CIRCUS POSTERS

Circus posters were used to advertise the show before it came to town. These colorful posters were hung all over town by the Advance Men, workers who went ahead of the circus to get people excited about the shows’ arrival.

Advertising was a year-round job with the circus. As soon as one show ended, it was time to plan for next year’s season. Advertisements were made as soon as the headlining acts were determined.

Advance Men travelled a few weeks ahead of the circus and were responsible for hanging posters, banners, and lithographs (mass-produced prints), booking newspaper advertisements, and handing out flyers. These hard-working men never saw a Ringling show, but were important to its success.

Circus posters were made to inspire people to buy tickets to see the show. Advertisements use literary devices like the ones in the green box to drum up excitement and sell more tickets. When designing your circus poster, make sure to use at least one literary device to create a suspenseful poster that sells out your circus!

Literary Devices

Advance Men became experts at using literary devices to drum up excitement and enthusiasm for the circus. A few of the literary devices used on circus posters include:

Alliteration – using the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words

Big Bingo – the biggest brute that breathes!

Hyperbole – exaggerated statements that are not necessarily meant to be taken literally

The greatest show on earth!

Imagery – visually descriptive or figurative language

Big Bingo trumpets his joy at the sound of popping corn!
Learning Extension: Try it Out!

Now that you’ve had the chance to look at some circus posters, it’s time to create one of your own! Remember to use bright colors and be sure to include the name of your circus, the name of the act or person you are advertising, and an exciting image of the performance to encourage people to buy a ticket to see the show!