Analyzing and Presenting Visual Arguments

Grade level: 9-12

Introduction

Visual aids can help illustrate key points of your presentation and can help when you are trying to persuade people to adopt your point of view. Consider lawyers in the courtroom who present physical evidence to sway a jury. Visual aids such as charts, figures, tables or illustrations often improve readability by making complicated information or data easier to understand. Advertisements often include photographs that evoke an emotional reaction. *Visual rhetoric* is the study of how images communicate messages.

In this lesson, students will evaluate examples of visual arguments in various formats for effectiveness. They will then conduct research on a controversial topic using Points of View Reference Source. Finally, they will write and present a formal, 5-minute persuasive speech that includes multimedia and visual aids to engage the audience.

This lesson is designed for students in grades 9-10 but can be modified for grades 11-12. For example, students could spend additional time evaluating more complex visual arguments. Teachers could add requirements to the culminating assignment and/or require a self-assessment.

Standards

In addition to aligning with Common Core State Standards (see Appendix D), this lesson plan provides opportunities for students to achieve several of the learning competencies described in AASL's National School Library Standards.

Objectives

1. Students will understand and explain how visual aids can support an argument.
2. Students will properly use authoritative digital information resources to research, write and present a persuasive speech on a controversial topic.
3. Students will effectively use visual aids to support their own arguments.
4. Students will successfully use technology in preparing and presenting visual arguments.

Materials

- Computer
- Access to Points of View Reference Source
- Access to YouTube
- PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.

Prior Knowledge and Experiences

- **Argument:** Students have a basic understanding of "perspective"; know that more than one perspective exists on an issue; and can distinguish fact from opinion.

- **Researching:** Students possess basic search engine skills; they should know what "citing sources" means and understand the concept of plagiarism.

- **Presenting:** Students possess speaking, speech-giving and/or basic presentation skills.

- **Writing Process:** Students possess basic skills around the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).

- **Listening:** Students can demonstrate basic attentive listening (eyes, ears and heart).

- **Technology:** Students should have basic knowledge and command of technology resources (Word, Power Point, etc.).

Procedure

This lesson plan is designed to take one 50- to 60-minute class period, followed by two weeks of group research and presentations should the teacher choose to assign the extension activity. Modifications may need to be made depending on the length of the class period. In-class research days may also be provided.

1. **Warm-up discussion (10-15 minutes):** Get students thinking about visual communication and the non-verbal messages they send and receive.

   a. Would you wear the same outfit to a job interview that you would wear to a party? Explain.

   b. What would you think of a classmate who has pink hair, dozens of tattoos and multiple body piercings? Explain.

   c. What would you think of a teacher wearing flip flops and shorts to school? Explain.

2. **Class activity (40-45 minutes):** Show 2-3 examples of visual communication to your students and ask them to analyze the messages they convey. You can find videos on YouTube and many thought-provoking images on Flickr and Pinterest. A good example would be to look at vintage cigarette advertisements and compare them with images from today's anti-smoking ad campaigns. What messages do these ads send? How are they persuasive?

   a. Search for these images in Points of View Reference Source (or select others of your choosing):

      - AN imh1712081 (actor Gregory Peck smoking Chesterfield cigarettes, circa 1950)

- AN imh225416 (French ad for Job brand Cigarettes, circa 1889)

3. If you've chosen to show a video or infographic, distribute questions in Appendix A. If you are using images, distribute questions in Appendix B (Analyzing a Photograph). Assign students to work in pairs or small groups to evaluate the visual arguments you've shown.

4. Discuss findings as a class.

5. Introduce the concept of using visual aids to support an argument. How might a speaker incorporate visual aids into his/her speech? (See introduction to lesson for examples.)

6. Review types of visual aids. (See Appendix C.)

7. Book 2-3 days in the library for students to work on extension activity (see next section).

Extension Activity: Visual Argument Presentation Project

Working in pairs or small groups over the next two weeks, students will research a controversial topic of their choice using Points of View Reference Source. They will then write and present a formal, five-minute persuasive speech that includes two visual aids, one of which must be in **multimedia** format. The visual aids should support the argument and engage the audience.

Guidelines for Students

- Speeches must be typed and double-spaced.
- Make sure your visual aids …
   o are relevant to your argument,
   o are free of spelling and grammatical errors,
   o use a limited number of fonts (and fonts should be easy to read),
   o use color effectively, not haphazardly, and
   o don't distract either you or your audience during your presentation.
- Practice your speech using your visual aids so they don't interfere with the flow of your presentation.

Possible Topics

- Abortion
- Arctic Drilling
- Artificial Intelligence
- Censorship
- Climate Change
- Death Penalty
- Fracking
- Immigration
- Legalization of Marijuana
- Universal Health Care
- Use of Drones
- Vaccines
- Voting & Elections
- Welfare
- Year-Round School
- Zero-Tolerance Policies

Assessment

The following links provide a collection of assessment rubrics to help you measure student mastery.

Oral Presentation Rubric

http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/oral-presentation-rubric-30700.html

Kathy Schrock's Guide to Everything: Multimedia and Apps Rubrics

http://www.schrockguide.net/assessment-and-rubrics.html

Appendix A: Analyzing a Visual Argument

Visual arguments contain three main elements. To assess a visual argument, you must analyze all three.

I) **Claims:** Declarative statements that are either true or false, but not both. The claim is presented in the thesis and reinforced in the conclusion of an argument.

II) **Evidence:** Includes expert testimony, examples, empirical facts, definitions or statistics. The evidence appeals to a person's beliefs, needs, core values and attitudes.

III) **Assumptions:** Beliefs about your target audience

When analyzing a visual argument, answer these questions:

1. What claim(s) does the visual argument make?
2. What assumptions underlie the claim(s)?
   a. Who is the audience?
   b. Where will they encounter the visual argument?
   c. What do they already know or believe about the topic?
   d. What kinds of information or ideas will they find persuasive?
3. How does the visual's design enhance or hinder the argument?
4. Which **emotions** (pathos) does the argument appeal to? How?
5. How does the argument appeal to **logic** (logos)?
   a. What evidence is used to support the claim(s)?
   b. Is the evidence accurate and adequate?
6. How does the argument appeal to **ethics** (ethos)? Has the speaker presented himself/herself as trustworthy and credible? How so?

Here's a great handout from the University of Central Florida: The Three Appeals of Argument.

Appendix B: Analyzing a Photograph

The Getty Museum offers tips for <u>Analyzing Photographs</u>, but here are some questions to get you started:

1. What people or objects are shown?

2. Describe their relationship. How are they arranged in the photo?

3. What is the physical setting?

4. What other details can you see?

5. What is happening in the photo?

6. What message does the photo appear to convey? Consider both obvious and subtle messages.

7. How might the composition of this photo influence the viewer?

8. Can we rely on a photo to be accurate? Explain.

Appendix C: Types of Visual Aids

When giving a speech, it's always a good idea to incorporate visual aids. Visual aids help you to gain and keep your audience interested. Visual aids are used to support, clarify and strengthen what you are saying while helping your audience to better understand the subject matter. Using visual aids to support your speech enhances your ability to inform, educate or persuade your audience members. Here are some examples:

- **Props/Objects:** Bringing the object of your speech (or one related to your topic) to class can be an excellent way to clarify your ideas and give them dramatic impact. Keep objects classroom appropriate!

- **Models:** If the item you want to discuss is too large, too small, or unavailable, consider creating a model.

- **Photographs:** In the absence of an object or model, you may be able to use photographs. However, be sure a photograph is large enough for the audience to view. Avoid passing around normal-sized photos or photo albums. You don't want to divert the audience's attention away from what you are saying.

- **Drawings:** Diagrams, sketches, and other kinds of drawings can help you to illustrate the main points of your argument.

- **Graphs, Charts and Infographics:** Audiences often have trouble making sense of complex data. Help them out by using charts, graphs or infographics to show statistical trends and patterns. These tools are useful for summarizing large blocks of information.

- **Slides:** Slide presentations allow you to integrate a variety of visual aids — including charts, maps, photographs, and video — into your speech.

- **Posters:** Posters are great visual aids, whether you create them the old-fashioned way using poster board or go interactive with a multimedia tool like Glogster.

- **Video:** Video brings movement, pictures and sound into your presentation. Make sure that the video clip relates to your speech's content and doesn't run too long. If needed, tell your audience what to look for.

- **Live Demonstrations:** Sometimes you can even use your own body as a visual aid. You may even take volunteers from your audience to help you demonstrate your point.

Free multimedia tools for creating visual aids:

- Biteable
- Canva
- Google Slides
- Prezi
- Screencast-O-Matic

Appendix D: Alignment with Common Core Standards

The lesson plan, "Analyzing and Presenting Visual Arguments," supports the following standards:

English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 9-10

Text Types and Purposes

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.8 - Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.9 - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening » Grade 9-10

Comprehension and Collaboration

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2: Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.