

Persuasion Topics: Language and Context
Lesson Plan
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Scaffolding: This activity is part of my unit on persuasion, where students create a text in an oral or visual genre. These two activities can be used to support this project either in conjunction (shortened to fit a single class period) or as a two-day lesson on language and context factors in persuasion.

Part One: Language

Objective: Conduct a focalized discussion of language use in rhetoric, concentrating on use of word choice, tone and sentence phrasing/structure.

Method: At this point, students should have their master text chosen. They are to choose one line (1-2 sentences) that is particularly powerful in terms of language. If they haven't chosen a speech yet, choose just one that they like (maybe one from last week) and complete the same activity for practice. Analyze this word by word—why does it work, why were the words chosen, etc. 15 minutes to prepare, 15 minutes to share, 15 minutes to discuss. Try to answer, “why does word choice matter?” Look particularly for the composition and repetition from the initial presentation.

Part Two: Context

Objective: Consider how context affects oratory rhetoric, focusing on how choices stem from an analysis of purpose, audience and moment in time.

Method: Students should make a list or small graphic organizer of the “cultural moment” of their chosen speech, and in specific what influenced it in terms of historical context, audience, etc. Also try to include any specific language that acts as association. 15 minutes to prepare, 15 minutes to share, 15 minutes to discuss. Try to really focus on the idea of context and the “why” specific language (building on Wednesday’s discussion) matches with specific context. Make sure to hit on diversion/omission as well.