

Communication Evaluation

Benchmark: SS.7.C.2.11 Analyze media and political communications (bias, symbolism, propaganda).

Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will use scenarios to identify bias, symbolism, and propaganda.
- Students will evaluate how bias, symbolism, and propaganda can impact public opinion.

Time: One class period

Materials:

- Communication Evaluation PowerPoint
- Handout A: Communication Evaluation
- Markers
- Paper/dry erase boards
- Computer
- Projector
- Internet access: www.livingroomcandidate.org

Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.
- Select ads for students to view from The Living Room Candidate
- Resources:
 - Propaganda overview: <http://literarydevices.net/propaganda/>
 - Symbolism overview: <http://literarydevices.net/symbolism/>

Lesson Overview

Warm Up by asking students if they have ever seen a political ad. Follow up with:

- What do you remember about the ad?
- Was it about the candidate or the candidate’s opponent?
- Would you say it was a positive ad or a negative ad?

After discussing student responses, ask students to work in small groups to make a list of items they would want to see included in a political ad. What kind of information do they think should be included?

Distribute Handout A. Working in small groups, students should complete Part I by discussing the definitions of the terms bias, symbolism, and propaganda. The third column should be left blank and will be completed during another part of the class activity. Students will then need to work in their groups to provide a definition in their own words. Have students share responses and discuss as a class.

Check for understanding: Using the PowerPoint, have students identify examples of bias, symbolism, and propaganda. Students will write their response (B, S, P) on a dry erase board or piece of paper identifying if the image is reflective of bias, symbolism, or propaganda. Instruct students to hold up their answers.

Conduct the ad-viewing activity. After students have demonstrated a clear understanding of bias, symbolism, and propaganda, they will view pre-selected* ads from [The Living Room Candidate](#). (*See notes below for selecting ads for this activity) Show each ad once all the way through. Students will need to identify examples of bias, symbolism, and propaganda as each ad is shown. This should be written in the third column on Part I.

Show each ad again. This time, students will need to complete Part II of Handout A by answering the questions posed. This part of the activity may be done individually or in small groups.

Debrief the activity by discussing the completed handout. Emphasize the impact that the ads can have on public opinion through the use of bias, symbolism, and propaganda. Ask students to look back at their list of items they would look for in a political ad to see if they would change their list by either removing items or adding new items.

Check for Understanding The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.

Note: The Living Room Candidate provides ads from political campaigns dating back to 1952. When selecting the four ads the students will view, be sure to provide a balance of ads based on the following:

- Political party
- Positive campaigning vs. negative campaigning
 - Positive campaigning: showing the candidate in the best light possible.
 - Negative campaigning: showing negative information about the opposing candidate.
- *For example:* Include two commercials for the democratic candidate – one positive and one negative - and two commercials for the republican candidate – one positive and one negative.

This activity can look at either historical examples, contemporary examples, or a combination. This website also allows you to search ads based on the type of commercial and the issue(s) addressed.

Extension Activity: <https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/propaganda-whats-message>

Under the Media and Influence curriculum unit on iCivics, use the lesson *Propaganda: What's the Message?* This lesson includes a gallery walk activity where students will evaluate a variety of posters from the past and present.

Name: _____

Communication Evaluation

Part I Directions: In small groups, discuss the terms in the grid below. For each definition, provide your own interpretation. What does that term mean to you? How would you define the term?

You will use the third column during Part II of the activity, so leave it blank for now.

Term	Definitions	Examples
Bias	Display of favor for or against someone or something; often seen as prejudicial.	
Symbolism	The use of symbols to represent ideas.	
Propaganda	Communication aimed at influencing public attitudes or opinions toward some cause or position. Propaganda is often used to manipulate human emotions by displaying facts selectively.	

Part II Directions: You will watch each commercial from The Living Room Candidate twice.

The first time you see the ad, list examples of bias, symbolism, and propaganda in the third column in Part I.

The second time you watch the ad, answer the questions below.

Commercial Title/Campaign	What is the tone of the ad and what message does the ad convey?	What evidence was presented to support the message in the ad? How would you know if this evidence was factual?	How does the ad make you feel about the candidate?	Do you think the ad is persuasive/effective? Why or why not?