

Growing Voters and Election 2016: High School

Activity Title: **Who Won the Debate? Students Cut-and-Paste Coverage**

Overview

Pundits and news outlets analyze the debate by using excerpts. Consider what candidate expression is captured, which excerpt from which answer, which quip or verbal shot at an opponent is carried in the news? Does it show one candidate struggling and the other looking commanding? Does the news replay an equal number of “gotcha’s”? In this activity, students will make those choices to deliberately construct their own different version of debate coverage.

Following a candidate debate, students can use the internet to locate a variety of clips from debate coverage. Different student groups can assemble excerpts from the coverage to produce competing versions, suggesting multiple interpretations of who prevailed.

Students can create versions of debate coverage using video excerpts, audio clips for radio, or text for newspapers and online posting. Playing these competing versions of who won the debate in class creates a learning opportunity for students to see that news coverage is constructed to create a message.

Through free and easily accessible online tools, students can re-construct their own versions of the debate.

Objectives

Upon completion of this learning module, students will be able to better identify constructed messages, gain media literacy, and see behind the role that media play in influencing public views on the candidates. Students will understand the issues in the campaign and be able to reconstruct a debate of key issues.

Example of Relevant Education Standards:

Evaluate the ways in which public opinion can be used to influence and shape public policy. Identify the sources, evaluate the justification, and analyze the implications of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Activity Instructions:

1. The instructor can collaborate with the class to identify how best to divide into teams and for what intentions. This can depend on how much technology is available, class size, and time available for this activity.

For example,

- Divide the groups by platform – TV coverage, radio, or text news;
- Divide by candidate (two candidates and groups for each win, lose, or other message);
- Divide teams by intentional messaging, i.e. MSNBC version versus Fox News

2. Students should seek out debate footage from a previous election and watch the interpretation and re-interpretation in the coverage to see how it is done. Google searches will produce these as will YouTube channel searches.

3. Once put into groups, each student team needs to design its intentions for its construction of the debate material. Students will peruse an assortment of online video footage and editorial commentaries as the basis for their research. They can watch, listen, or read various excerpts available online, and/or watch the entire debate online.

4. Identify key arguments and points which each candidate tried to make about her/himself and against the other candidate. Identify key issues and where the candidate stands (or appears to associate with). Students can look to understand how the assigned political party wants the messages of the key issues to be interpreted and explained.

5. Student groups design what they want to cut and paste to create “their” version of debate coverage. Each group should plot out what footage they need for their re-construction of the debate and then find and capture the needed clips, excerpts in the appropriate format.

6. Using the tools best suited for the medium students are working in (video, print, audio) students **can edit together their selected messages** using debate footage and commentaries. See the free online tools noted on the website GrowingVoters.org On Mac computers, iMovie editing and on PCs, Microsoft Movie Maker is available and straightforward to high school students and higher level students.

- Prepare a guiding script (shooting, text or audio)
- Are photos or graphics needed
- If there is voiceover, write and record the narration to edit in

7. Instructors have various online options for how students can submit their work. It is recommended that students upload their materials online. Classroom servers will work well for this but if not available, then password-protected video and audio sites will also serve the purpose. Tech tip: these files are likely to be too large to email and uploading to the internet is a best practice not only for storage but for playing in class.

8. Design this activity to culminate with a critical analysis assignment: a class discussion and/or written assignment comparing the student-constructed messages and versions of the debate coverage. Ask essential questions like what this exercise has taught students about the role of the media?

**Note that advance preparation can be assigned outside the classroom; consider using a BLOG for each team to keep track of their ideas and their work.

Materials:

Internet Resources: http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com/Growing_Voters

Editing tools list at GrowingVoters.org

Additional Ideas:

1. Construct coverage of each presidential candidate debate and compare the set.
2. Consider doing this activity with the Vice-Presidential debate and compare coverage with presidential debate(s).
3. Show video / play radio podcast to other classes; share online and collect reactions.
4. Excerpt from student-constructed debate coverage to make into campaign commercials (pro or con a candidate.)