



Media and Politics: Critical Inquiry

	<p><i>The Role of Media in Elections: Helping Students Understand Media's Influence</i></p> <p>by Frank Baker, media educator (Workshops available; contact me)</p> <p>©2004</p>	
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Questions for students to consider (from Project Vote Smart)

- What are the key messages communicated in each advertisement?
- Which type of ad was more memorable? Why?
- Which do you think would be most effective in convincing viewers to vote for (or against) a candidate?
- Did you learn from the ads? Did they help you to decide which candidate to support?
- What do all types have in common? Do they provide factual information or do they evoke an emotional response?
- During which programs do the ads play? What time of the day do you see the most ads?
- What are the limitations of a 30 second commercial?
- How important is a candidate's look in these ads? What type of image are they trying to create?
- If you were the campaign manager for a candidate for congress in your district, what type of ad would you try to create?

Resource: [Questions for Analyzing Ads](#) (CSPAN)

Examining Campaign Ads (from CSPAN)

By looking at campaign ads students can view a primary way in which candidates communicate their records, goals, or particular stances on issues to the electorate. Candidates may also use this format to

challenge the record or views of their opponent.

Watch/analyze campaign ads from current presidential candidates (**see links in the left column**)

Watch/analyze campaign ads from [previous presidential races](#).

1. What is the primary goal of the ad(s)? i.e. to support an issue, attack an opponent, tout a candidate's record, etc.
2. Describe the overall language/tone of the ad(s). Is the narrator a male, female, or the candidate? How does this language/tone affect the overall message? Does the use of a celebrity have any impact? If so, how?
3. Who sponsored/financed the ad? Was there a change in the tone of the ad based on who sponsored it? If so, how would you describe the difference?
4. What was your reaction to the ad(s)?
5. How do these ads compare to ads you may have seen in your district?
6. What are some of the visual techniques that are used in the ad(s)? i.e. camera angles, wording, color vs. black and white, etc. Do you think they are effective? Use examples from the ad(s) to illustrate your answer.

Extended Exercise

Pretend that you are a communications strategist for a campaign in your local district or state. Write a script and create a story board for a 30-second campaign ad for television. Keep in mind local issues that your candidate would like to take a position on. Or, if the candidate is running for re-election, there may be issues that a candidate has supported or opposed over his/her previous term(s).

from <http://www.c-span.org/classroom/govt/campaignads.asp>