

Analyzing presidential campaign advertising

Directions:

- A. Select a group of no more than 3 students to work with.
- B. Go to the following website: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>
- C. Along the left side, find the link "For teachers" and click on it.
- D. Read the titles and the summaries of the various lessons below. Pick a 1st choice and a 2nd choice. No two groups may complete the same lesson. Sign up is "first come, first serve." If you want a choice, make it early.
- E. Once you have selected your lesson and signed up with Mrs. Jones, click on the lesson. You do not need to download or print the PDF copy of the lesson, but you may do so to help your group understand key ideas and to stay organized.
- F. **VERY IMPORTANT INSTRUCTION:** Jump down and read the "Assessment" section. This section provides the "moral of the lesson." Be sure that all of your analysis in the steps below reflects and is consistent with the Assessment or "moral of the lesson." **Everything that you present should support the "moral of the lesson."** Be sure to discuss the key points identified in the Assessment in your group's presentation.
- G. In most cases the videos you need are at the bottom of the procedures page; however, if you need other videos, use the "back" button to go to the website's home page and click on the appropriate year under "Commercials" to find the rest of the video ads. Run your mouse over the icon of the video to find out the name of the ad. You may choose to use other ads if you feel they better suit your purposes.
- H. **As a group be sure you are prepared to present the lesson to the rest of the class on Tuesday/Wednesday of next week. Each person must contribute EQUALLY to the presentation, so all members of the group should know their roles. Make sure that you include all the KEY IDEAS from the lesson in your presentation. [Note: If a student is absent for the presentation, the other members of the group will present that student's material. Any student absent will need to complete a written version of his/her presentation to earn credit for this assignment.]**
- I. Grading will be based on the following:
 - Following directions as given in each lesson to present and support lesson's key objective and assessment (moral of the story).
 - Thoughtful, critical, in-depth (as opposed to superficial) answers to the lesson prompts and questions.
 - Effective presentation of material to the class (articulate, insightful, knowledgeable, prepared, etc.)
- J. **OPTIONAL BONUS:** Each group or individual may choose to complete and present ONE of the Extension/Homework assignments listed in the lesson in addition to what is required in #6 above. You can earn up to 10 additional points for doing this. Points earned will be determined upon quality of thought and presentation. Be sure to write down the assignment and identify the lesson you are working from so that I can tell if you are accurately and directly answering the question. **Self-study:** Many of the other links on this website offer interesting information. Check them out.

Lessons:

- 1. WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE AD? PLAYING ON EMOTIONS—FAMILY/CHILDREN.** Go to the following link: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/lessons/17>. Do ALL of the following: Read carefully each of the following sections in the lesson: Objective, Overview, Preliminary Discussion, (optional PDF lesson). Make sure you understand the gist of each of these sections. These sections give you the necessary background information to effectively and critically complete this assignment.
 - Do only the part related to family/children. **Stop** when you get to Variation: Negative ads.
 - Now go back up and read the “Procedures” section. As a group, complete the instructions in the Procedures section. Assign each person in the group one part or question of the procedures to present to the class (optional—Consider questions in the PDF). If there are more parts than you have people, then assign all parts equally within the group.
- 2. WHAT MAKES AN EFFECT AD? PLAYING ON EMOTIONS—NEGATIVE ADS.** Go to the following link: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/lessons/17>. Do ALL of the following: Read carefully each of the following sections in the lesson: Objective, Overview, Preliminary Discussion, (optional PDF lesson). Make sure you understand the gist of each of these sections. These sections give you the necessary background information to effectively and critically complete this assignment.
 - Jump over the part of the lesson related to family/children. **Start** when you get to Variation: Negative ads.
 - Now go back up and read the “Procedures” section. As a group, complete the instructions in the Procedures section. Assign each person in the group one part or question of the procedures to present to the class (optional—Consider questions in the PDF). If there are more parts than you have people, then assign all parts equally within the group.
- 3. UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL ADS:** Go to the following link: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/lessons/15>. Do ALL of the following: Read carefully each of the following sections in the lesson: Objective, Overview, Preliminary Discussion, (optional PDF lesson). This lesson has you address the use of connotation and denotation in commercials. Make sure you understand the gist of each of these sections. These sections give you the necessary background information to effectively and critically complete this assignment.
 - Now go back up and read the “Procedures” section. As a group, complete the instructions in the Procedures section. Assign each person in the group one part or question of the procedures to present to the class (optional—Consider questions in the PDF). If there are more parts than you have people, then assign all parts equally within the group.
 - You may use either one or both of the videos recommended in the lesson. Or if you prefer, you may look for others among the commercials provided from various campaigns. Warning: Don’t get bogged down looking for ads and not accomplishing your task.
- 4. EVALUATING INFORMATION: FOCUSING ON THE 2008 ELECTION:** Are all facts really facts? How can you tell facts from perversions of the truth? This lesson shows you how. Go to this link: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/lessons/13>.
 - Now go back up and read the “Procedures” section. As a group, complete the instructions in the Procedures section. Assign each person in the group one part or question of the procedures to present to the class (optional—Consider questions in the PDF). If there are more parts than you have people, then assign all parts equally within the group.

5. **DEVELOPING CRITICAL ANALYSIS: ANALYZING IMAGES AND SOUNDS (CINEMATIC FEATURES):** Go to this link. <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/lessons/14>. This lesson explores how images and sounds can impact viewers, in this case, images and sounds of war and peace. Be sure to both parts. Part B introduces you to President Johnson’s “Daisy” commercial, one of the most controversial of all time.

- Now go back up and read the “Procedures” section. As a group, complete the instructions in the Procedures section. Assign each person in the group one part or question of the procedures to present to the class (optional—Consider questions in the PDF). If there are more parts than you have people, then assign all parts equally within the group.

6. **POLITICAL ADS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: [Note: A second group could take on Part 2 of this lesson.]**

6A: The first TV ads appeared with the 1952 election of former World War II general Dwight Eisenhower and intellectual Democratic politician Adlai Stevenson. Do the lesson as described; however, consider also examining the differences in campaign advertising then and now. What conclusions can you reach about those differences? What are they? Go to this link: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/lessons/16>.

- Now go back up and read the “Procedures” section. As a group, complete the instructions in the Procedures section. Assign each person in the group one part or question of the procedures to present to the class (optional—Consider questions in the PDF). If there are more parts than you have people, then assign all parts equally within the group.

6B: The campaign of 1988 of George Bush vs. former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis relied heavily on emotional campaign advertising. Do the lesson as described; however, also consider examining what emotional appeals you’re your notes] control the 1988 campaigns on both sides. In addition to the ads mentioned in the lessons, you might want to take a look at the Republican ad called “Revolving Door.” This airing of this ad is often considered a downward tipping point for the Dukakis campaign.

7. **POLITICAL ADS IN THE INTERNET AGE:** The 2008 election took campaign advertising to a new level with the first full-fledged use of Internet campaigning. Go to this link: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008>. While there is no lesson on the livingroomcandidate.org web site that addresses this, you can use your knowledge of what we have talked about in class this semester to do the following. **For this assignment, use ONLY the ads labeled “web”.**

- Compare and contrast two ads—one for Obama and one for McCain—in terms of their images and their themes.
 - i. Obama launched his Internet campaign with the “Yes, we can” ad (the second one in). What symbols and images does Obama use? How do the symbols and images relate to the commercial’s theme?
 - ii. Now do the same thing for McCain’s ad, “Dr. No” (the second one in). What symbols and images does McCain use? How do the symbols and images relate to the commercial’s theme?
- Look at several other web campaign commercials from both sides. Because web ads could be longer than TV ads (cost factor), what conclusions can you reach about what content the candidates could include in their online ads that they could not in their TV ads?
- Who do you think the target audience was for the online campaign ads? How do you know this? How did the target audience influence the ads? What do you see in them that was not in the TV ads?