LESSON – Power of Persuasion: Media and the Democratic Process
Election Year Coverage

Lesson Guide
Recommended grade level: Elementary

Learning Objectives
Learners will:

• Understand how media play a role in the election process
• Develop an awareness of how media affect voter perceptions
• Compare different persuasion techniques in advertising
• Examine how candidates use media strategies to win elections

Preparation
Select a one or two-day implementation format:

• One-day format: Allow enough time for students to create a poster or webpage.

• Two-day format: Assign the poster/webpage activity as homework and conclude the lesson on the following day.

Materials

• (Optional) Access to a board or interactive board
• Advertisements for the presidential election (ads for or against candidates) or election of your choice
Options include:
  - Magazine or newspaper ads for students to cut out
  - Online sources: video ads at The Stanford University Political Communication Lab (listed by topic): http://pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns/2012/
  - Do an image search for presidential election advertisements and select ads for students to examine.
• Access to information from the resource page Which Came First? The Chick or the Egg? (On the board or print copies)
• Advertising Comparison Chart for each student or student group
• Access to information and chart on the Persuasive Strategies page (On the board or print copies)
• Materials to create posters or webpages

Lesson Procedures

Define media: Media is a means of communication, which is usually made through television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other outlets that influence a large amount of people.

Go over the reference page Which Came First? The Chick or the Egg? (On the board or provide copies) and discuss how media can affect the way people view candidates and how it can affect the outcome of elections.
Activity 1 – Media Analysis
Pass out copies of the Advertising Comparison Chart to each student or to small student groups.

Access election advertising

• Offline: Have students look through the magazines and newspapers for examples of campaign advertisements and cut them out.

• Online: Have students access online election advertising of choice.

Have students or groups select two ads to use with the Analysis Chart.

As a class, discuss their findings. Emphasize that in evaluating what a candidate stands for, it is important to consider their point of view on issues and topics, the source of each advertisement and its purpose.

Activity 2 – Vote for Me!
Pass out copies of the Persuasive Strategies Activity page to each student or provide the information on the board. Read the introduction and go over the strategies listed in the left column.

Assign each student to create a campaign poster. Tell them to imagine they are running for office. You may designate the imaginary election. For example: Student Body President, Governor, President of the U.S., etc.

• They should refer to the strategies when developing their posters.

• Instruct half the class that they may only use facts such as their experience, things they can really change, etc.

• Instruct the other half of the class that they may use any persuasive techniques necessary to make them sound like the candidate to vote for.

(1) When the posters/webpages are complete, have students exchange their work and fill out the Persuasion Chart provided or create a copy of the chart to record responses. This may also be done as a group activity.

(2) Display the posters/webpages and allow students to view all of them. Instruct them to respond to Part 2 of the activity: Use a blank page or the back of this page to describe at least two campaign posters or webpages you liked the best. List the details that would make you vote for the candidates. In your opinion which strategy is the best one to use to get votes? Do photos or graphs make a difference? If you realize that a candidate makes a claim or promise that she/he cannot fulfill, does it make you want to vote for or against them?

Concluding discussion

Have students share their opinions from the last activity. Include discussion of the following:

• Can media serve to strengthen one’s views about a candidate? How?

• Does it matter if candidates use information in advertising that is not true? Why or why not?

• If you realize that a candidate makes a claim or promise that she/he cannot fulfill, does it make you want to vote for or against them?

• Why might someone limit themselves to watching, reading or listening to information that positively supports the candidate they like best?
REFERENCE—Which Came First? The Chicken or the Egg

It’s an age-old question. Which came first – the chicken or the egg? The point of the question is you can’t have one without the other. The same is true when we look at how media affect current events like elections.

Think about it: How does the average American learn about current events? How can this affect how they view things?

Most Americans learn current events from watching television, listening to radio, accessing online information, picking up a newspaper or a magazine, even from billboard ads and flyers. Because of this a person’s view of current events is affected by how the media portrays it (what they see, read and hear).

The Presidential Election
The presidential election is an important current event that happens in the United States every four years.

Media play a huge part in the election process.

Think about it: Who are the candidates in this year’s Presidential election? Have you seen or heard anything about the candidates through media like television or magazines?

Separating Fact from Fiction – Is it important in elections?
It is important to remember that not everything you see or hear in media is true. Untrue things about a candidate may be published on purpose to get people to vote for or against a certain candidate.
# Advertising Comparison Chart

Select two different campaign advertisements for comparison. Label and briefly describe the people or organizations that are being advertised in your selections:

Ad 1:  

Ad 2:  

**For each advertisement, answer the following questions.**

What is the message or claim the advertisement is making?

Ad 1:  

Ad 2:  

Does the ad mention experts or important people who support the candidate?

Ad 1:  

Ad 2:  

What attention-grabbing and/or persuasive words or images did the advertisers use?

Ad 1:  

Ad 2:  

Do the advertisers try to appeal to emotions?

Ad 1:  

Ad 2:  

How do the advertisers try to make their point convincing?

Ad 1:  

Ad 2:  

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Persuasive Strategies

Part 1

Different strategies are used in campaign advertising to convince or persuade voters to vote for candidates. The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided ways of persuasion into three categories: Ethos, Pathos and Logos. Today’s advertising incorporates these strategies with other effective ways to persuade.

Read through the campaign ad assigned to you. In the chart below, check yes or no if the strategy was used. If you checked yes, describe how the author used that strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasive Strategy</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>How the Author Used It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim</strong> – States the main purpose or his/her stand on an issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Big Names</strong> – Mentions experts or important people who support the candidate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logos</strong> – Uses facts, numbers or logic to support their position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pathos</strong> – Appeals to the audience’s emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethos</strong> – Tries to build trust and credibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kairos</strong> – Creates a sense of urgency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong> – Uses studies and information to make the argument seem more convincing. This may be visual such as in charts or graphs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2

Use the space below or a blank page to describe at least two campaign posters or webpages you liked the best. List the details that would make you vote for the candidates. In your opinion which strategy is the best one to use to get votes? Do photos or graphs make a difference? If you realize that a candidate makes a claim or promise that she/he cannot fulfill, does it make you want to vote for or against them?