

Lesson Plan 2

Propaganda Techniques

Students identify four different techniques of propaganda found in entertainment and advocacy

Rationale

Non-profit activists use propaganda to bring attention to their causes. Propaganda techniques are designed to attract and hold attention by activating strong emotions and promoting *either-or* thinking to create a sense of urgency. Propaganda can be a powerful tool for advocacy but the way people respond to propaganda can be unpredictable. Sometimes people have trouble recognizing and resisting propaganda techniques when strong emotional techniques block critical thinking.

Essential Question

- How may the techniques used in propaganda interfere with critical thinking?

Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Recognize four common techniques used in propaganda
- Analyze examples of contemporary propaganda in news advertising, public relations, entertainment, advocacy and education to identify how techniques have been used to construct the message
- Understand how and why these techniques may interfere with critical thinking
- Appreciate that people respond to propaganda in different ways and they are able to recognize and resist it

Preparation

Have a video projector and speakers available to display [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) and make copies of Worksheet 2.1 for all students.

Activity 2.1. “Kony 2012”

KONY 2012

View: <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/697>

It’s the viral YouTube sensation that rocked the Internet in the spring of 2012. You may want to watch this video in class or you can assign it for homework. Before introducing this lesson, [you may want to gain background information about the Kony 2012 case](#), which exploded on the American scene in 2012, attracting more than 120 million viewers in less than 30 days. Non-profit activist groups have never before achieved such visibility and success with a viral video.

Watch just the first five minutes of the video and ask students to share their feelings about what they have viewed. Ask:

How does this video make you feel? This video activates a sense of belonging to or joining something important and world-changing; it promotes sentimental feelings about childhood; positive emotions about the power of the Internet to connect people; and positive emotions about the value of children,

parents and the love between them. It cultivates curiosity about the filmmaker and about Jacob, the Ugandan boy

What does the filmmaker do to attract your attention? The filmmaker ignites our curiosity within the first 90 seconds when he says, "The next 27 minutes are an experiment, but in order for it to work, you have to pay attention." The scenes from the hospital room and the birth of his son are riveting and the images showing the child's life (including his playful filmmaking activities with special effects explosions) capture attention.

Activity 2.2. Recognizing Propaganda Techniques in KONY 2012

Read about the four propaganda techniques used in KONY 2012 on Worksheet 2.1. Use these questions to check for comprehension:

Q: Why is the KONY2012 video called the most viral video ever?

A: This YouTube video attracted more than 120 million viewers in just one week and generated \$32 million dollars in donations.

Q: This video activates people's feelings of pride. According to the article, how does it do this?

A: It puts the viewers on a pedestal, positioning them as heroes, by activating feelings of collective pride. Towards the end of the film, Russell says: "We have reached a crucial time in history, where what we do or don't do, right now, will affect every generation to come. Arresting Joseph Kony will prove that the world we live in has new rules... we are not just studying human history-- we are shaping it."

After viewing the KONY 2012 video and completing Worksheet 2.2, discuss these questions:

Q: Which of the four propaganda techniques was used most effectively in KONY2012?

A: Answers will vary. Encourage students to use reasoning and evidence from the text to support their ideas.

Q: Is the KONY2012 video beneficial or harmful?

A: Answers will vary. Encourage students to use reasoning and evidence from the text to support their ideas.

Activity 2.3 Propaganda in Entertainment

View: "The Interview" Film Trailer

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/698>

"The Interview" was a controversial Hollywood comedy that featured two lightweight celebrities who go to North Korea to interview and, with the help of the U.S. government, murder the head of the country, Kim Jong-Un. In December 2014, when the movie company, Sony, decided to cancel the release of the film after their company's computer systems had been hacked, the U.S. government blamed North Korea for the hacking and urged Sony to release the film.

Review the four propaganda techniques and encourage students to discuss how these techniques are used in this Hollywood entertainment film. Use pair-share discussion to help students generate ideas for how this form of propaganda may be interpreted differently by different audiences.

Discuss:

- What propaganda techniques are used?
- What were the unpredictable consequences of this film?
- How do these propaganda techniques interfere with critical thinking?
- Why does propaganda have unpredictable consequences?

Teacher Reflection

It's important to recognize four different strategies that are commonly used to influence our beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behavior. Both "The Interview" film and the KONY 2012 non-profit activism campaign activate strong emotions, respond to audience needs & values, simplify information & ideas, and attack opponents by creating an "us-vs-them" mentality. These forms of media have unpredictable consequences that can be both beneficial and harmful.

Evaluation

Students should be able to identify four propaganda techniques in entertainment and advocacy and know that public response to propaganda is unpredictable.