**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band**: 10

**Task source**: Inquiry by Design in collaboration with Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE); Authors: Dennie Palmer Wolf and John McMillan

**Constructing the Self**

**STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Task context:**

In 2006, the American Academy of Pediatrics published a policy statement titled “Children, Adolescents, and Advertising.” This document was a clear statement on the negative effects of advertising on children and young adults. They pointed out that the average young person “views more than 3000 ads per day on television, on the Internet, on billboards, and in magazines” and suggested that advertisers increasingly target younger and younger audiences “in an effort to establish ‘brand-name preference’ at as early an age as possible.” The report argued that advertising, including advertising in schools, contributes significantly to childhood and adolescent obesity, as well as poor nutrition and cigarette and alcohol abuse. They called for media education—what they term “media literacy”—as an important way to curb the effects of advertising, pointing out that “media education seems to be protective in mitigating the harmful effects of media, including the effects of cigarette, alcohol, and food advertising.”

But advertisements are only one of many kinds of media that should be carefully examined. Other texts, including music, film, television, and magazines also target young people and influence the ways they think, look, and spend. Together, all of these texts comprise what cultural critics such as Susan Bordo describe as “cultural imagery.”

This assessment has three parts. Be sure to complete the tasks in order because the work you do early in the assessment will make your later work much easier.

1. **Final product**:

**Part One: Understanding Arguments in Visual and Written Texts**

In this part of the assessment you will be looking at a short text by Susan Bordo. In it, she analyzes a number of texts to show how they influence the way people think and behave. This work is important because later in the assessment you will be asked to do a similar analysis of a text you know well.

Please read the selection from Susan Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight*. At the end of the text, Bordo makes the claim that “cultural imagery” is “teaching us how to see.”

Please write a 400 – 500 word response to the following questions:

1. What is Bordo’s main claim?
2. What evidence does she use to support her claim?
3. Is she persuasive? Do you find her argument convincing? Why or why not?

**Part Two: Textual Analysis – What are the Messages or Arguments in a Popular Text?**

In Part One you studied a text by Susan Bordo. Now it is time for you to become a cultural critic by analyzing a popular text of your own choosing. In this task, you will analyze the messages or arguments that are made in the text, as well as the strategies used to communicate those messages.

Select, with your teacher’s help and approval, a popular text you know well—for example, a novel, a movie, a television show, a series of ads—that you think sends powerful messages about how young people should think, look, or behave.

The text you choose should meet some or all of the following criteria:

* You should know it well and have thought about it
* You should have heard other people react to it or discuss it
* You should think it is worth investigating

Make notes about the popular text that answer the following questions (be sure to cite lines and examples from the text to illustrate your answers):

1. *Text*: What is the text?
2. *Topic*: What is the topic that the text is teaching readers/viewers about? (Focus on one topic only.)
3. *Cultural imagery*:
   1. Describe what you read/see in the text (the explicit message).
   2. What message is the text trying to communicate to young audiences (the implicit message)?
   3. How does the text communicate these messages? What choices or strategies were used to convey these meanings?

**Part Three: Present Your Perspective on the Message Sent by Popular Texts**

To complete your textual analysis, select ONE of the following choices below as a way to communicate your analysis of the popular text in Part 2 above.

**CHOICE A:** Write a 400-500 word essay in which you communicate your own perspective about the message texts send to young people about how they should think, look, and behave, using the popular text selected in Part 2 as a specific case study.

***OR***

**CHOICE B:** Craft a compelling mixed-media text (e.g., a multimedia slide presentation accompanied by narration or audio) in which you communicate your own perspective about the message texts send to young people about how they should think, look, and behave, using the popular text selected in Part 2 as a specific case study. Be sure to incorporate a set of images that enrich or complement the written/oral text portion of the presentation.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. **Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**
2. On this task, you will show that you know these things:

* That texts convey messages and that creators of texts use specific rhetorical techniques and imagery to convey those messages
* What cultural imagery is
* What it means to be a cultural critic

1. On this task, you will show that you are able to do these things:

* Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
* Determine central ideas and themes
* Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text
* Analyze the structure of texts
* Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text
* Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text
* Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content
* Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
* Conduct short research projects based on focused questions in which you gather relevant information from multiple sources, integrate the information, and draw conclusions
* Gather relevant information from print and digital sources, assess the credibility of each source, and integrate the information
* Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

1. **Materials needed:**

* Excerpt from Susan Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight*
* A popular text (movie, TV show, advertisement) that you think sends a powerful message(s) about how young people should think, look, or behave
* Access to multimedia materials (if you choose the second option for your final product)

1. **Time requirements:**

You will have four class days, and five additional days out of class.

1. **Scoring:**

Your work will be scored using the English/Language Arts Textual Analysis Rubric, Grade 10. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.