



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2010 Volume II: Persuasion in Democratic Politics

Educating Tomorrow's Orators

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by Adam Kubey

How do you persuade someone for positive results? The power of persuasion can be used for many goals, positive and negative, action and inaction, to inspire or to give someone to blame. The goal of this unit is to have students analyze the many parts of rhetoric, spoken and written and use the knowledge gained from understanding persuasive argument for positive goals.

Students will complete multiple mini lessons that are in this unit to complete this goal. First students will analyze their own autobiography to understand ethos. Then students will look at Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic National Convention Speech. This will be followed by looking at the art of rhetoric through historical documents by Aristotle, Cicero. Also students will analyze Robert Kennedy's speech after the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. to understand how speech can be used for peaceful purposes. Through these examples, students will use speech to make positive outcomes to potentially violent situations. Through word analysis, students will look at how key words contribute to speech, and last through analysis of decorum, or agreeability of the speaker with their audience by looking at non-verbal characteristics of speakers.

Students will gain an understanding of the art of rhetoric and become able orators for positive change.

(Developed for World History, grade 8; recommended for Social Studies and World History, grades 7-12)

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