

ACTIVITY PLAN



Constructing Candidate Biography

! NOTE: Please read “How To Use These Materials” for additional support in teaching and adapting this media literacy activity.

Grade Level: High School and College

Objective Options:

- Students will analyze how the perspectives of filmmakers shape the history they construct.
- Students will reflect on what life experiences might serve to create a good leader.
- Students will compare the points of view of two authors for how they treat candidate qualifications to be president.
- Students will cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of an author’s message.
- Students will identify what values are implied in representations of candidate biographies.

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| Standards Options | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| C3 Framework Social Studies Concepts | D2.His.3.9-12 |
| | D2.His.6.9-12 |
| Common Core ELA Standards | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 |
| | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 |
| | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 |
| | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 |

Vocabulary:

biography, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, film

Media Type(s): video



*Republican Convention
Trump Biographical Film, 2016
3:26 min*



*Democratic Convention
Clinton Biographical Film, 2016
3:15 min*

Preparation and Materials:

*All materials can be downloaded from the PLS website <http://www.projectlooksharp.org>

Preparation:

- Download and review the *How to Use Materials* section associated with this activity.

Materials for the Lesson:

- Two video clips

Additional Support:

- From the website, view [Media Decoding Examples](#) demonstrating classroom media analysis.
- Download the [Key Questions for Analysis](#) for supporting questions.
- [The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy](#) and the [Do-It-Yourself](#) online guide are both available from the homepage.

Time: 20-40 minutes (dependent on number of questions used)

Activity Procedures:

- Select among possible questions on the next page based on your objectives in teaching to social studies content and/or ELA/media literacy skills.
- Use the selected questions to lead students through a constructivist media decoding process of the two videos with informational text. Background information about the media documents is included at the bottom of the next page. Example student answers are included on the last page.

CONNECTIONS

Connections to *Media Construction of Presidential Campaigns* Lessons on Biography

1828 "The Hunters of Kentucky" Song
1840 Democratic Republican Party Newspaper Ad
1860 Lincoln/Hamlin Campaign Poster
1872 Grant "The Workingman's Banner"
1904 Parker "Jeffersonian Principles" Poster
1908 Commoner vs. Plutocrat Postcard
1952 Nixon "Checkers" Speech
1984 Time Covers Reagan "Man of the Year"
1992 Clinton "Journey" TV Commercial
2000 Republican Convention Bush Biographical Film
2000 Democratic Convention Gore Biographical Film
2004 Swift Boat Veterans for Truth TV Commercial
2008 John McCain Biographical Film
2008 Barack Obama Biographical Film

DECODING Q'S

Possible Questions for Media Document Decoding

Select among these based on your teaching objectives. Make questions document-based (i.e. According to this image or video...)

Social Studies

- How have the filmmakers constructed the biography to appeal to their target audience?
- How does the historical context of the 2016 election shape the narrative of each film?
- What does each film suggest regarding the qualities required to be a good leader?

ELA

- What evidence does the filmmaker give to support the candidacy of their subject?
- What additional information might you need to make an informed decision about this candidate's capacity to lead the country?
- What are some guidelines for discussion that enable civil and democratic discourse about a potentially divisive subject such as presidential candidate preferences?

Media Literacy

- What values are implied by these candidate biographies and what evidence in the document supports your answer?
- How does your own bias influence how you analyze each of these biographies?
- How might different people understand these biographies differently?

Follow up Evidence Questions & Comments

- Where do you see that?
- Say more about that
- How do you know that?
- What makes you say that?
- Does anyone have a different idea?

BACKGROUND & SOURCES

These excerpts are from the opening sections of the video biographies presented to the Republican and Democratic Conventions in the summer of 2016.

Rightsideradio. "AMAZING Donald Trump Biography Video Played at the RNC (7-21-16)." YouTube, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bj-zp0ljac>.

CBSNewsOnline. "Morgan Freeman Narrates Hillary Clinton DNC Biography Video." YouTube, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pte70cmywv4>

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Social Studies

Question: How have the filmmakers constructed the biography to appeal to their target audience?

Possible Answers: *Trump* – The Republican Party base has traditionally supported economic advancement and job creation through entrepreneurial initiative. The filmmakers chose to highlight Donald Trump’s leadership in real estate development, creating jobs and revitalizing New York through his creation of a strong management team. *Clinton* – The Democratic Party base has traditionally supported creating strong social safety nets for disadvantaged populations through government intervention. The filmmakers chose to highlight Hillary Clinton’s mother’s challenges to support herself in the face of childhood neglect and Hillary’s choice to devote her early career to working as an advocate for children in need.

ELA

Question: What evidence does the filmmaker give to support the candidacy of their subject?

Possible Answers: *Trump* – “When he gets elected he will make our country great again” with film clips of Trump supporters cheering; “Donald saw a city that symbolized America’s greatness and he was committed to making it great again” with images of Trump in a hard hat looking upwards toward the spires of an iconic New York skyscraper. *Clinton* – “She is bright and promising, an achiever” with images of Clinton as a smiling young college student; “Her commitment to making people’s lives better” spoken by President Obama in the oval office with images of children.

Media Literacy

Question: What values are implied by these candidate biographies and what evidence in the document supports your answer?

Possible Answers: *Trump* – Strong leadership evidenced by images of Trump as captain of the baseball team and captain of the cadets at New York Military Academy and cutting ribbons as a real estate developer. Family support evidenced by images of Donald Trump with his father and with his children. Team management evidenced by images of Trump at the head of a conference table and walking on the tarmac with his adult children. *Clinton* – Empathy evidenced by comments from a 9/11 survivor and first responder. Kindness evidenced by comments from a long time friend. Social commitment evidenced by images and text about her work with the Children’s Defense Fund and for children with disabilities.

Question: How does your own bias influence how you analyze each of these biographies?

Possible Answers: Students might reflect on how their own political biases are shaped by family, media, friends and life experience. They might recognize how our personal beliefs often can cause us to prejudge a film about a political candidate. For example if respect my parents who are strong Republicans and who are vocally opposed to Democratic leaders I am likely to view the Trump biography in a different light than I will the Clinton biography and vice versa. If I only pay attention to progressive news media sources I am likely to have a bias against Trump and if I only attend to conservative media sources then I’m likely to be biased against Clinton.