

<b>Lesson Title:</b> Examining Political Attack Ad Techniques	
<b>Name:</b> Elizabeth Howlett	<b>Subject Area:</b> Political Science
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Time Required</b>
11/12	3 x 50 minute classes
<b>Brief Lesson Description</b>	
In this lesson, students will be asked to examine the persuasion techniques used in Canadian political campaign attack ads. The purpose of this lesson is to alert students to the importance of critical thinking and informed decision-making in the democratic political process.	
<b>Provincial Standards/Outcomes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect a clear commitment to democratic beliefs and values</li> <li>• Promote the use of a variety of teaching methods and instructional methods</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to learn and practice the basic skills of participation from observation to advocacy</li> </ul>	
<b>NETS-S Technology Standards</b>	
4. Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources. c) Collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions	
<b>Technology Resources Needed (Hardware and Software)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SmartBoard to access and display YouTube to the class</li> <li>• Access to computers (preferably a one to one laptop ratio) for students to view YouTube links</li> <li>• PhotoStory software</li> </ul>	
<b>Procedure:</b>	
<p><i>Engagement Activity (10 minutes):</i></p> <p>This lesson will open by showing the class the Rick Mercer Report’s “Bono Attack Ad”. As this video is a parody, the attempts made to discredit the rock musician are obvious and comical. Students will be asked to comment on what tactics were used in this video to attack Bono; the teacher can guide students to consider the narrator’s tone of voice, questions posed, quotes cited, the lighting, etc. Students can discuss in pairs to draft a list of techniques used in the “attack ad” which can then be compiled to make a larger class list.</p> <p><i>Learning Activity (40 minutes):</i></p> <p>During this class students will be asked to watch the following attack ads available on YouTube:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Bob Rae wants to be Prime Minister” – Conservative Party</li> <li>• “Health Risk” – Liberal Party</li> <li>• “Just visiting” – Conservative Party</li> <li>• “Soldiers with guns” – Liberal Party</li> <li>• “Stephen Harper’s Solution” – New Democratic Party</li> <li>• “They’ll go negative” – Conservative Party</li> </ul>	

- “Two Sides of the Same Coin” – Liberal Party

In groups of two or three, students will view and discuss the videos. They will be asked to record their initial reactions to the video (how did the ad make them feel about the individual presented in the video?) and their observations regarding the techniques used to cause those reactions (see attachment *Video Response Sheet*).

Once this activity has been completed, the groups will be asked to share with the class any common techniques they noticed among the videos.

At the end of the class, the teacher will show the Green Party’s “Change the Channel on Attack Ads” video. Students will be given 3-4 minutes to discuss the similarities and differences between this ad and the others they have watched. Then, students will be invited to discuss whether or not this should also be considered an attack ad.

*Application Activity (85 minutes):*

In the following class, students will be asked to use the techniques they observed in reviewing political attack ads to create an “attack ad” of their own. Using the PhotoStory software, students will choose fictional characters from popular T.V. shows, films, novels, etc. as the targets of their ads. They will have the option of working either individually or with a partner. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate how attack ads can be used to bend the truth, take information out of context and over-simplify situations to make any person seem undesirable. Students will have the full period to work on creating their PhotoStory attack ad. If they are unable to complete the task in class, they will be responsible for completing this assignment as homework.

The following class, students will present their “attack ads” to the class. After each presentation, students will have the opportunity to comment on their reactions to the ad.

*Wrap Up/Reflection (15 minutes):*

At the end of the class, there will be an open discussion on the importance of critically evaluating political campaign ads. The teacher will facilitate the conversation by posing questions such as “What key points should viewers keep in mind when watching campaign ads?” (who made the ad, what their motives are, etc.) and “Why do you think attack ads are so successful?” (individuals are not informed, do not do their own research, etc). The goal of the discussion is to have students come to the realization that political campaign ads are not a reliable source of information; responsible voters should consult a variety of sources in order to make informed decisions.

**Assessment Method:**

Students’ attack ad videos will be marked based on their Quality (3), Creativity (3) and use of Persuasion Techniques (3) as discussed in class for a total mark out of 9. Please see the attached *Fictional Attack Ad Rubric* for the marking scheme.

**YouTube Links:**

“Bob Rae wants to be Prime Minister” – Conservative Party:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXINVvAHfxE&feature=plcp>

“Bono Attack Ad” – Rick Mercer Report: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GloYc01otqc>

“Change the Channel on Attack Ads” – Green Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-GekKKNUTU>

“Health Risk” – Liberal Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP1qHX7qOeg>

“Just visiting” – Conservative Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSgHmbh7ZVY>

“Soldiers with guns” – Liberal Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMsqEph7a8I>

“Stephen Harper’s Solution” – New Democratic Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIH-dknpjVQ>

“They’ll go negative” – Conservative Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsfcoXHARAU>

“Two Sides of the Same Coin” – Liberal Party: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-QSgRfjBDs&feature=relmfu&noredirect=1>

## References

Journell, W. (2009). Using YouTube to teach presidential election propaganda: Twelve representative videos. *Social Education*, 7(72), 325-363. Retrieved from <http://publications.socialstudies.org/se/7307/7307325.pdf>

**Video Response Sheet**

<b>Video</b>	<b>Initial Reactions</b>	<b>Techniques Observed</b>
“Bob Rae wants to be Prime Minister” – Conservative Party		
“Health Risk” – Liberal Party		
“Just visiting” – Conservative Party		
“Soldiers with guns” – Liberal Party		

<p>“Stephen Harper’s Solution” – New Democratic Party</p>		
<p>“Two Sides of the Same Coin” – Liberal Party</p>		
<p>“They’ll go negative” – Conservative Party</p>		
<p>“Two Sides of the Same Coin” – Liberal Party</p>		

**Fictional Attack Ad Rubric**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Creativity</b>	Work demonstrates the incorporation of unique ideas and means of expression.	Work demonstrates the incorporation of some unique ideas and means of expression.	Work demonstrates few or no unique ideas or means of expressions.
<b>Quality</b>	Completed work is well polished. Sound is clear and images are of good quality. Ideas are very clearly communicated.	Completed work is fairly-well polished. Sound is fairly clear and images are clean. Ideas are clearly communicated.	Work appears to be incomplete or hurried. Sound is difficult to hear and images are disorganized. Ideas are not clearly communicated.
<b>Use of Techniques Discussed in Class</b>	Incorporated many different techniques (tone, lighting, text, imagery, sound, etc.) to create the attack ad	Used two to three techniques (tone, lighting, text, imagery, sound, etc.) to create the attack ad.	Few or no techniques used to create the attack ad.

**Total Mark:            /9**