



Campaign Ad Strategies



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In this activity, students will learn about strategies used by media specialists who piece together campaign advertisements; analyze real presidential campaign advertisements to determine purpose, point of view, and authorship; then create a campaign ad for a state or national candidate. Teachers of younger students might want to link the activity to a piece of children's literature such as "*Duck for President*" and have the students create ads for "Duck" or "Farmer Brown."

Audience: primarily intermediate to high school.

Time Needed: 2 class periods.

Resources needed:

- Computer with Internet connection and LCD projector or access to a computer lab.

Recommended Lesson Preparation

Visit the Living Room Candidate Website at www.livingroomcandidate.org and Stanford University's Political Communication Lab at pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns/2008 to familiarize with the resources and operations of the sites.

Procedures

1. Ask students...
 - A. if any of them has seen campaign ads for the upcoming election.
 - B. to estimate what percentage of the American people they think are influenced by campaign ads on television.
 - C. to describe any ads that they have seen and explain what strategies were used by those who created the ad.
2. Tell them that the purpose of today's lesson is to introduce them to strategies used by media specialists when they piece together campaign ads, so that they are able to recognize how others are trying to shape their thinking. Then tell them that their task at the end of the lesson will be to use the information they acquire from today's lesson to work in small groups piecing together a campaign ad for one of the candidates for state or national office.
3. Distribute copies of Handout 1: Analyzing Historic Campaign Ad Strategies. Tell students that they are going to watch three campaign ads from past presidential elections. Their task is to answer the three questions found on the handout as they watch each ad:

- A. What was the message in this ad?
 - B. What was the purpose of the ad?
 - C. What strategy did the creator of this ad use in this ad?
 - D. Who probably created this ad?
4. Students complete while watching ads. Visit Living Room Candidate at www.livingroomcandidate.org – show
 - A. 1988 1st Republican Ad entitled “Family/children.”
 - B. 1988 6th Republican Ad entitled “Tank Ride.”
 - C. 1964 2nd Democratic Ad entitled “Peace Little Girl – Daisy.”
 5. Clarify: Ask students to share their responses.
 6. Mini-Lecture: Campaign Ad Strategies Tell
 students that there are overarching general strategies used by media specialists in campaign advertising. Project a copy of Transparency 1 on the screen. Introduce students to the three campaign advertising strategies listed on the Transparency (showing and explaining one at a time): Define Your Candidate, Define Your Opponent, Define the Stakes in the Election.
 7. Historic Application: Ask students to think again about the three campaign ads they just viewed. Ask which strategy was most prevalent in each ad:
 - A. to define a candidate, (1988 Family/Children)
 - B. to define an opponent, (1988 Tank Ride) or
 - C. to define the stakes in the election. (Peace Little Girl – Daisy).
 8. Create Ads. Place students in groups of three to five. Assign each group to a candidate for office (e.g., John McCain, Barack Obama, Sarah Palin, Joe Biden, or perhaps Duck v. Farmer Brown for younger students). Ask each group to design a campaign advertisement for their candidate using one of the media strategies they learned about in this lesson. Tell them that they are to create their ads in the form of a 30- to 60-second skit that they will act out in front of class. Note that each ad must have a title.
 9. Present Ads. Have the students present their ads (skits) in front of the class. Distribute copies of Handout 2: Analyzing Classroom Campaign Ad Strategies. Ask the rest of the class to answer the questions on the chart for each ad that is presented. Go over their responses at the conclusion of each skit.
 10. Contemporary Application: Stanford University’s Political Communication Lab at pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns/2008 contains scores of ads from the 2008 election season. Distribute copies of Handout 3: Analyzing Classroom Campaign Ad Strategies. Ask student to choose two to three McCain ads and two to three Obama ads and use the questions on Handout 3 to analyze the strategies used by media specialist in the 2008 election. Suggest that they look at some early ads and some recent ads to see if strategies are changing over time as we draw closer to the election.

Handout 1

Analyzing Historic Campaign Ad Strategies



Name: _____

Ad	What was the message in this ad?	What was the purpose of the ad?	What strategy did the creator of this ad use in this ad?	Who probably created this ad?
1988 "Family/children"				
1988 "Tank Ride"				
1964 "Peace Little Girl – Daisy"				

Transparency 1

Campaign Strategies

Strategy 1: Define Your Candidate

Most important thing for your campaign to do is to define your candidate BEFORE the other side defines your candidate. Show people what is good about your candidate before the other side shows what they think is bad about your candidate.

Strategy 2: Define the Opponent

Explain what is bad about the other candidate before the other side gets a chance to convince people that he or she is a better candidate.

Strategy 3: Define the Stakes

Explain why the election is so important. What bad thing will happen if your candidate is not elected? Make people nervous over the idea of voting for someone other than the person you want elected.

Handout 2

Analyzing Classroom Campaign Ad Strategies



Name: _____

Title of Ad	What was the message in this ad?	What was the purpose of the ad?	What strategy did the creator of this ad use in this ad?	Who probably created this ad?

Handout 3

Analyzing Contemporary Campaign Ad Strategies



Name: _____

Title of Ad	What was the message in this ad?	What was the purpose of the ad?	What strategy did the creator of this ad use in this ad?	Who probably created this ad?