
- In a recent survey, 62% of 12- to 13-year-olds say that buying certain products make them feel better about themselves.

Lesson Plan

Objectives:

Students will:

- Imagine the job they will have as an adult
- List the things they would like to be known for when they retire
- Write a speech that would be delivered at their retirement dinner about their accomplishments and what has been most important to them

Materials:

- Paper, pens/pencils; black/white board

Project and Purpose:

Students will present the speech they would deliver at their own retirement dinner, reflecting on what has been most important to them in life.

1. Begin by asking students to write down the career they would like to have.
2. Then say, *Imagine you are 65 years old and retiring from the job you love. Your co-workers are throwing a dinner for you and they would like you to present a speech! In the speech, they would like you to reflect on your career and your accomplishments and talk to them about what has been most important in your life.*
3. Have students take 5-10 minutes to write a list of possible "future" accomplishments, both personal and work-related. Encourage students to talk to a friend in the class to help them develop their lists.
4. Then have students make a second list of the most important things in their lives, considering what they might feel is most important when they are 65 (older than their parents!) Try not to elaborate on this; encourage students to interpret the assignment.
5. When they have completed both lists, have students use the information to write the speech they will give at their retirement dinner. You may wish to assign this as homework or during another class time.
6. When students have completed their speeches, ask volunteers to share their work with a partner. Have each partner listen and write down the "highlights" of the other person's speech.
7. Gather the class together and ask partners to share the highlights. At the end of the presentations, ask the class, *What seemed to be repeated as "most important?" Were they material things or non-material things? Were they relationships? Accomplishments? Opportunities we created for others? Volunteering? What do our speeches tell about us? Which things will make a lasting impression? Why?*
8. Have students create a written response to the exercise. Have each student provide an answer to: *What did you discover about what is important by completing this activity?*

Class Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that teens today suffer from *affluenza*? Explain your answer and give specific examples to support your opinion.

2. How do adults fit into the affluenza formula? Do you think the adults in your life have affected how you look at consumerism? How so? Who or what else influences how kids buy things, want things?
3. Agree or disagree with this statement: "There is such a thing as too much money." Explain your answer.

Self-Reflection Questions:

1. How do you distinguish between what you want and what you need? Would you say you operate on an "I need it" basis or an "I want it" basis when you shop? Explain your answer.
2. How do you define yourself? Do you define yourself by what you own or by other measures? Who are you "without your stuff"?
3. What would you do if you didn't or couldn't have ANYTHING else? What would you think about? What would you do?

Evaluation:

- Did students complete the written portions?
- Did each partner actively listen and write their partner's speech highlights?
- Were students able to analyze their speeches to discover what is important to them?
- Did each student complete the questions?