

LESSON 10: CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, I can...

- explain the role of political parties in elections;
- examine a variety of media texts and evaluate their significance or effectiveness;
- work collaboratively with peers to analyze and organize information.

READINESS

Using their mobile devices, ask students to take photos of campaign communications they observe in their community in lead up to the lesson.

INTRODUCTION

1. Review the concept of media. Media is the communication of information and messages to the public.

2. Collect and share a few examples of media with students (e.g., newscast summary or news article, blog post, online or newspaper advertisement, promotional flyer). For each piece, initiate a discussion related to the following:

- Who is the writer or source?
- Who is the audience?
- Who paid for it (or facilitated its creation)?

3. Have a closing discussion: Which type of media did you find to be the most effective and why? Which did you find to be the most credible and why?

ACTIVITIES

1. Through a classroom discussion, invite students to share all the ways they think political parties and candidates try to communicate with voters and share their message (e.g., advertising, lawn signs, mailings/pamphlets, their website, social media, public events, door-to-door canvassing, news coverage, candidates' debate). Ask students if they have noticed any of these efforts for the current election and invite them to share their photos from the *Readiness* activity.

2. Review examples of political party advertisements or social media messages for the current election campaign. You could use images from each party or party leader's Instagram account or video advertisements found on their website or YouTube channel. Encourage students to look at language, colour, images, music, tone and content. Write down comments to the following guiding questions so that all students can see.

Guiding questions:

- What are the key messages the party is trying to get across?
- Is it an attack ad? Is the party focusing on their own ideas/platform or are they attacking another leader or political party?
- Who is the target audience of the party's communication piece or advertising?
- Does the communication achieve its purpose? What makes it effective or ineffective?

Attack ad examples – 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign:

- "Role Models", Hillary Clinton ad – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrX3QI31URA>
- "Corruption", Donald Trump ad – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epbmHco8sFO>

3. As a class, co-create criteria to evaluate political party advertising or communication. For example:

- Is the message clear and concise?
- Is the message factual?
- Are the images relevant to the message(s)?
- Do the message(s) target the intended audience?
- Is the language of the message appropriate to the tone and content?

4. Divide students into groups and have them evaluate the communications of one of the political parties or candidates running in your school's electoral division. Select options from each party in the same medium(s) to ensure comparisons can be made on the same level and are not biased towards format. Place each piece of media (or printed screenshot of the video) in the middle of a larger piece of paper or chart paper. Ask students to annotate their thoughts around the edge. Encourage them to look at language, colour, images, music, tone and content.

Teacher Note: Annotation can be explicitly modeled in Step 3 or before the group work.

5. Post each group's work around the classroom or down a hallway. Have students participate in a 'Gallery Walk' to look at their peers' work. For a further extension, give students sticky notes so they can add their own thoughts or ideas.

Alternative Activity

Divide students into groups and ask them to track the communications of one particular political party or candidate over the course of the campaign. Students should collect the party or candidate's communications/messages from multiple platforms and in different formats (e.g., video, print material, social media posts).

Provide an overall checklist of what should be collected during the tracking period.

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For example:

- 3 video advertisements
- 10 social media posts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat)
- 1 party pamphlet
- 1 speech
- 2 media releases

Suggested questions:

- What are the party's key messages? Are they consistent across all platforms or communications?
- Are they focused on their own ideas or do they focus on another party's negatives?
- Which platform do you think is most effective and why?
- Which demographic groups does the party appear to be targeting with their communications? Explain your reasons.

Afterwards, give students an opportunity to share their work with each other through a classroom presentation, 'Gallery Walk' or an alternative method.

CONCLUSION

Have a brief closing discussion about campaign communication, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Evaluate the communications of each political party or candidate and rank them based on effectiveness. Explain the reasons behind your rankings.
- If you were the leader of a party or candidate, what would be your communications strategy? What formats would you use? Who would you try to reach? What would be your main messages?
- What is the role of citizens during elections?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Set up a classroom Twitter or Facebook account to help your students track social media posts.
- Be sure to show options from each party in the same medium to ensure comparisons can be made on the same level and are not biased towards format.
- When choosing video advertisements, be sure to show ads of similar tone. Try not to compare a positive ad from one party with an attack ad from another. Compare positive and negative toned ads from the same party.
- If finding local campaign material is difficult, you could use the provincial leaders' material instead.