

MEDIA & POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

SS.7.CG.2.9 Analyze media and political communications and identify examples of bias, symbolism and propaganda.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.7.C.2.11
 - Changed from “Analyze media and political communications (bias, symbolism, propaganda).” to “Analyze media and political communications and identify examples of bias, symbolism and propaganda.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
 - No changes
- Benchmark Clarification Changes
 - No changes
- Vocabulary Changes
 - No changes

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. Media and Political Communication and their Impact on Public Opinion
2. The Role of the Media in Election Campaigns
3. Presidential Campaign Slogans

1. Media and Political Communications and their Impact on Public Opinion

The public learns most of its information about government from the media. Scholars suggest that the media act as a “black box” between the public and government. The image of the “black box” is fitting; individuals cannot see what is between them and what is on the other side. The public must trust the information that they receive through the media as they have no real means to verify it. The “black box” metaphor also works in reverse; government and political entities such as political parties, candidates and interest groups know that the media is reporting on their activities. Being aware of the media’s presence shapes their behavior. Individuals on both sides of this relationship depend on the media to receive or transmit information. The information transmitted through the media, and by government and other political institutions such as interest groups, candidates and political parties, is all understood as political communication.

The role of the media in presenting information is often not balanced—the media may present information in a way that is favors one perspective (“bias”), advocates a clear point of view or action (“propaganda”), or references or presents images to serve as information shortcuts (“symbolism”).

Media bias may take two forms. One form of bias involves the information shared with the public. It is impossible for the media to report all information about which the public has no direct connection; thus, the media chooses what to report on and how much information to share about that news item. Another form of media bias focuses on how information is presented to the public. For example, a media story on poverty may show members of a specific race, gender, age or ethnic group as being impoverished, which may impact how the public reacts to news stories about poverty because public perceptions about poverty may be shaped by their opinions about the impoverished persons portrayed in the news story. Bias may also be demonstrated in the importance placed on a news item such as placing a news story on the front page of a newspaper, or leading with that story on a televised news program.

Propaganda is a way for government and political entities to shape or motivate political action or public opinion. For example, government may use public information campaigns to bring about certain behaviors such as during World War I when the federal government sponsored a campaign to encourage the public to buy liberty bonds to fund the war effort.

Symbols provide the public with information shortcuts; they often replace text. Symbols may also bias public opinion and serve as propaganda tools. For example, “U.S.” is often used to represent “United States”. “United States” is also represented as an older white male dressed in clothing with red and white stripes, and white stars on a blue background (the colors, symbols and patterns of the American flag). This “person”, “Uncle Sam” is a symbol of patriotism toward the United States and has been used to encourage individuals to fulfill civic responsibilities such as registering for the draft, paying taxes and voting.

In transmitting information to the public, political entities use the media to shape information that includes bias, symbolism and propaganda when sharing information with the public. These communication methods impact public opinion and political behavior; how the public learns information impacts the public's reaction.

2. The Role of the Media in Election Campaigns

The media also play a key role in transmitting information sponsored by candidates, political parties, interest groups and individuals during election campaigns. Political advertising focuses on influencing voting behavior, raising money, and motivating other political action. These organizations and individuals pay media outlets to advertise their messages. Campaign advertising gives candidates, interest groups and political parties the opportunity to control their message.

Campaign commercials serve as useful tools for understanding candidate strategies. Information provided by commercials is shown through the substance of, and the approach used, to convey messages. For example, some candidates may emphasize theirs or their opponent's policy positions while other candidates will choose to focus on personal characteristics. These strategic decisions are critical because they create one key lens through which voters process campaign related information. Information generated by campaigns and disseminated through commercials impacts several election-related decisions: whether to register to vote, whether to vote, how to vote, and whether and how much time or money to donate to a campaign organization, political party or interest group.

Most campaign-related advertising is available where there are the most consumers. There are far more television consumers than there are radio, Internet, newspaper or newsmagazine consumers. Thus, far more campaign-related advertising is found on television than in any other medium. Among non-television media, radio and the Internet are far more often used as campaign advertising outlets than are newspapers or news magazines. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, have grown in importance as campaign advertising media.

Televised campaign advertising spots were first aired in 1952. The cost and use of television advertising has grown exponentially since then resulting in shorter television spots. Critics argue that shorter advertisements contain less information and a greater emphasis on entertaining viewers, both of which compromise and bias the information found in these advertisements.

3. Presidential Campaign Slogans

The following table provides some of the more memorable campaign slogans from 1840-2020. Available at: <http://www.presidentsusa.net/campaignslogans.html>

Campaign	Candidate	Slogan
1840	William Henry Harrison	Tippecanoe and Tyler Too
1844	James K. Polk	54-50 or Fight
1844	James K. Polk	Reannexation of Texas and Reoccupation of Oregon
1844	Henry Clay	Who is James K. Polk?
1848	Zachary Taylor	For President of the People
1856	John C. Fremont	Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Speech, Free Men, and Fremont
1860	Abraham Lincoln	Vote Yourself a Farm
1864	Abraham Lincoln	Don't swap horses in the middle of the stream
1884	Grover Cleveland	Blaine, Blaine, James G. Blaine, The Continental Liar from the State of Maine
1884	James Blaine	Ma, Ma, Where's my Pa, Gone to the White House, Ha, Ha, Ha

1888	Benjamin Harrison	Rejuvenated Republicanism
1896	William McKinley	Patriotism, Protection and Prosperity
1900	William McKinley	A Full Dinner Pail
1916	Woodrow Wilson	He Kept us Out of War
1920	Warren G. Harding	Return to Normalcy
1920	Warren G. Harding	Cox and Cocktails
1924	Calvin Coolidge	Keep Cool with Coolidge
1928	Herbert Hoover	A Chicken in Every Pot and a Car in Every Garage
1952	Dwight Eisenhower	I Like Ike
1956	Dwight Eisenhower	Peace and Prosperity
1960	Richard Nixon	For the Future
1964	Lyndon Johnson	The Stakes are Too High for you to Stay Home
1964	Barry Goldwater	In your Heart you Know He's Right
1968	Richard Nixon	Nixon's the One
1976	Gerald Ford	He's Making us Proud Again
1976	Jimmy Carter	Not Just Peanuts
1976	Jimmy Carter	A Leader, For a Change
1980	Ronald Reagan	Are you Better off Than you Were Four Years Ago?
1984	Ronald Reagan	It's Morning Again in America
1984	Walter Mondale	America Needs a Change
1988	George Bush	Kinder, Gentler Nation
1992	Bill Clinton	Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow
1992	Bill Clinton	Putting People First
1992	Ross Perot	Ross for Boss
1996	Bill Clinton	Building a Bridge to the 21 st Century
1996	Bob Dole	The Better Man for a Better America
2000	Al Gore	Prosperity and Progress
2000	Al Gore	Prosperity for America's Families
2000	George W. Bush	Compassionate Conservatism
2000	George W. Bush	Leave no Child Behind
2000	George W. Bush	Real Plans for Real People
2000	George W. Bush	Reformer with Results
2000	Ralph Nader	Government of, by, and for the People...not the Monied Interests
2004	John Kerry	Let America be America Again
2004	George W. Bush	Yes, America Can!
2008	John McCain	Country First
2008	Barack Obama	Hope
2008	Barack Obama	Yes We Can!
2012	Barack Obama	Forward
2012	Mitt Romney	Believe in America
2016	Donald Trump	Make America Great Again
2016	Hillary Clinton	I'm With Her
2016	Hilary Clinton	Stronger Together
2020	Donald Trump	Keep America Great
2020	Donald Trump	Promises Made, Promises Kept
2020	Joe Biden	Build Back Better
2020	Joe Biden	No More Malarkey
2020	Joe Biden	Unite for a Better Future

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What types of communication techniques and methods are used in media and political communication? How can these techniques impact public opinion?		
BENCHMARK		
SS.7.CG.2.9 Analyze media and political communications and identify examples of bias, symbolism and propaganda.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will understand and analyze how bias, symbolism, and propaganda are used in media and political communication.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will use scenarios to identify bias, symbolism and propaganda. Students will evaluate how bias, symbolism and propaganda can impact public opinion. 		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bandwagon, bias, card stacking, glittering generalities, media, name calling, plain folks, political communication, propaganda, symbolism, testimonial, transfer 		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Primary source analysis	Defining terms in context	Collaborative learning
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPCA television commercial video (external link) Pepsi television commercial video (external link) Nike print advertisement image (external link) Gatorade print advertisement image (external link) Presidential Campaign Logos images (external link) Ike for President political commercial video (external link) Bear political commercial video (external link) Media and Political Communication reading Understanding Methods of Media and Political Communication activity sheet Except for Those of Us Who Are Above It political cartoon image 		

- Cartoon Analysis Worksheet (external link; 2 copies per student)
- It's Still a Representative Form of Government - They Represent Us political cartoon image
- Uncle Sam Poster image
- Poster Analysis Worksheet (2 copies per student)
- Be Patriotic image
- We're All in the Army Now image
- Bonds or Bondage image
- Abraham Lincoln image
- Be a Regular Fellow image
- Keep Old Glory Forever Free image
- Join the Parade of Winners image
- Additional Poster Questions slide

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.7.V.1.1- Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To begin this lesson, break up students into small groups of 3-4 participants and assign each group an advertisement to view. These can vary from commercials on television or an advertisement in a magazine or online. Below are some examples that can be used but finding new or relevant content may be more engaging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “SPCA television commercial” ■ “Pepsi television commercial” ■ “Nike print advertisement” ■ “Gatorade print advertisement” Provide students time to watch and examine their advertisement. Then have them write down their thoughts on the following questions: Do you like the commercial/advertisement? How does it make you feel after viewing it? Does the commercial convince you to do something? Why or why not? Engage in a whole class discussion using the questions, having students share group by group so that all different types of media have been shared. Next, as a whole class, examine some political advertisements. Project these “Presidential Campaign Logos” from the 4president.org website. Slowly scroll down the page so that students can view the presidential campaign logos from 2020 – 1960. While scrolling, ask students to share out any similarities they see between all of the logos (red, white, blue, stars, flags). Pose the following questions for discussion: Why do you think candidates use the colors red, white, and blue and stars and stripes in their logos? What message do you think they are trying to convey by using these colors and images? Is there a feeling or emotion that the logos convey? Teacher Note: Allow these questions to serve as a brainstorm as the logos will be revisited later in the lesson. Next watch the “Ike for President” 1952 political commercial from Dwight Eisenhower and the “Bear” 1984 political commercial from Ronald Reagan. Teacher Note: Students may need background information on the Cold War and the bear/Soviet symbolism. Pose the following questions for discussion: Why do you think candidates might use songs? What message do you think they are trying to convey by using the images chosen? Is there a feeling or emotion that the commercials invoke? Lead students to the understanding that similar techniques are used in media and political communication to convey messages or convince the audience to think or feel a certain way. Pass out the “Media and Political Communication” reading and the “Understanding Methods of Media and Political Communication” activity sheet. Explain to students that their task is to read for purpose in order to define the key terms as they appear in context in the text. Review the directions on the activity sheet. Instruct students to mark the text that will help them define each term on the activity sheet and then write the <u>definition</u> in the box next to the word and find <u>examples</u> from the reading. Teacher Note: Students may leave the ‘impact on public opinion’ box blank for now Provide time for students to complete the reading and activity sheet independently. Project the “Presidential Campaign Logos” from the 4president.org website again and ask students to identify the form of communication that is exemplified. (symbolism)

	14. Instruct students to write a sentence explaining how the campaign logos use symbolism on their activity sheet in the ‘examples’ box under symbolism. Have the students share their sentences with a partner and edit their answers, if needed.
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DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students take out their “Understanding Methods of Media and Political Communication” activity sheet from Day 1. 2. Pose the following question to the students and instruct them to respond by writing a summary sentence in the ‘Impact on Public Opinion’ box under <u>bias</u>: Many Americans get their news from the newspaper, whether print or digital. What might be the impact on public opinion if a newspaper’s front page/story has a bias? Continue completing the box on the Impact on Public Opinion under <u>symbolism</u> by asking: How can using symbols change a person’s opinion? 3. Project the “Except for Those of Us Who Are Above It” political cartoon from Herbert Block. 4. Ask students to identify the type of document they are viewing. 5. Pass out the “Cartoon Analysis Worksheet” from the National Archives. <i>Teacher Note:</i> When making copies, if using for a print activity, copy the same worksheet on both sides to use again later in the lesson. 6. Share with students that this cartoon was created in 1977 in reaction to the CIA and FBI being investigated for keeping Americans under surveillance. The artist, Herb Block, commented, <i>Unwarranted secret operations and snooping in the interest of ‘security’ have contributed to making Americans feel less secure.</i> 7. Complete the “Cartoon Analysis Worksheet” as a whole class. 8. Ask students to consider the following questions for discussion: What types of communication are used in this cartoon? (bias and symbolism) Based on what you know about the background of this cartoon, what is the bias in this cartoon? What symbols are being used? 9. Instruct students to write a summary sentence explaining the bias in the cartoon at the bottom of their worksheet. 10. Place students into pairs and pass out another “Cartoon Analysis Worksheet”. 11. Pass out copies of the “It’s Still a Representative Form of Government – They Represent Us” political cartoon. 12. Share with students the following information about the political cartoon. There is a concern in the United States regarding soft money and the ability for national political party organizations to raise unlimited funds for political advertisements. Some believe that this leads to elections being ‘bought’ by donors who give the most money in return for favors. Herb Block, the artist, has stated <i>that there is nothing free about sales of public office to high bidders, who buy and pay for elections and influence.</i> 13. Instruct the pairs to complete the worksheet and write a summary sentence at the bottom of the worksheet explaining the bias and/or symbolism found in this cartoon. 14. Share out responses from the worksheet and review bias and symbolism in political cartoons.
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DAY 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project the “Uncle Sam Poster” and have students answer: What do they see? Why would they use Uncle Sam? Do you think this would be used to persuade young men to join the Army?
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2. Have students share out their answers.
3. Pass out copies of the “Poster Analysis Worksheet” adapted from the National Archives.
Teacher Note: When making copies, if using for a print activity, copy the same worksheet on both sides to use again later in the lesson.
4. Explain to students that government agencies used propaganda techniques for different areas of need throughout history but especially during World War I and World War II.
5. Refer students back to their reading and ask a student to share out the difference between the terms bias and propaganda.
6. Project the “Food Will Win The War Poster” from the National Archives.
7. Complete the “Poster Analysis Worksheet” as a whole class.
8. Engage students in a discussion by using the following questions and instructing them to take notes on the bottom of their “Poster Analysis Worksheet”: Which propaganda techniques are used in this poster? (transfer, plain folks, glittering generalities) What emotion is being conveyed? How might this poster impact a viewer and public opinion during the war?
9. Place students into pairs.
10. Pass out copies of the following posters, one for each pair of students.
Teacher Note: Based on the number of students in your class, some posters will be repeated.
 - “Be Patriotic” (transfer, glittering generalities, name calling)
 - “We’re All in the Army Now” (bandwagon, transfer)
 - “Bonds or Bondage” (card stacking, transfer)
 - “Abraham Lincoln” (testimonial)
 - “Be a Regular Fellow” (plain folks)
 - “Keep Old Glory Forever Free” (transfer)
 - “Join the Parade of Winners” (bandwagon, glittering generalities)
11. Instruct students to complete another “Poster Analysis Worksheet” for their assigned poster with their partner. In addition, project the “Additional Poster Questions” slide and instruct students to answer these questions on the bottom of their poster: What propaganda technique(s) is being used in the poster? What is the intended emotion this poster is trying to convey? How might this poster impact public opinion during the time this poster was released?
12. Return student attention to the front of the class. Project each poster and ask the students assigned to each poster to share the propaganda technique for their assigned poster and the impact the poster might have on public opinion. Instruct students to take notes on their “Understanding Methods of Media and Political Communication” activity sheet from Day 1.
13. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):
Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using one of the following prompts:
Prompt 1
Using what you have learned from this lesson, explain how bias, symbolism, and propaganda can be used to impact public opinion.
Prompt 2
Explain how bias, symbolism and propaganda impact how information is used in media and political communication and why it is important to be aware of these techniques.

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
bandwagon	propaganda technique encouraging the viewer to like something or someone because everyone else does
bias	a preference, opinion or attitude that favors one way of thinking or feeling over another
card stacking	propaganda technique involving the use of showing one-sided information
glittering generalities	propaganda technique using short phrases or words to promote positive feelings or emotions
media	the plural form of the word “medium,” refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio, newspapers and the Internet (web) are different types of media. The term can also be used to describe news organizations as a whole group.
name calling	propaganda technique using negative words to associate with a product or person
plain folks	propaganda technique conveying that a candidate is a “regular” person, just like everyone else
political communication	the use of media to convey messages or information related to government issues, campaigns or public offices
propaganda	the method of spreading ideas or information for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person
symbolism	the use of something to represent ideas or qualities
testimonial	propaganda technique involving the use of a celebrity or spokesperson to speak on behalf of a product or candidate
transfer	propaganda technique involving the use of symbols to convey a message or feeling

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- N/A

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Understanding Methods of Media and Political Communication activity sheet

Sample Answers: Cartoon Analysis Worksheet: Except for Those of Us Who Are Above It

Sample Answers: Cartoon Analysis Worksheet: It's Still A Representative Government– They Represent Us

Sample Answers: Poster Analysis Worksheets

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

SOURCES

SPCA television commercial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gspElv1yvc>

Pepsi television commercial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyY15Jkkg2A>

1984 Ronald Reagan television commercial: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1984/bear>

Nike print advertisement:

<https://vladimerbotsvadze.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/advertisement-by-nike-what-is-the-secret-of-speed-ask-the-master-justdoit-nike/>

Gatorade print advertisement: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/taekwondo>

1952 Eisenhower television commercial: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952>

Campaign logo website: <http://www.4president.org/>

Bias Information - http://indykids.net/main/teachers/classroom_workshops/, Accessed February 2013 and

http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Bias_News_Sources.pdf

Symbolism - <http://arch.k12.ar.us/apush/files/Assignments/Political%20Cartoon%20symbols.pdf>, Accessed February 2013

Propaganda - <http://www.schooljournalism.org/recognizing-types-of-propaganda-in-advertising/>, Accessed February 2013 and <http://mason.gmu.edu/~amcdonal/Propaganda%20Techniques.html>, Accessed February 2013

Political Cartoons from Library of Congress – <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/herblocks-history/one.html> and <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/herblocks-history/hare.html>

National Archives Political Cartoon Analysis Worksheet -

https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet_former.pdf

National Archives Poster Analysis Worksheet -

https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/poster_analysis_worksheet_former.pdf

National Archives Posters -

- Uncle Sam <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsc.03521/>
- Food will win the War <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/512499>
- Be Patriotic sign your country's pledge to save the food <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/512497>
- We're All in the Army Now <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/533998>

- Bonds or Bondage. Everybody Every Pay day. 10 Percent.
<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/534069>
- Abraham Lincoln <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/534342>
- Be a Regular Fellow <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/534107>
- Keep Old Glory Forever Free, Buy More Bonds for Victory
<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/534098>
- Join the Parade of Winners <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/534238>