

Background Information before Examining Online Political Ads

Looking at online political advertisements requires students to use visual literacy skills to identify and explain the goal of propaganda techniques used in political advertisements posted on the Internet. These advertisements use an overabundance of propaganda techniques that can be easily identified and compared to the propaganda techniques used in the novel you've chosen to accompany this lesson. This comparison will help students gain a better understanding of the connection between their own society and the society depicted in novel. These activities will also help students become better evaluators of visual media and in turn become a better-informed participant in the democratic process.

The PBS election guide Web site "[By The People](#)" makes the following argument for why political advertisements should be looked at more carefully:

"The bottom line, then, is that it's important for citizens to look carefully at political ads. Certainly the truth or falsity and, regardless of 'truth', the deceptiveness of ad content is important to examine. Many newspapers and television analysis programs provide the citizen a good opportunity to learn more about the quality of the verbal content of political commercials. Although a majority of Americans are not aware of this, government closely controls the truth-value of national product advertising on television. But because of the principle of free speech, a principle protected by the U.S. Constitution, there is no control whatsoever on the content of a political commercial. Basically, a politician can say anything she or he wishes in a political ad. The only 'control' over content in a political ad is media and public response to that content."