

Political Advertisements

Grade(s):
3–12

Time:
1 week

Subject(s):
Social Studies
Language Arts

Standards

Social Studies
Students will be able to exercise the intellectual skills needed to understand, analyze, and judge civic and political processes and events as informed, responsible citizens.

Students will be able to exercise the participatory skills needed to monitor political events, promote public understanding, and influence politics and governance.

Language Arts

Students will read and understand grade-level appropriate material. They will draw upon a variety of comprehension strategies as needed, including generating and responding to essential questions, making predictions, and comparing information from several resources.

OVERVIEW

Students learn how to analyze the messages and the impact of the candidates' political advertisements in print, video, and audio formats. They learn about the techniques that candidates use to influence voter decisions and how to interpret the intentions of the ads. Students create their own ads using these strategies.

Driving Question: How do political ads influence voters? Are negative or positive ads more effective?

Skills and Knowledge: Writing, analysis, reading

Co-nect Rubric: Oral Presentation

Final Product: Students create their own political advertisements for the 2004 presidential election.

INSTRUCTION

Analyze Campaign Advertisements

Explain to students that there are four main types of ads:

- ❑ Warm and Fuzzy
—Candidates make the viewer feel good about the country or his or her campaign.
- ❑ Humorous
—Candidates elicit a laugh or smile from the viewer.
- ❑ Scary
—Candidates evoke images of fear (usually combined with a negative ad).
- ❑ Negative
—One candidate portrays the other in an unfavorable light.

Over the course of a few days, have students analyze different types of ads. Discuss:

- ❑ What key messages are communicated in the advertisements?
- ❑ Which type of ad is more memorable?
- ❑ Which type of ad is most effective in convincing voters to vote for a candidate?
- ❑ Did the ad help you decide which candidate to support?
- ❑ Did the ad provide factual information or did it evoke an emotional response?
- ❑ During which TV programs are ads played? What time of day?
- ❑ How important is a candidate's appearance in these ads? What type of image is he or she hoping to create?
- ❑ Where do you find the most campaign rhetoric (commercials, literature, newspaper, TV, radio, Web pages, or "stump" speeches)?

Students will write clear, coherent, and focused essays. Writing will exhibit awareness of audience and purpose. Essays will contain a formal introduction, bodies of supporting evidence, and a conclusion. Students will successfully use the stages of the writing process, as needed.

- ❑ Is the information you receive from major network newscasts, news magazine shows, talk shows, morning shows, and cable TV equally credible?
- ❑ Compare the various strategies used by the candidates: What types of ads does each candidate have? What strategies does each candidate use in his or her ads? Which do you think are most successful?

Create a Political Ad

Now, have students create their own ad for one of the presidential candidates. The ad can be for print, TV, radio, or the Web. Students should choose which type of ad they want to create and use strategies that they learned from their analysis of political advertisements. They should include a reflective piece of writing about the ad and the strategies that they used. Students can present their ads to their classmates.

RESOURCES

Effectiveness of Negative Political Advertising

<http://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/wjmcr/vol02/2-1a-B.htm>

Dissect an Ad

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov1996/takingonthekennedys/dissect.html>

The Role of Media in Elections: Helping Students Understand Media's Influence

<http://www.med.sc.edu:1081/mediapolitics.htm>