



# **VOTE SMART**

## **JUST THE FACTS**

### **Lesson 1 - The Political Spectrum**

#### **Standards: National Council for the Social Studies**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

NCSS 4: Individual Development and Identity

NCSS 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

NCSS 6: Power, Authority and Governance

#### **Objectives:**

SWBAT (students will be able to) identify with ideas from the political spectrum.

SWBAT categorize political speeches into political ideologies (conservative, liberal, left, right, moderate).

SWBAT write, explain and defend their own views on a relevant issue in today's political environment.

#### **Subject Matter:**

Political spectrum, conservative, liberal, rightist, leftist, Republican, Democrat, moderate

#### **Materials:**

- Access to internet
- Whiteboard/chalk board/smart board
- Speech worksheet
- Individual whiteboards
- Graphic organizer

#### **Procedure: (2 - 3 Days)**

##### **Set:**

1. Show [this](#) Craig Crash Course YouTube video to introduce students to different sides of the political spectrum.
2. After the video is over, check for comprehension by asking students what some traits of liberalism and conservatism are. Take a few answers and when satisfied, ask the lesson essential question (LEQ).

**Lesson Essential Question:** What is the difference between the left and right sides of the political spectrum? What side do you fall on; do you fall on a side at all?

Class Discussion:

1. Instruct students to get whiteboards, markers and erasers.
2. Instruct them to write the letter 'C' for conservative, a letter 'L' for Liberal, and a letter 'M' for Moderate.
3. Show the series of slides provided about different views on issues. One by one, ask students if they think the view is liberal, conservative, or moderate. Students should answer by circling a letter on their whiteboards and holding them up in the air.
4. Explain *why* those views are considered by some to be conservative or liberal. If students are generally understanding the concepts, ask them if the view is more liberal (left), or more conservative (right), and explain why. *Enrichment: draw a line on the board, and ask students to place a tick mark on it about how far left or right a view is. Is it to one extreme or the other? Is it more moderate?*
5. Once the teacher is satisfied that students understand this concept, transition by instructing students to read speeches by high profile public officials in the United States Congress (or you can use governors, the president, etc.) and determine where on the political spectrum they fall.

Congressional Speech Activity:

1. Hand out the speech worksheet to students.
2. Instruct students to go to [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) and select a congressional candidate of their choosing. To do so, students will type their zip codes into the bottom search bar, or type their full addresses into the ISpy search bar at the top of the page. Students can also use the "[Office and Officials](#)" link at the bottom of the page. Once students find a representative, select the folder 'Speeches'.
3. Explain the directions on the worksheet and ask for questions.
4. Have students select an issue important to them, and then select a speech that interests them and complete the worksheet.
5. The teacher will monitor and take questions for the rest of this activity.
6. When most students seem to have finished, ask them to share their findings with each other, and then share them as a class. Ask students if they agree with the speech they read.
7. Transition to the next activity by telling students that they will be writing their own persuasive speech on an issue and presenting it to the class to persuade and defend their stance on an issue.

Persuasive Speech Writing:

1. Explain to students that they will be writing, presenting, and defending an issue of their choice. Give students examples of relevant issues in modern day politics. These issues could include but are not limited to abortion and reproduction, national defense, immigration, education, infrastructure, the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and gun regulations, or any other issues that are in the modern political arena.

2. Hand out the task sheet to students and review it with them. Have them choose topics. Students may choose the same issue, but they have to be opposing viewpoints. There should not be two students writing speeches that are for stricter gun regulations, for example. The teacher should keep track of what students choose at their discretion.
3. Give students the graphic organizer to help them find statistics and to use them to support their arguments.
4. Give students some class time to start on this project, then assign the rest as homework. Give students several days to complete the assignment and assign them days to present.
5. When students present their speeches, give the audience a chance to argue points against their opinion. Then have students try to identify where the presenter falls on the political spectrum. Do not let the debate get heated to the point of students taking offense to comments. This should be a respectful, tolerant conversation between the audience and the presenter.
6. Set guidelines for students who are questioning the presenter - no obscene, vulgar, or insulting language of any kind. Rebuttals cannot personally attack the speaker. Any audience member not following the teacher's guidelines for rebuttals should (up to the teacher's discretion) lose points on their own work.

Close:

1. Check for comprehension by asking students the lesson essential question: What is the difference between the right and left sides of the political spectrum?
2. Take answers until the teacher is satisfied.

Assessment:

The teacher will collect the speech worksheet and give a grade based on completion and accuracy. The teacher will formally assess presentations of speeches. The teacher will informally assess student comprehension and participation during the whiteboard activity.

Assignment:

Finish speeches and work on presentations.

Self-Reflection:

## Congressional Speech Activity

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Go to [votesmart.org](https://votesmart.org) and pick a congressional member of your choice. Then go to the 'Speeches' folder. Select an issue that is important to you and find a speech you would like to read. Read the speech.

1. In a paragraph of 5 sentences, summarize what your speech is about.

2. Based on the ideas in this speech, circle where on the political spectrum you think the speaker falls.

Liberal

Moderate

Conservative

3. Please make a tick mark on the political spectrum below that corresponds to the speech you read..

Liberal

Moderate

Conservative

1

2

3

4

3

2

1

4. Why did you mark the line where you did? Give at least two reasons. Do you agree with the speech? Explain.

## Speech Graphic Organizer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Introduction and conclusion		Stat/Claims 1
Intro: Topic and why it is important?		Statistic:
		Claims:
		1)
		2)
		3)
Conclusion: Wrap up, why should people agree?		
<u>Stat/Claims 2</u>		<u>Stat/Claims 3</u>
Statistic:		Statistic:
Claims:		Claims:
1)		1)
2)		2)
3)		3)

## **Writing A Persuasive Speech**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: You have the floor! Choose an issue in the modern political arena that interests you, then choose a side to argue. For example: Are you going to argue against or for gun regulations, and why? What evidence supports your claim that there should be more or less gun regulation?

Your speech must include:

**1. An argument:**

You must make an argument supported by evidence that convinces people you are right. For instance, I could theoretically say, "Guns kill people, look at all the mass shootings just this past year in the US. We cannot sit here and let this continue, we must regulate the purchasing of firearms. We must keep guns out of the hands of criminals and terrorists"; the other side could say, "Criminals and terrorists don't go through traditional channels to obtain firearms, they obtain them illegally. More regulations would only hinder law abiding citizens from defending themselves against criminals and terrorists." This is the kind of evidence, or claims, that you are expected to back up your speech with. You need to also include statistics. This is more solid and irrefutable evidence, but it is not as sensational and captivating.

**2. Evidence:**

You must include statistical evidence, and make claims based off of those statistics. Please provide at least 3 pieces of statistical evidence (such as "Darryl Johnson has an A+ rating from the NRA"), along with a claim based off of each one of those 3 pieces of evidence. Example: "75% of public schools are underfunded (the stat). This is unacceptable and we must be good stewards to the education of our children. I propose a multi-million dollar expansion to education funding (the claim)."

You can find statistics that support either side of any argument - it is all about how you use those stats to create your argument. Stats can be interpreted in many different ways.

**3. A Transcript:**

You must include a transcript. Keep in mind, your speech should generally be 3-5 minutes long, so the transcript of your speech should be somewhere between 3-4 pages long. Take a look at how members of Congress craft their speeches. How are they written? How are they formatted? Use that as a reference point for writing your own speech.

Step 1: Choose an issue from the modern political arena. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- *Abortion*
- *Guns and the second amendment*
- *Common core and education*
- *Law enforcement brutality*
- *Campaign finance*
- *Jobs and the economy*
- *National defense*
- *Immigration*
- *Agriculture*
- *Public lands*
- *Scope and size of government*
- *Congressional term limits*
- *Environment*
- *Renewable energy and natural resources*
- *Crime*
- *Drugs*
- *Marriage*

These are just a few topics you can delve into. If you think of any other issues you would like to research, please see the teacher to discuss it.

Step 2: Choose which way you want to argue your issue. Are you for, against, or somewhere in the middle with your stance?

For example, when people talk about renewable energy, some will say it is too costly for the benefits we will get from it. Some say it will create jobs and others say we should remove ourselves from it all together and focus on the energy resources we already have such as nuclear power, coal power, and natural gas.

Find a way to support your argument. Research what ways people already support your argument by using the “[Public Statements](#)” section of [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org). Do you agree with them? Can you think of an alternative solution?

Step 3: Make your argument and use evidence to support it. Learn the opposite argument in order to defend your own. How are you going to convince your peers that your view is the right one?

Step 4: Draft your transcript. Use the congressional speeches you read as a reference point for your own formatting. Your transcript has to be 3-4 pages long.

Step 5: Prepare your speech. You may use a visual aide, but this is optional.

## Summary:

For full credit you must have the following:

1. An argument on a modern day political/social issue.
2. Three statistics, with each one having a claim behind it.
3. A transcript. 3-4 pages long, formatted in a similar way to the congressional speech you read. You may use the transcript during your speech. Some things you can talk about include but are not limited to:
  1. Why this issue is important to you and why it should be considered by others.
  2. Any real life experience you have with the issue.
  3. Your stats and claim.
4. Defense. Directly following your speech, you must answer the criticisms from your audience adequately and professionally.