

Why Should I Agree With You?

Using Persuasive Speech and Political Mavericks to Examine Historical, Democratic or Current Issues

Introduction

Students need to understand how participation in the democratic process is a means for governments, politicians, and citizens to effect change in their communities. How do people impact how others make decisions? How did the Maverick politicians influence people to agree with their point of view? What can I do to have other people listen to and accept my point of view?

Project Explanation

In this project, students will develop an appreciation of how people effect change in their community or government by becoming a speechwriter for one of the political Mavericks. They will choose a topic and come up with arguments, facts and figures that will persuade others to accept their opinion on the issue. They will then write a polished persuasive speech, written for the Maverick themselves, as they might present in their time or even in the present.

Alberta Social Studies Curriculum Unit Connections

Grade Five - Canada: The Land, Histories and Stories

5.3 Canada: Shaping an Identity

Grade Six - Democracy: Action and Participation

6.1 Citizens Participating in Decision Making

Grade Seven - Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of People

7.2 Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions

Materials and Resources Needed

- *Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta* - Character Biographies and Online Artifacts
<http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks>
- English Language Institute (UBC) – Persuasive Speech Lesson Ideas
http://www.eli.ubc.ca/teachers/lessons/speaking/presentation_skills/persuasive_speech.html
- Persuasive Speech Techniques
<http://www.speechgems.com/persuaders.html>
- Public Speaking Advice, Tips for Teachers, and Helpful Resources

- <http://www.capital.net/~bps2/Second%20Page.htm>
 CBC Archives: Electing Dynasties: Alberta Campaigns 1935 to 2001
http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1472/politics_economy/alberta_elections/

Procedures

Students will create a persuasive speech to their fellow Albertans on specific issue, under the assumption that it will be spoken by one of the political Mavericks, whom they will have to learn about using the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* site. Each student will become a speechwriter for one of the political Mavericks, conducting research and finding arguments to support their viewpoint. The students may even present the speech as the actual Maverick character if they choose.

The topic may be about a current question or concern or on an issue that was important in Alberta's past. Students may write their speeches about individual topics, or they may join into small groups to research their topics together. They will decide what their chosen Maverick would think of the issue and write their speeches individually.

Introduce the project by asking students what being persuasive is? When in their life have they ever had to be persuasive? For example, trying to stay up past their bedtime, asking their parents to do something, asking for their parents to drive them somewhere, etc. How did they try to convince the other people of their point of view? Then have students look at some of the elements of delivering speeches such as their body language, expression, pronunciation, pitch, pacing (or speed), pauses, volume, and variance in the tone of voice. The goal of this speech is to change someone's mind or way of thinking about a topic, and these elements will affect how persuasive they are able to be.

Speech ideas may come from various sources. They may relate to Alberta's history, relate to democratic issues, or be about current events. It may be an important issue to them or they may collect issues from the newspaper or the television news. Potential topics are listed below.

Possible Speech Topics

Historical Question Examples

- Should everyone have the right to vote in elections?
- Should women have the right to vote? (1929)
- Should citizens who have emigrated from another country have the right to vote? (Chinese people did not have the right to vote in a federal election until 1947)
- Should there be a prohibition of alcoholic beverages? (1916)
http://www.albertasource.ca/lawcases/criminal/emperorpic/setting_inalberta.htm
- Should women be allowed to own property? (Dower Act of 1925)

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-Should the First Nations people get their land back?

Democratic and Government Process Question Examples

- Should Canadian citizens be forced to vote?
- Should we have appointed or elected senators?
- Should Canada have direct or representative democracy?
- How should elected officials be held accountable for their actions?

Current Issues and Events Question Examples

- Should we have a city funded recycling collection program?
- Should children have to go to school until they turn 16?
- Should children have the right to vote?
- Should Alberta have to share oil revenues with the other provinces?

Once a topic has been chosen, students will need to research arguments that either support their position and arguments that detract from their opposition's position. They should find facts, graphs, and quotes by famous or important people to support their arguments.

They should also incorporate the political Mavericks into their speech using research done on the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* site. What might their view on the issue be? How would they approach the speech? For example, the students could use a sentence starter like "My distinguished colleague, _____, believes..." or "If _____ were alive today, he or she would tell us..." This will help to add credibility to their speech.

Students will need to practice their speeches often, either at home or in class, before delivering them in front of their audience.

Assessment and Evaluation

- In groups or as a class, students may conference and debrief each other after they have presented their projects. Students should be encouraged to share their personal reflections about how it felt to speak in front of their audience.
- Students may evaluate themselves and their peers using their project rubric, examining each other's project for historical accuracy, detail, and creativity.
- After completing the project, students may talk or journal about what they felt they did very positively, what they had difficulty with, and how they would change how they would approach a similar project in the future.

Ideas to Enrich this Project

- Students may create a poster, radio or television advertisement to promote their point of view on the issue they have chosen. This may be

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- done in place of the speech or as an addition to enhance to their persuasive presentation.
- Two students (or groups) could go head-to-head on an issue by taking opposing sides. Their goal will be to persuade others to accept their viewpoint over the opposition's.

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