Traveling circuses were some of the most popular forms of live entertainment in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Circus owners didn’t have television and social media to let people know about their upcoming shows, so they had to get the word out in other ways. Circuses like the Ringling Bros. from Baraboo sent “advance men” to put up posters and other advertisements throughout towns where the circus was going to play. The posters used colorful pictures and exaggerated, or over-the-top, language to get people excited to come to the circus.

Look at the examples of circus posters and think about these questions:

What is happening?
What colors and shapes are used?
What words are used? Why did they choose these words?
How does the poster make you feel?
Do you think this poster would persuade people to visit the circus? Why or why not?
LEARNING AT THE CIRCUS

POSTERS

CREATE your own Poster!

Some things to think about:

What’s the name of your circus?
What kind of picture you want to show?
What words will you use to create excitement?

See even more posters from Circus World Museum’s collection at
www.circus.pastperfectonline.com