

Pop Culture and Teen Magazines  
Julie Andracek  
Crestview Elementary/First Grade Teacher

I chose the topic of teen magazines because I had a huge interest in teen magazines as an adolescent. As a teenager, I LOVED getting a *Seventeen*, *YM* or *Teen* magazine. I remembered being so interested in the clothes, hair styles, and new accessories. Also, it was fun to have a look into the life of a certain celebrity. I enjoyed getting teen magazines and always felt good after reading one. I do not remember looking at the magazines and feeling pressure to look or dress a certain way. I liked the way the models looked and sometimes I tried to copy the latest trend but I knew they were models who had help looking that good. I knew that I was not supposed to look like the models in my *Seventeen*. As a teenager, I felt good about my body and body image. I think my feelings were and still are in the minority. Today many adolescents strive to look like the model of the latest *Seventeen* magazine cover. The fact is that most teenagers do not know, or do not believe, that the models on teen magazine covers are not perfect themselves. Those models have blemishes, facial hair, wrinkles, moles and other flaws that are “removed” by airbrushing to make them alluring and to sell the magazine (Hinds 2002, p. 27). Teenagers, especially girls, look through magazines and can’t help feel pressured to look a certain way. On *seventeen.com* there is currently an article about health. I assumed it would be about health eating but instead its focus is on how to “rock your body” and have it looking good for bikini weather. I think it is great to have a healthy focus in a teen magazine but they should be trying to educate teens about good eating choices to feel good and be healthy not necessarily to look good in a bikini.

It is hard to know how the articles, advertisements and pictures in a teen magazine will influence teens. I think each magazine needs to have awareness that many teens struggle with their body image and that they need to be careful on how they are directing their articles. It is nice to know that there are a variety of magazines on the market today that are directed towards teens that do not necessarily focus on fashion and looking beautiful. *Girl’s Life* for 10-15 year olds attempts to achieve a balance of fashion, advice, and informational stories with a more positive image than the traditional magazines (Harlan, Loertscher, & McElmeel, 2005). In the article, *Antidotes to Pop Culture Poison* (1997), the author Katherine Napier lists many alternative magazines that will still be interesting and fun to teenagers but will not include all the negativity. I would definitely display many different types of teen magazines in my classroom or have a list of great titles available to students. I wouldn’t exclude the “beauty” magazines but I would make sure students in my class knew that there are other great choices too. I think magazines like *Seventeen*, *Cosmo girl* and *Teen People* are important resources for teens. As long as a teenager can look through the magazines and know that things are not always as they seem. Models are models and they are paid to look, even if it takes a little airbrushing.

Since I am not a teacher of children in the middle school and high school age level, I can't say exactly how I would approach the topic of teen magazines with students. I do think that I would be open to discuss concerns with them regarding information that is presented in teen magazines. Now you can even find ads for birth control and beauty enhancements in teen magazines. I think it is important to teens to be aware of adult issues but I also think it is important for teens to have a responsible adult available to discuss these issues with them. I would want to be a person like that to any of my students that would need it. Also, I would try to use teen magazines of various types to educate my students. This would be a material they could easily relate to and for me as a teacher a get medium to use to get a point across.

I think magazines can be a great source of reference for teens and teen magazines should be in our libraries and schools. I also think it is important that teens have adults in their lives to help them deal with teenage issues. Sometime teen magazines can be a great way for teenagers to reach out and begin a discussion on important life-related events.

### *References*

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