OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students will engage in an in-depth discussion that examines the demand in the advertising industry for thin models under the age of 18 and the impact that this practice has on the body images of consumers.

A number of video clips provided with this lesson are from Girl Model, a film that pulls back the curtain on the modeling industry by following the stories of an American scout, and an aspiring model who is discovered in Siberia at age 13 and sent to work in Japan. Note: This film has subtitles in many parts.

POV offers a lending library of DVDs that you can borrow anytime during the school year—FOR FREE! Get started by joining our Community Network.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Discuss their ideas about the ideal beauty standard.
- Identify the connection between the demand for models under the age of 18 and the demand for very thin models.
- Determine the potential impact on the body images of consumers who regularly see advertisements that depict models under the age of 18.
- Evaluate who benefits and who is harmed when young models are used to represent adult women.
- Recognize what the practice of using children to advertise women’s products says about how society feels about women and aging.
- Explain in persuasive essays their positions on the use of children to advertise products for adult women.

GRADE LEVELS
9-12

SUBJECT AREAS
Language Arts, Social Studies, Current Events

MATERIALS
- Internet access and equipment to show the class online video
ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED
One 50-minute class period, plus time outside of class to complete persuasive essays

FILM CLIPS
Clip 1: “Scouting New Faces” (length 5:00)
This clip begins at 2:50, showing the back of Ashley, a model scout. It ends at 7:50, when Ashley says, “Perfect. Thank you.”

Clip 2: “Unattainable Images of Beauty” (length 6:40)
The clip begins with the question “What are the most common markets for models to be sent to?” It ends when Rachel says, “…which in the long run will just make us feel wrong.”

Clip 3: “Modeling in Japan” (length 10:47)
The clip begins at 31:10 with Nadya going to a casting in Japan. It ends at 41:57 with Nadya telling her mother on the phone, “Keep the money for yourself so you can eat.”

ACTIVITY
1. Ask students to imagine that they are scouts for a modeling agency. Have them take a few minutes to write down descriptions of the “ideal beauty standards” that would guide their search—age, size, shape, etc.

2. Have students compare their descriptions with partners, and then invite a few pairs to share their thinking with the class. List on the board the characteristics of the ideal female model that are common among students. Ask the class:
   • As a modeling scout, why do you think these characteristics are ideal? Does the list reflect your personal ideas about beauty, or just what you think people want to see in advertising?
   • What has influenced your ideas of what an ideal female model looks like?
   • How does the class list describing the ideal female model make female students feel about their own bodies?

3. Show the class Clip 1 (length 5:00), which shows a model scout searching for new faces at an open casting event in Siberia. Focus viewing by asking students to imagine what it might be like to be one of the aspiring models shown in the video. After watching the clip, discuss:
   • What thoughts would be going through your mind if you were one of the girls waiting to be evaluated at the open casting?
   • What was your reaction to the scouts discussing what they did not like about each girl while the aspiring models were present? How would you handle such criticism and rejection?
   • Is Nadya’s appearance consistent with your idea of what defines an ideal model? Why or why not?
   • Later in the film, Ashley the scout says she chose Nadya in part, because “they love skinny girls in Japan and she has a fresh young face. She looks young, like almost a pre-
pubescent girl.” What do you think the connection is between the demand for young models (girls as opposed to women) and the demand for very thin models?

- In your view, advertising for what types of products should feature 13-year-old models like Nadya? Explain your thinking.

4. Tell students that the use of young models is something that happens around the world, not just in Japan. A survey of working models in New York and Los Angeles indicates that the majority of models begin their careers when they are younger than 16. (Source: The Model Alliance [http://modelalliance.org/industry-analysis]) Show students Clip 2 (length 6:40), which is an excerpt of an interview with model Rachel Blais. Focus viewing by having students listen for what she says about how using young models in advertising affects the body images of consumers.

5. After watching the clip, discuss:
   - What impact might the fact that the image of what a woman should look like is represented by the body of a model under the age of 18 have on how adult women see their bodies?
   - How might the ideal of beauty presented by young models get people to make purchases?
   - Who benefits and who is harmed when young models are used to represent adult women?
   - What does the practice of using children to advertise women’s products say about how society feels about women and aging?
   - Do you agree with Blais’s view that models under the age of 18 should not be used in the advertising of products for adult women? Why or why not?

6. Ask students whether they agree with Blais’s view that models under the age of 18 should not be used in advertising for products for adult women. Have them capture their thinking on this issue in persuasive essays. If Twitter is available, ask students to submit questions to #askagirlmodel (for example, “how old were you?” and “did you trust the photographer?”) and use the answers as supporting points in the essay.

EXTENSIONS

1. Create advertisements for products for adult women that depict the beauty of adult women in your community. Discuss the ads in small groups. How do they compare to professional ads for these types of products? Would they be effective in convincing consumers to buy the products? Why or why not?

2. Work for change in the advertising industry. If students believe that models under the age of 18 should not be used in advertising for products for adult women, have them send letters to companies asking them not to use young models and include excerpts from their persuasive essays to make their points.

3. Use the modeling industry as a case study for learning about labor rights and protections. Begin by showing the class Clip 3 (length 10:47), which shows what happened when 13-year-old Nadya went to Japan by herself to begin modeling. Discuss what stresses Nadya had to endure as a young girl taking care of herself and working in an unfamiliar country. Tell the class that
Nadya’s agency did not provide the paid work that was promised and sent her home more than $2,000 in debt. Students can further investigate the challenges faced by working models by reading an October 22, 2012 blog post by model Rachel Blais (http://girlmodelthemovie.com/an-image-is-worth-a-thousand-words-or-a-thousand-aches/), who appears in the film, and by watching POV’s interview with Rachel. Have students summarize the labor rights issues for models described by these sources, steps being taken to improve labor conditions and the obstacles that make progress difficult. Ask students to think of lessons learned from their studies of historical labor rights movements that could be applied to improving conditions for models today.

4. Look more closely at the use of young models in fashion photography. Show students a brief video of model Cameron Russell (http://blog.ted.com/2013/01/16/model-cameron-russell-gives-the-real-story-behind-six-of-her-stunning-photos/) speaking about her work as a model. During her talk, she shows images from her early years in the industry that contrast modeling pictures with informal shots from the same timeframe that more accurately reflect her true age. Ask students for their reactions to these images. How accurately do Russell’s modeling pictures reflect her everyday appearance? Does seeing these contrasting images change the way students think about pictures of models found in magazines? Why or why not? How do these images contribute to the lesson’s discussion about the practice of using models under the age of 18 to advertise products for adults?

5. Examine the use of Photoshop in fashion photography. Show the class the video “The Photoshop Effect” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP31r70_QNM) and discuss how the model looked before and after Photoshop was used. What techniques were used to change her appearance? Do students believe that such practices are deceptive? Should they be banned? Should retouched photos be labeled as such? Why or why not? What potential harm could come from using Photoshop to alter someone’s appearance? How would students respond to the question posed in the video: Have we created an unattainable image of perfection that is widely accepted as the standard for beauty?

6. Discover how society’s ideas about “the ideal woman of the moment” are used to create mannequins. The POV short film 34x25x36 (http://www.pbs.org/pov/34x25x36/) shows what goes into mannequin design and reveals cultural beliefs about the ideal female body. A related lesson plan (http://www.pbs.org/pov/34x25x36/lesson_plan.php) further explores body image.

RESOURCES

About-Face
http://www.about-face.org
This site provides tools to help women and girls “understand and resist harmful media messages that affect their self-esteem and body image.”

Girl Model
www.girlmodelthemovie.com/
In addition to information about the film and filmmakers, the site includes links to related organizations and resources and blog posts, including one about New York Fashion Week by model Rachel Blais.

Media Literacy Clearinghouse
http://www.frankwbaker.com/default1.htm
This site provides education resources that promote critical thinking about media messages.

The Model Alliance
http://modelalliance.org/child-models
This organization seeks to improve working conditions for models by focusing on labor rights, health for models, protections for child models and sexual harassment issues and providing the perspectives of models on industry issues.

POV: Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films
http://www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php
This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

POV: Infographic: The International Model Supply Chain
http://www.pbs.org/pov/girlmodel/infographic.php
POV lifts the veil on the international modeling supply chain with a graphic representation of industry statistics.

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
(http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

**SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.9-10.2** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

**SL.11-12.2** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and
solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

W.9-10, 11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content.

W.9-10, 11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

**Content Knowledge:** [http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/] a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

- Geography, Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth’s surface.
- Language Arts, Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.
- Language Arts, Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
- Language Arts, Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
- Language Arts, Standard 10: Understands the characteristics and components of the media.
- U.S. History, Standard 31: Understands economic, social and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive’s director of education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and northern Virginia.