

## 30 seconds to the Presidency (How to Write a Presidential Television Campaign Advertisement)

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### About this Lesson:

*The final objective of this lesson is to teach students how to use their words, music, graphics and creativity to make a political television commercial. This lesson has a great deal of flexibility. If you are teaching grades 5-7, you can do this lesson as a group activity. If you are teaching grades 8-12, you can do this lesson as an individual activity or group activity.*

*In this lesson, students will learn how to write a campaign television commercial that will convey their candidates' message. In doing so, students will follow a step by step process. That process includes researching a Presidential candidate, learning how to write a topic specific advertisement, using past campaign television advertisements as a guide, making a presidential political television commercial and then comparing negative and positive commercials on voting results. Students will show their advertisements to the class and based on the content of the commercial, the class will vote as to the most convincing advertisement.*

**Grade(s) Level:**

Elementary

**Classroom Time:**

\*\*Dependent upon the teacher\*\*

Suggested classroom time:  
3 hours or class periods**Handouts**Television Commercial Requirements  
Storyboard Template  
Storyboard Requirements  
Television Commercial Assessment  
Candidate information packet**Constitution Connections**

Amendment #1

**Background**

Professional campaign advertisers are paid substantial amount of money to promote a candidate for President. In one week during the 2008 Presidential primary campaign season, Barack Obama spent \$600,000 on campaign commercials and John McCain spent \$400,000. The precedent for this began in 1956 with parties allocating 40% of their party's campaign costs to television commercials. Before 1952 candidates spent their campaign funds on newspaper advertisements, campaign buttons, bumper stickers and radio advertisements. It wasn't until television became a popular and convenient communication tool in people's living rooms that words and pictures used together were a "package" that promoted a Presidential candidate even more. The quality of television commercials has also changed. Early commercials were in black and white and had the candidate appear himself talking about the issues, similar to a press conference or a lecture. Music has always been used to catch people's attention. Kennedy used a catchy tune to get attention, while Johnson used scary, foreboding music to scare people. Overall, the spoken word, either positive or negative still remains the main focus of television commercials. As television evolved and color was introduced, campaign advertisements used primary colors to depict the more attractive parts of a candidate and dark colors to depict the unattractive parts of opponents. In today's society, it is the tone or message of a television commercial that can sway voters toward or away from a candidate.

**Objectives**

Students will:

- Utilize databases and primary sources to research presidential candidates
- Identify how presidential campaigns create commercials and evaluate the role they play in presidential elections
- Design and create a 30 second television campaign commercial using storyboards, sources and technology

**Standards**

From the National Council for the Social Studies  
<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>

- **V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions:** *Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.*
- **VI: Power, Authority and Governance:** *Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.*
- **VIII. Science, Technology, and Society:** *Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology, and society.*

## Activity

### Warm-up Activity:

1. Students will watch the Preschool Political Ad on You Tube:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdAjGXFJw3s>
2. Preschool Ad #2 on You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB5WypKQqCw>
3. Lead a discussion on the two political ads. Discussion topics include:
  - Differences in the advertisements
  - The positive and negative aspects of the advertisements
  - What the issues were in the advertisements
  - What color, graphics, images and music were used.
  - Which ad was most effective?
4. During discussion, write down the different types of wording and visuals that were generated.
5. This list will remain up in the classroom to add to as the project evolves.

### In-Class Activity:

6. Tell students that they will be designing a television commercial for one of the major party candidates.
7. Separate students into two groups.
  - One group will be the television commercial designers for the Republican candidate for President; the other group will be the television commercial designers for the Democratic candidate for President.
  - These groups are to be drawn on a random basis.
  - Differentiated Instruction: This activity can be done individually with the same requirement
8. Give each group the handouts with information about their candidate (issue platform, past experiences, family, etc.)
  - Differentiated Instruction: For students in higher grades, students can be assigned the research of the candidates for homework
9. Give students an overview of the lesson: they will be instructed to read the information about their candidate, then decide what aspect or issue they want their commercial to be about, and then storyboard their commercial.
10. Have students read all the information about their candidate then give each group or student (depending on your age group and time availability) a storyboard to begin the process of putting together a television campaign advertisement.
  - Readings about candidates available on candidates websites([johnmccain.com](http://johnmccain.com) and [barackobama.com](http://barackobama.com))
  - Each group or student will receive guidelines for their storyboards.

11. Explain to students how to decide what they want their commercial to be about. Steps of the Writing Process:
  - Make a brainstorming list of all the positive characteristics of the candidate
  - Make a brainstorming list of all the negative characteristics of the candidate
  - Write the top 3 campaign issues and the candidate's beliefs on those issues
  - Decide the purpose of the campaign ad?
    - To attack the opposing side (negative)
    - To promote a campaign issue (positive or negative)
    - To highlight personal side of candidate (positive)
  - Find a tag line (3-7 word phrase that people can remember and easily repeat)
12. Students should complete a storyboard based on the guidelines given.
13. After students have a completed storyboard, they should transfer the information to a technology presentation (30 second commercial).
  - In doing so, students need to refer to the television commercial requirements for content and graphic information.
  - If your school does not have the technology needed( laptops and video cameras) then stop activity at storyboard phase or have students act it out
14. After the commercials are completed, each group or students should present their commercial to the class.
  - Every member of the class should complete the Television Commercial Assessment.

### Assessment-Options

- Students (either in a group or individually) will make a Presidential television campaign commercial. Teacher and classmates will evaluate television commercials. Commercials will be graded based on the provided rubric.
- Students could be asked to view a presidential campaign commercial that is airing on TV in their area. Then, have students write an analysis and evaluation of the commercial OR have students compare and contrast ads from the Obama and McCain campaigns.

## Storyboard Requirements

1. After deciding the type of commercial (negative or positive), purpose and audience of the commercial, the students need to put in order their “story”. The story should be sequential. This is the most difficult part of this activity and may take several storyboards before the technology section of the activity can begin.
2. Students should use free-hand drawings or pictures of the candidates on their storyboards.
3. The lines under the picture blocks are for students to explain the reasoning behind the block and to write any words that may be used. Students should put words they are using in the commercial in the block and words that will be spoken on the lines below the block.
4. Students should include as many of the colors and graphics that will be in the technology portion of the activity on the storyboard as possible

## Television Commercial Requirements

Requirement #1: Make the Decision to produce a Positive Political Commercial or a Negative Political Commercial.

Positive Advertisement:

Accentuate your candidates' positive characteristics. Images and music used should present your candidates strongest issues and attractiveness.

Negative Advertisement:

Accentuate your opponents' faults and issues of weakness. The images and music should present the opponent in an unfavorable manner.

Requirement #2: Using technology available, incorporate the following elements:

- Images of your candidate (positive)
- Images of your candidate's opponent (negative)
  
- Pleasant/Happy sounding music (positive)
- Low octave, unpleasant sounding music (negative)
  
- Bright primary colors (positive)
- Dark colors (negative)

Requirement #3: Incorporate words and phrases with pictures and music to highlight key points. Do not write sentences or paragraphs. The wording needs to be short and concise.

Requirement #4: Use a catch phrase (a 3 to 7 word phrase that is easy to remember and highlights your message.)

Requirement #5: Don't forget to include a line about your candidate approving your message at the end of your commercial. This is a requirement made by Congress.

## Television Commercial Assessment

Rate the following categories as to whether you feel the particular category added to the effectiveness of the advertisement

1 -Very Ineffective 2 – Ineffective 3 – Made No Difference 4 - Effective 5 - Very Effective

Final Ratings Score: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTIVE AD OR NEGATIVE AD	COLORS USED	PICTURES OR GRAPHICS USED	TYPE OF MUSIC USED	ISSUES
Describe:	Describe:	Describe:	Describe:	Describe:
Ratings Score	Ratings Score	Ratings Score	Ratings Score	Ratings Score

Question: Would you vote for this candidate based on this commercial? Yes or No  
Why or Why not?

Scoring Rubric: 25-30 – You are an advertising genius!! Your commercial made an impact on the voter

20-25 – Good Job!! You might not have convinced an independent voter, but you used the resources you had to make a good political commercial

15-20 – Good try

0-15 – So advertising is not your strong suit. Better luck next time