

wearing a “dunce cap”? Would they know the meaning of it? Would they also understand what it means to be “sitting in the corner of the room”? Ask students to “read” or decipher the expression on the face of the president. What might it mean or convey? Because many teachers also teach bias, what might we have our students infer from the *Rolling Stone* editors’ use of the caricature, combined with the words “The Worst President in History”?



**FIGURE 3.10** The December 8, 2008, cover of the *New Yorker* magazine.

Examine the cover of the *New Yorker* magazine shown in Figure 3.10. In order to read/understand this cover, you must know what was happening in the news during this time. For context, Senator Barrack Obama had just been elected President of the United States in November. It would also be necessary to understand that all incoming presidents must interview and select key members of their staff. What else was in the news? Senator Obama’s two daughters were promised they would get a new dog when they moved into the White House.

Using the above background information, what might you infer is happening on the magazine cover?

## Magazine Covers as Symbolic Representations

Those who design the covers of magazines also communicate to readers using symbolism. Take a look at the magazine covers shown in Figure 3.11. Ask students to deconstruct these covers and explain their symbolism. What are the graphic designers and editors trying to communicate?



FIGURE 3.11 Magazine covers for students to deconstruct.

## Activities

Check out the magazine deconstruction activity from the Center for Media Literacy at [http://web.archive.org/web/20041024154540/http://www.medialit.org/pdf/CML\\_DeconstructionMags.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20041024154540/http://www.medialit.org/pdf/CML_DeconstructionMags.pdf)). There you will find two magazine covers of former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to compare and contrast. Another good example for comparing and contrasting are the two magazine covers (see Figure 3.12) featuring NBA athlete LeBron James.

Have students consider these questions:

- Who are the audiences for each magazine?
- What are the clues?
- What are one or two adjectives that could describe how LeBron looks on each cover?

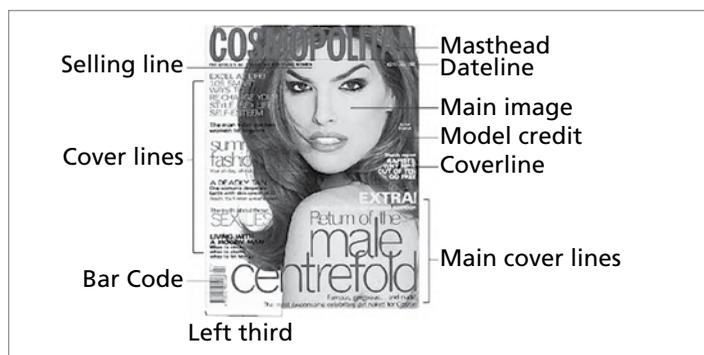


FIGURE 3.12 LeBron James on two magazine covers.

Magazine covers are also ads. What techniques are used to sell magazines to their readers? Notice LeBron’s facial expressions: what do they say to you? If you could read only one of these publications (*Sports Illustrated* or *GQ*), which would it be, and why? In other words, which is more appealing? If you were to re-design each cover, what would you change, and why?

### Sample Magazine Cover Deconstruction

In the following example, students would have to understand certain terms, such as “masthead” (the title of a newspaper or periodical as it appears across the first page), to comprehend this analysis. Explanations of this magazine cover, from the United Kingdom, are posted on the Magforum website ([www.magforum.com/cover\\_secrets.htm](http://www.magforum.com/cover_secrets.htm)) and under Gender/Magazine Covers and Cover Lines at [www.katpad.co.uk/media08/page6.html](http://www.katpad.co.uk/media08/page6.html).



**FIGURE 3.13** The secrets of magazine cover design ([www.magforum.com/cover\\_secrets.htm](http://www.magforum.com/cover_secrets.htm)).

Have students bring in a favorite magazine. Introduce them to some of the elements of “informational texts,” for example: layout, cover line, vanishing line, selling line, heading/subhead, sidebar, and balance.

Direct them to create an analysis or deconstruction of their magazine covers (refer to Worksheet 3.2).

**Informational Text Questions Worksheet**

*(Note: Not all of the questions would apply to every text.)*

1. Who is the author of this text, and who is the publisher?
2. What is the purpose of the text? What does the author/publisher hope to gain by creating it?
3. Does the text indicate any bias or propaganda techniques? If so, identify them.
4. Which text features stand out?
5. Could the text be described as a primary or secondary source?
6. Who is the intended audience; what does the creator hope the audience will do?
7. What is appealing in the text?
8. How are headlines, colors, and font styles and sizes used?
9. Could this text have been presented in a different form? If so, what form?
10. Create a few words or phrases that describe this text.

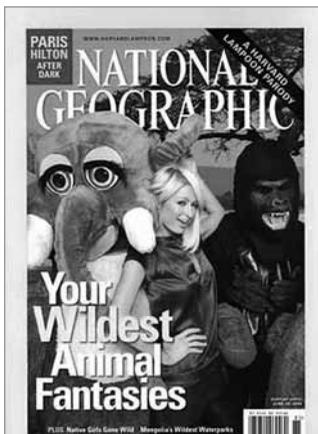
**WORKSHEET 3.2** Informational Text Questions Worksheet.

Source: [www.frankwbaker.com](http://www.frankwbaker.com)

Students could post their productions on a class blog or via sites such as SlideShare.net. Students analyzing the same magazine or perhaps the same cover subject on different magazines might also compare and contrast their analyses.

See how a student created his own magazine cover at <http://georgiamedia.wordpress.com/2010/02/22/productio-log-220210>. Have your students create their own magazine covers. Just Google the phrase “create a magazine cover,” and you will find a number of websites that will allow your students to produce their own covers. They might also prefer to create a parody of a magazine cover.

See Figure 3.14 for an example of a “fake” *National Geographic* magazine cover created by the *Harvard Lampoon*. Have students compare this fake cover with an authentic *National Geographic* cover. What text and visual features are alike; which ones are different? In what ways might Paris Hilton be a “wild animal”?



**FIGURE 3.14** The mock *National Geographic* cover of the *Harvard Lampoon*, which appeared April 1, 2008 ([http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/j/msnbc/Components/Photo\\_StoryLevel/080401/080401-harvard-lampoon-vmed-8a.widec.jpg](http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/j/msnbc/Components/Photo_StoryLevel/080401/080401-harvard-lampoon-vmed-8a.widec.jpg)).