



Lesson Plan: The History of the Soda Fountain & Creating Your Own Medicinal Soda

Grade Level: 3rd – 6th

Main Theme: The role of soda fountains in historic pharmacies and the connection between early soft drinks and medicine.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the history of soda fountains and their role in pharmacies.
2. Explore how early sodas were marketed as medicinal remedies.
3. Engage in creative thinking by designing their own medicinal soda.
4. Practice persuasive marketing techniques through slogans and logos.
5. Participate in a hands-on role-playing activity as a "soda jerk" or "pharmacist."

History of Soda

In the 1700s and 1800s, many people believed that naturally carbonated spring water had healing powers. Doctors often sent their patients to mineral springs to "take the waters" as a form of therapy. Once scientists learned how to make fizzy water in a lab, pharmacists began selling carbonated water in their drugstores as a therapeutic drink.

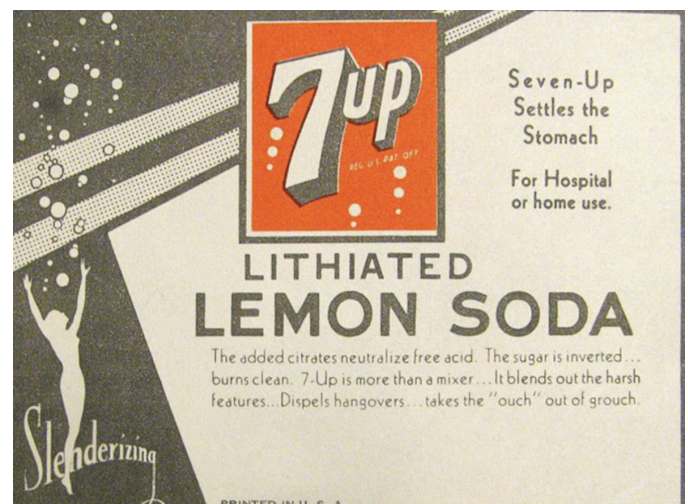
To boost both the health benefits and the flavor, pharmacists started adding botanical ingredients like ginger, mint, lemon, sarsaparilla, and other herbs. These early sodas were meant to treat common ailments like indigestion, low energy, and nervousness. They were not sweet at first—most were bitter tonics, crafted to be medicine.

However, once sweet syrups were added to the mix, these medicinal sodas became much more popular. What began as a health product quickly turned into a beloved treat. Some sodas were even advertised as cures for everything from headaches to "melancholy," and included ingredients we would now find surprising—like coca leaves or lithium.

In the 19th century, pharmacies were more than just places to get medicine. They were part general store, part medical center, and part social hub. Many had soda fountains—counters where fizzy drinks were mixed and served—right inside the shop. These weren't just for fun: people truly believed that these drinks had medicinal benefits.

The person behind the counter was known as a soda jerk. They operated the levers, mixed flavored syrups with fizzy water, and sometimes added a scoop of ice cream. Over time, the soda fountain became a place to gather with friends and hang out, much like coffee shops today. Sipping a fizzy "tonic" became just as much about the experience as it was about the cure.

Old Soda Advertisements



Design Your Own Medicinal Soda Worksheet

Imagine it's the year 1850... You're a pharmacist, and people are coming to you when they're feeling sick or tired. But instead of giving them a pill, you mix up a magical, fizzy soda to help them feel better!

Your mission: Invent a soda that tastes great **and** makes people feel amazing.

Step 1: Start Dreaming!

Think about your soda... What makes it special?

- What kind of **problem** does your soda help with?
(Does it help someone feel less tired? Calm their nerves? Make a sore belly feel better?)
→ _____
- What kinds of **flavors or ingredients** would you use to help people feel better?
(You can use anything from plants, herbs, fruits, or spices—get creative!)
→ _____
- What would this soda **taste like**?
(Is it sweet? Sour? Spicy? Fruity? Something no one's tasted before?)
→ _____
- What is the **name** of your soda?
(It can sound scientific, silly, powerful, or totally made up!)
→ _____
- What would the **slogan or catchphrase** be?
(Something fun or persuasive to make people want to try it!)
→ _____

Step 2: Design Your Bottle Label

On the back of this sheet (or on the soda bottle outline), draw and decorate your label! Include:

- Your soda's name
- What it's supposed to help with
- A list (or picture) of the ingredients
- A cool logo or design
- Your catchy slogan!

Make it colorful, creative, and fun—just like an old-fashioned medicine soda from the past!

Name

