The bill boards that go up every day are a wonderful resource for English Teachers. They contain few words and are carefully chosen and often cleverly constructed, to have maximum impact in a short space of time.

Here are some of the things one can use them for:

1. Teaching AGENCY in the press medium. Who makes these messages? Why? In effect they do what all good emotive language does: Grab our attention. Arouse curiosity. Motivate us to buy. They are in effect advertisements.

2. Target AUDIENCE. Who are the media consumers? Different newspapers target different audiences.

3. Sex sells. Many of the bill boards are salacious and pander to man’s basic desire and dark fascination with carnal lusts. Remember, newspapers need to sell to the common man. It can be interesting, depending on the sophistication of the class, to unpack a modern term like ‘bonk’. In my youth it was the sound Noddy’s car made as it careered around a corner and crashed into Mr Plod! Likewise one can also discuss how words have evolved
from their true meaning to more colloquial meanings, e.g. ‘romp’.

The word rape also holds macabre and dark fascination. This act of power together with sex has heightened morbid fascination. A good question to ask here is whether in our country, we have almost become desensitised to the word, a sad indictment of a country with the highest rape statistics in the world.

4. Gutter press. Bill boards make for a very powerful lesson on sensationalism and ‘hype’. It is often interesting to buy the newspaper for that day and see how the article compares to its enticing and dramatic sounding bill board headline. A bill board will often manipulate an event, incident, which in effect only merits a story on page 4.

5. Alliteration is catchy and memorable. Note how many bill boards employ alliteration for effect.

6. A few use the apostrophe. Never miss an opportunity to teach the correct use of the apostrophe.

7. Stereotypes. For example the term ‘blond’ or ‘priest’. Our expectations and generalizations (another useful term) around certain ‘types’. The expectations that come with certain occupations. Anything that runs contrary to ‘type’ is cause for interest. What, for example, are the expectations/associations with the word ‘Teacher’ and ‘Principal’? Why does the press relish the chance to pillory a person with a certain title?
In fact anything glaringly incongruent arouses curiosity. Violence in a church for example.

**TASK**

Give pupils in pairs, or small groups, a large blank A3 piece of paper and a thick black marker. They must put themselves into the shoes of an editor tasked with selling as many copies of that newspaper the next day. They must come up with a catchy bill board headline. **Not too many words.** Employ as many of the techniques they have discussed above. Prestic these up in the front of the class. Discuss as a class. Discuss: Which one is **most effective** and **why**?

**Warning!** Put your hazard lights on if you jump out your car in the middle of the road in traffic to pull a bill board from a pole for your lesson!

SCROLL DOWN FOR EXAMPLES OF BILL BOARDS ...
DAD IS BLONDE TEACHER'S PEST

www.iol.co.za
Sowetan

3 SHOT DEAD AT WEDDING

City Press

000 66

NUMBER OF PREGNANT TEENS HITS 000
MAN SAWS OFF HAND, NAILS HEAD
Angry

March of

Suns
Daily News

Bollyworld

SEN STILL SIZZLING
Daily News

TRIAL OF

TOLD OF

SEX

ROMPS

SUN

HORNY

PRINCIPAL

BUSTED!

Daily
BODY BUILDERS 'ARE BONKERS'

STOLEN COFFEE CASE BREWS
The Witness

ACCUSED WEEPS AS VICTIM IS MOURNED

SUBSCRIBE: 033 355 1366
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SA COLONEL IN BUNDU BONK
Weekend Witness

PUPILS HURT IN HAZING RITUAL

SUBSCRIBE: 033 355 1366
CAUGHT!
BY THE
HOOKER'S
KNICKERS
RAPED BY VIAGRA BLONDES

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1998
BOY (4) WATCHES PORN IN HOSPITAL

MERCURY

WEDNESDAY APRIL 6 2005

www.themercury.co.za
DAILY SUN
WHY MEN RAPE!
TUESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2013 011 877 6000