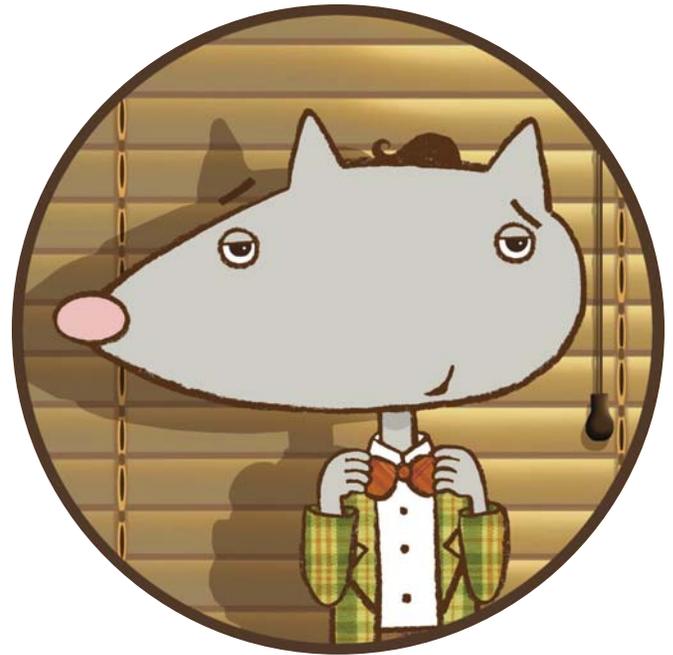


ABOUT HAVE I GOT A BOOK FOR YOU!

Salesman Al Foxword can sell anything, including an icebox to a penguin, an umbrella to a fish and a vacuum to a mole. Al knows you're looking for a great book, and this is your lucky day. Say good-bye to books that leave you bored and uninspired. Research shows that 100 percent of Al's customers notice a dramatic increase in happiness after buying his book. Not totally convinced yet? Just when you think you're ready to close the book on this relentless salesman, he comes up with a clever tactic that you simply can't refuse. This off-the-wall picture book combines sheer absurdity with the powers of persuasion that pokes fun at our hard-sell society.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR

Mélanie Watt is the bestselling author-illustrator and creator of publishing sensation *Scaredy Squirrel* that has been met with enthusiastic reviews and numerous awards. She is also the author of *Chester* and its sequel *Chester's Back*. Mélanie currently resides near Montreal, Quebec.



GETTING STARTED

The following activities support the language arts curriculum and will introduce primary students grades 2 to 5 to media literacy concepts such as overt and implied messages, point of view, audience, visual aids, different media forms and persuasive writing.

Before you begin working on the activities, ask your class to think about door-to-door salesmen and how they work. Talk about how technology has changed the way companies advertise and sell their products. Ask students to think about the following questions:

- How do companies sell things?
- Where do you buy things?
- Has anyone come to your house to try to sell you something?
- Is it easier or harder to decide whether to buy something if someone is there in person trying to sell it to you?
- What makes you want to buy something?
- Where and how do you normally see ads?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Al Foxword claims he can sell anything to anyone — and he has a fish buying an umbrella to prove it! For this activity, organize students into pairs, and ask each student to create an imaginary product. Their job is to try to convince their partner to buy their product. Ask students to think about the following questions to help them come up with a convincing way to sell the product: What does the product do? Who is it for? How can it help someone? Is it something people need or something for fun? How can people use it in their daily lives? Have students take turns selling their “products” to each other.

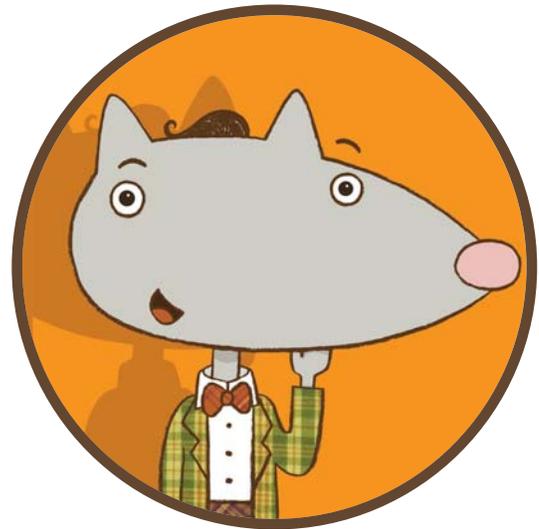
2. Al Foxword is creative about convincing the reader to buy the book and use it in new ways. For this activity, break students into groups. Ask each group to take an ordinary item (a chair, a hat, a table) and try to think



of ways to “sell” it without using the item’s original purpose. Students should, like Foxword, come up with new uses for the item to try and entice buyers. Have the groups present their “new” product to the class. Discuss how advertisers use this strategy to sell existing products. Using words like new and improved or new formula? Best ever? New packaging? New formats? How can buyers avoid being bamboozled by this strategy?



3. Although having Al Foxword come to your house might be persuasive, companies have other ways to attract buyers without having to be there in person. Have students, either individual or in groups, take one of the products from activity 1 or 2 and create a poster advertising the product. Ask students to think of the following: How can they entice potential buyers? Who is their target audience? Where should their poster hang? What does the poster need to say to convey the necessary points that buyers need to know? Afterwards, discuss how advertisers use things like demographics to help them target specific people that they think will be most interested in what they are selling. For example, certain times of day are better for advertising to certain groups (daytime for stay-at-home parents, early morning weekend days for kids).



4. Do a character analysis of Al Foxword with your students. Ask them to think about why Foxword is a humorous character. Is it his appearance? The way he's trying to sell the books (i.e., forgetting that books are for reading)? Is it the fact that he gets more and more desperate as the book goes on, which is reflected in his physical appearance? After your discussion, have students "re-write" the story from another perspective — as if there were another character in the book that Foxword is trying to sell his book to. Students can act it out, draw it or write it. Have students share their alternate version with their classmates.