

## Winning Websites: Analyzing Political Websites

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Because students encounter information almost solely online, they should learn specific techniques and strategies used to send messages, particularly in politics. Students will practice information literacy skills, visual and media literacy skills, and news literacy skills by contrasting the websites of two candidates in a local or national election.

**SUBJECT:**

Social Studies

Media Literacy

Library Skills

**GRADE LEVEL:**

Middle School

High School

**OBJECTIVES:**

Students will identify and analyze the use of rhetorical and persuasive devices on websites.

Students will use information literacy skills to contrast the two candidates' websites.

**MATERIALS:**

Internet access

Google Docs or another similar application

Websites Analysis Chart

**TIME NEEDED:**

Time needed will vary greatly depending on the grade and ability levels. The minimum range of time is two class periods in order for students to complete work, discuss, share, and complete any extension activities.

### INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURE

Depending on the grade level and previous experience of the students, the school librarian may need to provide mini-lessons or review the terms listed in the Websites Analysis Chart.

**Before:** Using an example version of the Websites Analysis Chart, model for students how to fill out the chart using two nonpolitical websites. Share or post this example for students to reference when working on their political candidates chart. Popular websites to use as examples include contrasting Carmax and Carvana websites. The school librarian may choose to include additional strategies/devices in the analysis chart used with their students.

**During:** Ask students if they have ever analyzed the effectiveness of a website. Discuss strategies they are familiar with or have used before. Explain that website creators use specific strategies much like a speechwriter or advertisement (show an example such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals website). Demonstrate how layout and usability impact the effectiveness of a website for a political candidate. Much like retail/popular websites, the sites of political candidates have a clear purpose: to win supporters.

Introduce the websites of two candidates for a local or national election as well as the analysis chart. Pick one strategy/device to analyze for scaffolding purposes and complete with guided help from the students. Then students can work individually, with a partner, or in groups to complete the chart. Remind students that they are evaluating the websites, not their feelings or thoughts about the candidates.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Get more ideas about how to teach about elections in Courtney Pentland's editorial, "[Connecting Students to the Political Process.](#)"

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