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“The Ground Game: Grassroots Politics and
a Youth Perspective”
Social Studies and Language Arts
Curriculum

the.Vote
is a feature of

the.News

**A daily news broadcast for High School and Middle School students
now under development by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions**



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**“The Ground Game: Grassroots Politics and a
Youth Perspective”
Social Studies and Language Arts Curriculum**

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Fall 2008

Dear Educator,

the.Vote is the newest feature of *the.News*. These online video reports provide middle and high school students with a valuable exercise in democracy. This video report on Grassroots politics (running 4 minutes, 35 seconds) is the third in the series with one more segment to air bi-weekly until the election. After Election Day, leading up to the Inauguration, the series will evolve from *the.Vote* to *the.Gov* and look at the process of forming a new government, identifying key issues for the new administration and new Congress.

Each video report is supported by a social studies and language arts curriculum. All videos and curricula have been informed by *the.News* instructional design that can be found on the website www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews. *the.Vote* is open-captioned. The curriculum includes content-based standards, discussion questions, student activities, vocabulary and primary reference sources. A complete transcript of each video report includes time codes to assist in isolating specific segments of the video. This material is presented as options to fit teachers' instructional needs.

YOU.edit, to launch early in 2009, gives students an online tool to remix the content of *the.Vote* reports (as well as all the other *the.News* videos), so they can create their own multimedia presentations. This editing tool will reside on our website so that it will be available to all students with an internet connection. It will be password protected so that it can serve as a viable educational asset that allows classroom teachers to assign multimedia projects within the security and content safety of *the.News* website.

A companion multimedia feature, *YOU.report*, will provide an online home for student-generated content. The *YOU.report* feature will include a student competition. Details about the *YOU.report* competition are on the website at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/youreport/index.php>.

Funding for *the.Vote* has been provided by Adobe through the PBS Foundation.

For more information and questions about this material contact Lisa Denny at ldenny@newshour.org.

Sincerely,

Karen W. Jaffe
Manager, Education Projects, *the.News*
MacNeil/Lehrer Productions
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Arlington, VA 22206



“The Ground Game” Social Studies Curriculum

This lesson has been designed to support *the.News* video “The Ground Game,” the video can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/thevote/story.php?id=4685&package_id=634

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Content Areas: Civics, Social Studies and Government

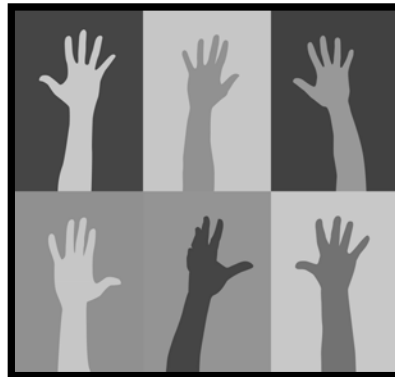
Key Concept: Students will understand how political campaigns use polling data to understand voter appeal of their candidate and what issues are most sensitive to their concerns. Students will then take this information and create a campaign-organizing project to inform potential voters about the candidates.

Civic Literacy (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Participating effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes
- Exercising the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels
- Understanding the local and global implications of civic decisions

Key Vocabulary:

- Approval rating
- Blue states
- Margin of error
- Nonpartisan polling
- Opinion poll
- Polling trend
- Red states
- Sampling
- Swing states
- Tracking



Background:

Political campaigns have become very complicated public relations machines that use scientific opinion poll data, highly sophisticated advertising techniques, and basic grassroots organizing to promote a specific candidate. Opinion polls give campaign organizers critical information on how their candidate is doing across the country, but especially in “swing states” where voter

preference toward the candidates is close. Poll results can tell campaign organizers which of their candidate’s policies and which philosophies appeal to voters and

McRel Learning Objectives www.mcrel.org- Civics:
**Standard 7: Understands alternative forms of representation
and how they serve the purposes of constitutional
government** - Level III (Grades 6-8); Level IV (Grades 9-12)



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where those policies might be weak. By interpreting these data, campaigns will craft advertising and speeches to clear up voter confusion, to address voter’s concerns, and—it is hoped—to bring in more support.

McRel Learning Objectives
www.mcrel.org- Civics: Standard 19:
Understands what is meant by “the public agenda,” how it is set and how it is influenced by public opinion and the media - Level III (Grades 6-8); Level IV (Grades 9-12)

To gain additional support in a particular state, campaign committees will organize supporters at the “grassroots level,” meaning that they contact local supporters to help build an organization that will carry their candidate’s message to other voters. In the past two presidential elections, grassroots organizing and fundraising have incorporated the Internet and wireless communications to new

levels. This aspect of using the “new technology” has caught the interest and active participation of young people for whom being “wired” is a major part of their lives.

In this activity, students will look at how political campaigns use polling data to better craft their message to voters in swing states. They will also review polling data from their state or community to develop an effective grassroots effort to get the word out about the candidate of their choice.

Materials:

- Internet access to computers
- *the.Vote* Video Segment #3 titled “The Ground Game”
- Link to NewHour’s Election Issues at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/issues>
- Link to NewsHour/NPR’s election map at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/primaries/states/>
- Link to “Facebook: Here’s My Issue” at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/issues>
- Student Handout: Election Polling (p.9)
- Student Handout: Campaign Strategy (p.10-11)
- Notebook paper, pens and pencils

Time Frame: Two to three class periods

Procedure:

Opening Activity: In this activity, students will make a personal assessment of how informed they are about the candidates and the issues. Assure students that the activity is intended only to give them an idea of their own level of understanding.

McRel Learning Objectives www.mcrel.org
- Civics: Standard 21: Understands the formation and implementation of public policy - Level III (Grades 6-8); Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Divide the class into pairs.



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2. Ask each pair to take out a piece of paper and to divide it into three columns. In the first column, students should write a list of issues being discussed in the current election, things such as the economy, education, health care, homeland security, jobs, and national defense. They are to head the second two columns with the names of the presidential candidates. If you choose to include third-party candidates, plan for more columns.
3. In their pair groups, ask the students to review what they know about each candidate's position on each of the issues and to mark the appropriate columns in the following way:
 - a. If they know well the candidates' position on a particular issue, the students are to place a plus mark (+) in that candidates' column next to the issue.
 - b. If they know positions on some issues but need to know more about the candidates' position, have the students place a check mark (✓) on the candidates' column next to the issue. If they know little or nothing about the candidates' position, the students are to place a minus sign (-) in the candidates' column next to the issue.
4. Discuss the results with students to get an idea of their understanding of the candidates' positions on the issues.
5. To help students understand the issues better, have them go to NewsHour's link on the issues at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/issues>. Students can also go to the interactive "Facebook: Here's My Issue," which is also found on the NewsHour's Issues webpage.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Exercising sound reasoning in understanding.
- Making complex choices and decisions.
- Understanding the interconnections among systems.
- Identifying and asking significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.
- Framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions.

Main Activity—Campaign Strategy

Part 1: Red States, Blue States and Swing States

1. Regroup the class into groups of three to four students.
2. Distribute the handout on "Election Polling" (p.9) and have students review the material or you can review it for them.
3. Next, have students go to the NewsHour/NPR's election map at

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy **K-12** (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Accessing information efficiently and effectively, evaluating information critically and competently and using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.
- Possessing a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information.



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<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/primaries/states/>. Explain that some states have consistently voted for Republican candidates over the past 10 to 20 years and that those states are referred to as “red states.” States that have consistently voted Democratic are called “blue states.” States that are leaning one way or the other or that are too close to call are considered “swing states.”

4. Have students identify which states are solidly behind one candidate or the other and which states are swing states.
5. Assign each student group one of the swing states. **For now, do not have students review polling data from their own state.** While they are on the Internet, have them click the assigned state twice to find polling data under the heading “RCP Poll Average.”
6. Have students record the percentage of each candidate’s approval rating and the spread between the candidates on the basis of the RCP (Real Clear Politics) Averages.

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy
K-12 (Literacy for the 21st Century
www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Using digital technology, communication tools and/or networks appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information in order to function in a knowledge economy.
- Using technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information and the possession of a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information.

7. Then have students click on the link under the RCP Average section titled “More about these polls.” Have students access several of the polls highlighted in gray, review the summaries, and identify the issues where the candidate is strong and weak in that particular state.

8. Review each group’s results with the entire class.

Part 2: Development of a Grassroots Campaign Project

In Part 2, students will develop a grassroots campaign for one of the candidates. Ideally, the class’ preference toward the candidates will be balanced, thereby allowing for each candidate to be represented. If most of the class predominantly supports one candidate, you might assign the other candidate to some of the small groups. You can also include third-party candidates but polling data may be limited.

Media Literacy (Literacy for the 21st Century
www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Understanding how media messages are constructed, for what purposes and using which tools, characteristics and conventions
- Examining how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors



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1. Re-divide the class into small groups of three to four students, and either have each group select or assign each group one of the candidates.
2. Have students go to the NewsHour/NPR's election map at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/primaries/states/>. This time have them collect data from their own state as they did for other states in Part 1. Have students review the summaries of the polls to identify the issues where their candidate is strong or weak. As an alternative, you can have students conduct a school-wide opinion poll that asks what presidential candidate is preferred and on what issues their candidate is strong or weak.
3. Then have students develop a grassroots campaign at their school or in their community as they conduct one or more of the activities listed next:
 - Develop print advertisements or audio/video media spots or both that speak to the issues brought up in your poll and to better explain your candidate's position or to better contrast your candidate's position with that of the opponent.
 - Write an OP/ED column that supports your candidate and that would appeal to "swing voters."
 - Team up with another group that supports the other candidate and then hold a debate for your classroom or school. Feature issues from the opinion polling in the debate topics.
 - Set up information tables at school so you give fellow students information on where your candidate stands on the crucial issues. Get volunteers to sign up to help you spread the word about your candidate.
4. Have students present their project plans to the class for advice and comment. After they have completed the project, have them present their findings again, including the results of their efforts.

McRel Learning Objectives
www.mcrel.org - Civics: **Standard 20:**
Understands the roles of political parties, campaigns, elections and associations and groups in American politics - Level III (Grades 6-8); Level IV (Grades 9-12)

Communication and Collaboration (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing
- Demonstrating ability to work effectively with diverse teams
- Exercising flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal
- Assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work



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Assessment: Students' performance on the described projects can be evaluated for their cooperative behavior in (a) the development and execution of the project, (b) the grammar and spelling in written materials, and (c) the depth of coverage of the opinion polls and explanations of the candidates' positions on the issues.

Extension Activity: Getting Involved

There are many other ways students can become involved in political campaigns. Divide the class into small groups, and have each group review one of the links that follow:

- Student Association for Voter Empowerment at <http://www.savevoting.org>
- Rock the Vote at <http://www.rockthevote.com/act-out/>
- Generation Engage at <http://www.generationengage.org/index.php>
- Barack Obama at <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/actioncenter>
- John McCain at <http://www.johnmccain.com/dashboard/>

Now have each group report their thoughts as to the organizations' efforts to get students involved in voting. Then have students sign up for any of the activities listed in the organizations' websites.

Communication and Collaboration (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing

Resources:

In addition to the websites mentioned in the lesson, the following websites are recommended for further information:

- *Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement* at www.civicyouth.org.
- *Declare Yourself* at <http://www.declareyourself.com/index.php>.
- *Generation Engage* at <http://www.generationengage.org/index.php>.
- *Kids Voting USA* at <http://www.kidsvotingusa.org/>.
- *National Student/Parent Mock Election* at <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/>. This website presents an organization of students and parents who seek to instill the power that comes with participation in a democracy. The site offers (a) information on how and why to get involved, (b) teaching materials, and (c) activities for elementary through high school.
- *Politics1.com* at <http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm>. This site is a solid, nonpartisan online guide to American politics. The site contains a directory of the major political



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parties, up-to-date information on the 2008 race, data about state and federal candidates, news links and more.

- *Project Vote Smart* at http://www.votesmart.org/election_president.php. This site is a great website for election information for each state. The site contains information on party politics, candidates' voting records and public statements.
- *Service Vote 2008* at <http://www.servicevote.org/>. This site supports young people to be civically engaged as advocates addressing the issues they care about, and it supports youth service and service learning. Information, social networking groups and ways to take action are all featured.
- *Student Guide to Voting* at <http://www.gocollege.com/students-guide-to-voting.html>. Though intended for college students and first-time voters, this site provides good information on the young voters, the voting process, and the importance of voting and of issues facing young voters.
- *Vote 2008 NewsHour Online* at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/>. NewsHour's website follows the primary and the general election with news articles from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* including audio/video links and transcripts. The site also contains interactive election map, information on the candidates, reporters' blog and links to lesson plans.
- *What Kids Can Do* at www.wkcd.org.
- *Your Three Cents* at <http://www.yourthreecents.com/index/about-us/>.

Activity Designer: Greg Timmons

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Student Handout: Election Polling

Opinion polls are one of the main tools used by political campaigns to understand voter sentiment and to help guide the direction of a campaign. Pollsters rely on samplings of the population to get a good idea of what the public is thinking. Samplings are a cross-section of society in terms of economic class, culture, race, gender, education and age. Samplings can range from several hundred to several thousand. Most polls have a margin of error (+ or – a certain percentage) built in to account for possible inaccuracies in polling. Accurate polls usually have margins of error at or below 3%. The larger the sampling, the lower the margin of error and the more accurate the poll.

Opinion polls can determine (a) how much the public approves of the candidate and (b) the voters' support or lack of support for a candidate's position on a given issue. Tracking a candidate's public appeal through several polls gives pollsters a good idea of how a candidate is doing throughout the campaign. It can also help candidates construct their message to the public.

The most effective and accurate polls contain unbiased questions that ask for a single answer (yes/no or approve/disapprove) and that elicit information about voters' opinions on the candidates' position about issues. Although political campaigns conduct their own polls, those polls can often ask leading questions or present a politically biased point of view and aren't usually considered accurate. Polls conducted by nonpartisan organizations are the most reliable.

Just looking at the numbers that indicate voters' approval of a candidate is not enough. It's not as important that a candidate received a high or low approval rating as it is to understand the reasons a candidate's polling numbers are high or low. Polling questions that ask respondents to indicate whether they approve or disapprove of the candidates' position about the issues provide such information. Campaign organizers can then devise speeches, media advertising or announcements to strengthen the candidate's appeal in the eyes of the public.

When a candidate's approval numbers go up or down over a period of time, that movement is called a trend. Voters can change their minds and often do over the course of a campaign. The campaign organizations watch trends in the polling numbers to determine if their candidate or the opposition's candidate is gaining or losing ground on an issue or in the opponents' overall appeal to voters. The campaigns will make adjustments in their message to bolster an upward trend or to try to stop a slide. Polling trends themselves will also affect how people feel about a candidate. If a candidate's polling numbers are moving upward, more people will tend to support that candidate. If numbers begin to turn down, the opposite can occur.

Political campaigns also pay close attention to individual states and count the numbers of electoral votes in states where the polls indicate the candidates are favored. States where polls indicate there is no clear winner are referred to as "swing states." In those states, campaigns will spend much of their time and money trying to persuade voters toward their candidate. The campaigns will draw information from their candidate's speeches and policy positions, as well as presenting negative information about their opponent to try and gain the upper hand in a swing state. The hope is to carry that state during the general election and to gain all its electoral votes.



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Student Handout: Campaign Strategy

Part 1: Red States, Blue States and Swing States

1. Form groups of three to four students and review the handout titled “Election Polling.”
2. Next, go to the NewsHour/NPR’s election map at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/primaries/states/>. Note the different colored states. States that have consistently voted for Republican candidates over the past 10 to 20 years are referred to as “red states.” States that have consistently voted Democratic are called “blue states.” States that are leaning one way or the other or that are too close to call are considered “swing states.” Those states are colored in shades of red or blue or beige.
3. In your small group, identify which states are solidly behind one or the other major candidates and which states are designated as swing states.
4. After you have been assigned one of the swing states, click that state twice on the website to find polling data under the heading “RCP Poll Average.”
5. Record the percentage of each candidate’s approval rating and the spread between the candidates on the basis of the RCP (Real Clear Politics) Averages for the state you’ve been assigned.
6. Click on the link under the RCP Average section titled “More about these polls” to access several of the polls used to create the average (highlighted in gray). Review the summaries of those polls and identify the issues where the candidate is strong and weak.
7. Be prepared to review your findings with the class.

Part 2: Develop a Grassroots Campaign Project

In Part 2, you will select one of the candidates to develop a grassroots campaign. Your teacher will help determine which candidate you will be examining. You can also include third-party candidates but polling data on such candidates is limited.

1. Re-divide into small groups of three to four students.
2. Go to the NewsHour/NPR’s election map at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/primaries/states/>. This time, collect data from your own state as you did in Part 1 for other states.
3. Review the summaries of the polls to identify the issues where the candidate is strong or weak. Or, as an alternative, you can conduct a school wide opinion poll that asks which



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presidential candidate is preferred and on what issues respondents feel the candidate is strong or weak.

4. Develop a grassroots campaign at your school or in the community as you conduct one or more of these activities:
 - Develop print advertising or audio/visual media spots or both that speak to the issues brought up in your poll so you can better explain the candidate's position or can contrast your candidate's position with that of the opponent.
 - Write an OP/ED column that supports your candidate and that would appeal to "swing voters."
 - Team up with another group that supports an opposing candidate and conduct a debate for your classroom or school. Feature issues from the opinion poll in the debate.
 - Set up information tables at school to give fellow students information on where your candidate stands on the crucial issues. Get volunteers to sign up and to help you develop and distribute the materials about your candidate.
5. Be prepared to present your project to the class both before you execute it and after you complete so you can present the results of your efforts.





“The Ground Game” Language Arts Curriculum

This lesson has been designed to support *the.News* video “The Ground Game,” the video can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/thevote/story.php?id=4685&package_id=634

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Content Areas: Language Arts/Media Literacy

Key Concept: Students will analyze the effectiveness of the language that grassroots political organizers use to connect with different voting groups and to achieve political goals. They will also develop multimedia presentations while using persuasive visuals and language to convey political messages.

Key Vocabulary:

- Grassroots
- Precinct
- Precinct captain
- Social networking



Background:

Voting is the most influential tool that citizens have to affect public policy. With their ability to elect public officials, citizens have the ultimate say in America’s political process and can determine how U.S. government operates.

Voters must be at least 18 years old, must be a U.S. citizen and must have lived in their residence for a certain period of time. In the privacy of the polling booth during each election, citizens exercise their ultimate power in a democracy. Sometimes people feel that their votes don’t matter but as the extremely close 2000 and 2004 presidential elections demonstrated, everyone’s vote counts!

The 2008 presidential election promises to be another tight contest. Political analysts predict that swing states such as Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia will determine the outcome between Senators Barack Obama and John McCain. For example, Virginia last voted for a Democrat for president in 1964. But Democratic gains since 2001 are viewed as an indication that the state is in play this year.

Although Obama—with his development of “Obama Camps” to train eager volunteers and with heavy investment in grassroots organizing that is buttressed by the expert Internet social-networking tools of “MyBo”—has a strong hold on the youth vote, both candidates realize the



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importance of the age 18–34 demographic and are stepping up their efforts to attract young people.

The Republican Party has been trying to compete with the College Democrats of America who have been signing up thousands of new members on college campuses with text messages, YouTube videos and social networking sites. In a July 24, 2008 article written by Lisa Wangness the *Boston Globe* predicted:

The (McCain) campaign says it will drastically improve its website’s social networking capacities well before college classes resume in the fall and the post–Labor Day sprint begins. The (McCain) campaign now has youth chairs in 30 states, including all battleground states, and... (prior to their convention)... it held a series of conference calls with young adult leaders across the country to begin organizing its volunteer groups. Many of those involved are already members of the College Republicans and other established groups and many are already independently using social networking sites such as Facebook to communicate with each other and grow their ranks.

Although cyberspace is gaining an increasingly important place in the political world, the real organizing work is still done on the ground.

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy

K-12 (Literacy for the 21st Century
www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Using digital technology, communication tools and/or networks appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information in order to function in a knowledge economy.

Social networking sites, RSS feeds and blogs have helped mobilize unprecedented numbers of young people who haven’t just donated money; they have been transformed into grassroots activists. Many have become precinct captains, who are volunteers responsible for person-to-person contact in their precincts (the smallest unit of electoral geography) and who go far in communicating a

candidate’s vision directly to voters in their neighborhoods.

Materials:

- Computers with a browser access to the Internet
- *the.Vote* Video Segment #3 titled “The Ground Game”
- Student Handout: Excerpt from *Rocky Mountain News* interview with Michael and Kitty Dukakis in August 2008 (p.20-21)
- Student Handout: The Youth Vote in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses (p.22-23)
- Pens and highlighters
- Overhead projector (optional)
- Scratch paper
- PowerPoint on computers
- Video camera



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Time Frame: 2 to 3 class sessions

Procedure:

Opening Activity:

1. If your students have permission, ask them to visit the MySpace pages of John McCain and Barack Obama.
 - What information can be found on those pages?
 - How are they organized?
 - How are they similar? How are they different?
 - Are they effective in capturing each candidate’s message? Why? Why not?
2. Students should analyze the language and imagery used in the video clips featured on both candidates’ social-networking sites.
 - Is the language objective or persuasive?
 - Are chosen terms likely to arouse emotion?
 - What inflections or gestures are used?
 - What is the mood or tone of the film clips?
 - How do camera angles, lighting, music, narration and editing contribute to creating an atmosphere in the films?
 - What is the central message of the clips?
 - How does the juxtaposition of images attempt to persuade the viewer?
3. Ask students—in their capacity as “campaign managers”—to develop “issue-oriented” ads for the candidate of their choice using either a PowerPoint slide show or a 30-second “commercial spot” filmed with a digital camera.

McRel Learning Objectives www.mcrel.org: **Standard 9 - Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media**

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Makes multimedia presentations using text, images and sound (e.g., selects the appropriate medium, such as television broadcast, videos, web pages, films, newspapers, magazines, CD-ROMS, Internet, computer-media-generated images; edits and monitors for quality; organizes, writes and designs media messages for specific purposes)
- Makes formal presentations to the class (e.g., includes definitions for clarity; supports main ideas using anecdotes, examples, statistics, analogies and other evidence; uses visual aids or technology, such as transparencies, slides, electronic media; cites information sources)

Main Activity—Examining Grassroots Campaigning

1. Pass out copies—or place on an overhead projector—excerpts of an interview that was conducted by M. E. Sprengelmeyer with Michael and Kitty Dukakis and was



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published in the *Rocky Mountain News* in August 2008 (See Student Handout on p.20-21).

- What ideas or perspectives does Dukakis offer about grassroots campaigning?
 - What does he think Barack Obama needs to do to become the next President of the United States?
 - Could those same recommendations apply to John McCain? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Ask groups of students to role play as precinct captains and to list five grassroots strategies they would recommend to their preferred candidates: John McCain; Barack Obama; and third-party candidates such as Bob Barr, Ralph Nader and Cynthia McKinney. What do you think would be the best forum to communicate those strategies to potential voters? Tailor your message and its method of delivery to various demographic groups such as independent voters, women or young voters between the ages of 18 and 34. Suggest language you would use to rally a solid base of supporters in those groups.
 3. Discuss responses as a class, with students in each group presenting their answers. Students may choose to role play a real “on the ground” or “live” presentation that they would deliver to selected demographic groups.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions.

Main Activity—Examining Grassroots Campaigning

1. Share the notion with students that in the past not enough young people between the ages of 18 and 24 have exercised their right to vote, while older people vote far more often and have gained considerable more influence in American government because of their active public participation.
2. Then share with students the findings of the Center for Information and Research on Civil Learning and Engagement in its study titled “The Youth Vote in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses” (p.22-23). An adapted excerpt from the opening summary of those findings may be found in Student Handout: The Youth Vote in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses. See also http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_08_primary_summary.pdf.

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy

K-12 (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Accessing information efficiently and effectively, evaluating information critically and competently, and using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.



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3. Pair students and ask each group to analyze the statistics that the report generated.

- What states had the highest youth turnout rate?
- What are voting trends for different youth subgroups?
- Who has been the clear presidential choice among Young Democrats? Young Republicans?
- Ask students to share their thoughts about what the report's information suggests about young people and politics.
- Suggest reasons for the increased political involvement of the youth demographic.

4. As an extension, ask students to brainstorm issues that are important to them that might become part of the public agenda if they gained political influence.

- See how many different ways of communicating with and influencing government your students can suggest.
- Do their parents, relatives or friends engage in any of those activities?
- See if students are aware that

McRel Learning Objectives www.mcrel.org: **Standard 9 - Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media**
Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Knows that people with special interests and expectations are the target audience for particular messages or products in visual media; and knows that design, language and content reflect this (e.g., in advertising and sales techniques aimed specifically towards teenagers; in products aimed towards different classes, races, ages, genders; in the appeal of popular television shows and films for particular audiences)
- Understands techniques used in visual media to influence or appeal to a particular audience (e.g., production techniques, such as designing a news program as entertainment; persuasive techniques, such as exaggerated claims, portrayal of appealing lifestyles, bandwagon, glittering generalities; subliminal messages; narrative style)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Understands the effects of visual media on audiences with different backgrounds (e.g., age, nationality, gender, class, belief system)

- young people sit on commissions and take part in public life in other ways even before they reach voting age.
- Ask students to develop detailed action plans indicating various ways that they could become involved in American government, either now or in the future.

5. Finally, encourage students to attend a political event, such as a campaign rally or a politically oriented meeting with a local, state, or national government official. Although the visceral impact of the event may be diminished, students may also view political events on television or online. Students should analyze the political language used by the government official at the event.

- Was the language incomplete and in the form of sound bites?



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- Was it emotionally charged?
- What persuasive techniques were used?
- Were benefits promised?
- Were there attacks? Partisan smears? Lots of slogans?
- Have students do research on any issues of public policy that are relevant to the meeting or event.

Back in the classroom, students can present what they learned about politics and public policy.

Extension Activities

1. Lynda Kaid, director of the Political Communication Center at the University of Oklahoma said recently:

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Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Understands how style and content of spoken language varies in different contexts (e.g., style of different radio news programs, everyday language compared to language in television soap operas, tones of news bulletins on “serious” and youth-oriented stations) and how this influences interpretation of these texts
- Understands influence on language use (e.g., political beliefs, positions of social power, culture)

During the past five decades, television’s role in the political system has increased so dramatically that it is now the dominant form of communication in the political system.... The ads themselves have become the political discourse. Often the commercials instead of the candidates debate each other.



Discuss with students the significance of television during political campaigns.

- What do they see as the particular problems and virtues of television for informing voters?
- Do they approve of the political ads they have seen?
- Do students feel that those ads provided sufficient information?

Students should justify their answers. Encourage your students to redesign a campaign ad on the basis of their criticisms,

Civic Literacy (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Participating effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental

2. Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 “Daisy Girl” (see <http://history.sandiego.edu/gen/movies/daisygirl.html>) and George H. W. Bush’s 1988 “Willie Horton” (see



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<http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/timeline/years/1988.html>) are some of the most famous political attack ads in American political history.

- Share those ads with students, and ask them to analyze the message, mood, tone, and use of imagery and language.
 - Ask students to research the political context of the time those ads were produced. Who was the intended audience? Speculate about the effectiveness of the ads.
3. Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy met in the first televised debates in American history between two candidates running for president. Although a majority of the 70 million viewers judged the smooth, tanned and well-rested Kennedy the winner over the tired and haggard-looking Nixon, many radio listeners pronounced Nixon the winner. Ask students (a) to read portions of the first in this series of four debates held in Chicago, (b) to summarize the domestic and foreign policy issues discussed and (c) to evaluate the performance of both candidates.

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Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Understands a variety of messages conveyed by visual media (e.g., main concept, details, themes or lessons, viewpoints)
- Uses a variety of criteria to evaluate and form viewpoints of visual media (e.g., evaluates the effectiveness of informational media, such as web sites, documentaries, news programs; recognizes a range of viewpoints and arguments; establishes criteria for selecting or avoiding specific programs)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Understands how images and sound convey messages in visual media (e.g., special effects, camera angles, symbols, color, line, texture, shape, headlines, photographs, reaction shots, sequencing of images, sound effects, music, dialogue, narrative, lighting)
- Understands effects of style and language choice in visual media (e.g., use of long-shots to signify both real and metaphoric isolation; rapid editing in a television commercial; juxtaposition of text and color in a billboard; words in headlines intended to attract attention)
- Understands a variety of techniques used in advertising (e.g., portrayals of happy families and exotic places; celebrity endorsement; use of humor; emphasis on value and reliability; sex appeal; science and statistics; appeal to fears and insecurities)
- Understands how editing shapes meaning in visual media (e.g., omission of alternative perspectives; filtered or implied viewpoints; emphasis of specific ideas, images or information, in order to serve particular interests; the careful construction of seemingly straightforward texts)

4. As a follow-up, ask students to speculate about the extent that television changes the process of debate and political campaigning. You Tube clips of the debates are



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available on line and transcripts of the debates may be found at the following web site: http://www.debates.org/pages/his_1960.html.

Resources

- *Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement* at www.civicyouth.org.
- *Declare Yourself* at <http://www.declareyourself.com/index.php>.
- *Federal Election Commission* at <http://www.fec.gov>.
- *Generation Engage* at <http://www.generationengage.org/index.php>.
- *Kids Voting USA* at <http://www.kidsvotingusa.org/>
- *Project Vote Smart* at http://www.votesmart.org/election_president.php.
- *Student Association for Voter Empowerment* at <http://www.savevoting.org/Index.html>.
- *What Kids Can Do* at www.wkcd.org.
- *Your Three Cents* at <http://www.yourthreecents.com/index/about-us/>.

Activity Designer: Jeff Litzke

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Student Handout: Excerpt from *Rocky Mountain News* interview with Michael and Kitty Dukakis in August 2008

Q: What did you do immediately after the (1988) convention and did you in any way let your guard down because you thought you had a great convention?

DUKAKIS: No, no, no. Certainly nobody was complacent. We felt good about it. We had a right to feel good about it. What did we do? We flew from Atlanta, Lloyd Bentsen and I, to his hometown in south Texas where, I don't know, 10,000 people were waiting for us. You know, he was the hometown guy; he was back; he was now the nominee. People were very excited about the campaign. We then flew to Modesto, Calif., where 25,000 people were waiting for us. From there we flew to Minot, N.D. ... 11,000 people.... There had never been a political event like this [there].

And then I think Lloyd and I split and went down to North Carolina where another 10,000 people were. So there was enormous enthusiasm coming out of the campaign, but from the standpoint of campaign strategy, the decision—and again it was my decision to remain silent in the face of those attacks—was just a terrible mistake. And we didn't do the grassroots effort anywhere near as well as we should have.

Remember, Obama was drawing 15,000, 20,000 people even before the convention. In my opinion, they shouldn't let any of those people out of the hall before they sign up for precinct or block captain. Routinely, every time he has an event [he should sign up people]. See, 20,000 people in Minnesota—that takes care of Minnesota in terms of organizational strength and stuff. So those are the kinds of things I would advise him to do both pre- and post-convention. But I thought the bus trip coming out of the convention was a brilliant idea. Simple. I would strongly urge him to do that and every time he meets with a group of folks, he and his running mate, before they leave, “Hey, if you haven't signed up as a precinct or block captain, please do.... The coordinators, they're ready for you. Give them your telephone and e-mail address and so-on, and so-forth, we'll be in touch with you.” So [then] you keep building and building and building this grassroots organization.

And by the way, hit all states. Forget about this red–blue nonsense. Democrats buying into red–blue is the dumbest thing we've ever done. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's inaccurate. I mean, there are 12 or 13 states that are supposed to be red with Democratic governors, including—by the way—Colorado, which doesn't look to me like a red state anymore, whatever that means. Look at the governors you have out there. Montana's governor's a Democrat. Wyoming's governor's a Democrat. Arizona's governor's a Democrat. Colorado's governor's a Democrat. Nevada's governor ought to be a Democrat. The mountain states in particular are ripe for the taking but we're not going to do it without an on-the-ground effort. And that's what has to be in place even before the convention.



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Q: Sounds like you even did it going to Texas and North Dakota....

DUKAKIS: We did it but we never organized at the precinct level except in a handful of states. And where we did it, by the way, it was very effective. Why didn't we do them all? Well, because even I was buying into this kind of consultant stuff, which is, "Well, in the final ... Maybe you did that in the primary, Dukakis, but in the final it's all ... It's all this kind of stuff." It's a terrible mistake. People are hungry for the kind of personal stuff that a precinct-based organization provides for you. But understand what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about parachuting kids in with two weeks to go. We're talking about precinct captains who live in the precinct, look like the precinct, walk like the precinct and talk like the precinct. And let me tell you, we do that, and Barack Obama is going to be the next president of the United States by a very decisive majority.



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Student Handout: The Youth Vote in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses

By **Emily Hoban Kirby, Karlo Barrios Marcelo, Joshua Gillerman, and Samantha Linkins**
June 2008

More than 6.5 million young people under the age of 30 participated in the 2008 primaries and caucuses (see Table 1). This number marks a dramatic increase in youth voter turnout over the past comparable election cycle in 2000. In states where data are available for both the 2008 and 2000 primaries, the national youth turnout rate rose from 9% in the 2000 primaries to 17% in the 2008 primaries.*

The increase in youth turnout in the 2008 primaries and caucuses continues a historic trend observed in other elections since 2000. In the 2006 congressional elections, the voter turnout rate among 18- to 29-year-olds increased by 3 percentage points compared to the previous congressional election of 2002. And in the 2004 presidential election, the national youth voter turnout rate rose 9 percentage points compared to 2000, reaching 49%. This is the first time since 18- to-20-year-olds were allowed to vote that the youth turnout has increased three election cycles in a row.

*This turnout rate was calculated for states that had both a Republican and Democratic exit poll in 2000 and 2008, with the exception of Rhode Island where there was only a Democratic exit poll in 2000 and 2008. The states used to calculate the youth turnout rates for 2000 and 2008 were NH, MA, GA, MO, TX, TN, IA, MS, OH, OK, RI, FL, CA, CT, LA, MD, and NY.



Material From: CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement) Fact Sheet - Tufts University - Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service
(See http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_08_primary_summary.pdf for more detailed info)



Table 1: Presidential Primary Participation in 2008, Citizens Under 30

State	Type of Contest	Youth Turnout	Number of Youth who Voted	Youth as Share of All Voters	Allowed 17 year olds to vote/participate
Alabama	Primary	19%	136,000	13%	No
Arizona	Primary	7%	59,000	7%	Yes
Arkansas	Primary	11%	50,000	9%	No
California	Primary	19%	951,000	14%	No
Connecticut	Primary	12%	51,000	10%	No
Delaware*	Primary	7%	92,000	10%	Yes
Florida	Primary	13%	286,000	8%	No
Georgia	Primary	21%	282,000	14%	No
Iowa	Caucus	13%	65,000	18%	Yes
Illinois	Primary	18%	378,000	13%	No
Indiana	Primary	20%*	213,000	17%	Yes
Kentucky	Primary	12%*	89,000	13%	Yes
Louisiana	Primary	7%	51,000	10%	No
Maryland	Primary	15%	138,000	13%	Yes
Massachusetts	Primary	25%	231,000	14%	No
Michigan	Primary	14%	214,000	15%	Yes
Missouri	Primary	21%	191,000	14%	No
Mississippi	Primary	14%	71,000	13%	Yes
Montana	Primary	15%*	25,000	14%	No
Nevada	Caucus	5%	20,000	12%	No
New Hampshire	Primary	43%	84,000	16%	Yes
New Jersey	Primary	18%	188,000	11%	No
New Mexico	Primary	4%*	12,000	8%	No
New York	Primary	12%	312,000	13%	No
North Carolina	Primary	15%*	222,000	14%	Yes
Ohio	Primary	25%	479,000	15%	Yes
Oklahoma	Primary	14%	83,000	13%	No
Oregon	Primary	18%*	91,000	16%	No
Pennsylvania	Primary	14%*	276,000	12%	No
Rhode Island	Primary	14%*	24,000	13%	No
South Carolina	Primary	19%	119,000	12%	No
South Dakota	Primary	9%*	13,000	13%	No
Tennessee	Primary	15%	140,000	12%	No
Texas	Both	17%	620,000	15%	No
Utah	Primary	15%	66,000	16%	No
Vermont*	Primary	18%	17,000	11%	No
Virginia	Primary	16%	188,000	13%	Yes
West Virginia	Primary	16%*	46,000	14%	Yes
Wisconsin	Primary	25%	220,000	15%	No
Total			6,594,000		

Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the primaries, we can only estimate their level of participation. The estimate of votes cast is calculated by multiplying the youth share of all voters (source: exit polls) by the actual number of votes cast (source: media tallies). The turnout rate estimate for each state is calculated by dividing the estimated number of votes cast by young people in the state's primary by the estimated number of young citizens (source: 2008 March Demographic File, US Census).

*The youth turnout rate present in Table 1 is the *overall* turnout rate for the state. Because no Republican exit polls were conducted in the starred states, the numerator for overall turnout rate includes **only** young voters who participated in the Democratic primary. The denominator includes ALL eligible young voters in the starred state (Democrats, Republicans and Independents). Thus the turnout rate does not reflect the full participation of young people in each starred state's primary.

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The number of votes cast is obtained from the cnn.com (the morning after the respective state's contest.)