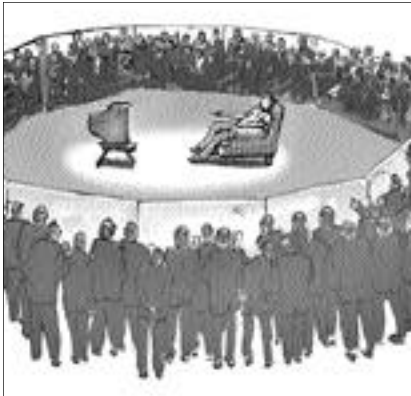


Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**OVERVIEW**

“Fuzzy Picture” explores the latest Nielsen controversy concerning accurate ratings data. Television network executives weren’t pleased to get Nielsen’s data showing a decline in male viewers between 18 and 34, a much coveted demographic by advertisers.

A drop in viewers could cost the networks advertising dollars because it lowers the value of commercial time. An estimated \$17 billion in advertising on broadcast networks was spent last year based on viewer tallies compiled by Nielsen. But Nielsen’s sample is rather small and it is finding it more difficult to get young people to participate in its surveys.

If Nielsen is to remain a source for businesses that rely on its sales and marketing data, it will need to make some changes in its collection process.

Read and discuss “Fuzzy Picture.”

**1** Why are the ratings among younger viewers, age 18 to 34, the most-watched numbers? \_\_\_\_\_

**2** What are some criticisms of Nielsen’s sample and data collection? According to Nielsen’s critics, why might Nielsen not have an incentive to change its process? \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Explain how Nielsen measures viewing. \_\_\_\_\_

**4** If the reported trend among young male viewers is actually occurring, what strategies would you recommend to networks and advertisers that rely on Nielsen’s sales and marketing data? \_\_\_\_\_

**5** What, if any, recommendations do you have for Nielsen about its method of gathering data about people age 18 to 34 years old? \_\_\_\_\_

**WRITING/RESEARCH/SPEAKING IDEAS**

- Discuss the long-term significance of ratings. How do they affect the shows that get renewed, the kind of programming networks will show and the kind of events we watch?

- Go to [www.nielsenmedia.com/whattratingsmean](http://www.nielsenmedia.com/whattratingsmean) to find out more about Nielsen Media Research. When was it founded? How does it gather its ratings statistics? What do those ratings really mean? Where did your favorite shows rank in the ratings?

Use your research and “Fuzzy Picture” to write an essay about the power Nielsen ratings have over the programming offered today.

- Go to [www.look-look.com](http://www.look-look.com) to find out what is “cool” and trendy in the lives of teenagers according to this marketing-research company. How valuable do you think this data would be to advertisers? Why?

## Answers

**1** Teenagers and younger audiences are sought after because they are exposed to more media and are easy to reach; most of their income is disposable and ready to spend; teens are often impulsive buyers; advertisers want to establish brand loyalty with buyers when they are young and before their purchasing patterns have been established.

**2** Nielsen is the only media research company that gathers ratings; it is the only game in town. With no competitors, it has little incentive to change or update its research methods. It samples only 5,100 homes and 1,485 men age 18 to 34. Critics say the slightest change or error in data collection is magnified and enlarged disproportionately.

**3** It obtains its daily measurements of TV viewing habits through TV set-top boxes.

**4** Answers will vary.

**5** Answers will vary based on students' creativity. Ask students to consider ways to measure audience in a manner gets more 18-to 34-year-olds to participate, but doesn't disproportionately represent them. Any attempt to gather more data from that age group would require Nielsen to go where they are: playing DVDs or online gaming.