

THE CANDIDATE: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

THE CANDIDATE'S IMAGE

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

The student will be able to:

- Identify various factors which compose a candidate's image
- Discuss the importance of a candidate's image

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Activity 1 Handout 1-1 "How to See through Images"

Activity 2 Handout 2-2 "What's In an Image?"
 Handout 2-3 "Image"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Explain to students that in many elections, the "image" a candidate projects plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of the political contest. Voters are frequently influenced by such intangible factors as a candidate's personal appearance, charisma and perceived sincerity, integrity and leadership abilities. A candidate's image can be as important or more important than his or her stand on their issues.

The information in Handout 1-1 acquaints students with how candidates attempt to portray their own image as well as that of other candidates. Study it as a review of propaganda techniques and as preparation for completing further activities.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 – "How Does a Candidate's Image Influence Voters?"

For one week have students pay close attention to all mentions of each Presidential and/or Vice Presidential candidate in the newspaper, on radio, and TV. Include news articles, opinion pieces and paid advertisements among the items they listen to, read, or watch. Make a chart to record perceptions of each candidate's "image." Consider such factors as his/her physical appearance, sincerity, integrity, charisma, "toughness" in dealing with difficult issues, compassion, leadership abilities and devotion to family. After the data are collected ask students such questions as:

- What is emphasized in newspaper ads? Radio ads? TV ads? In which medium does image play the largest role?
- What influences your opinion of a candidate? Discuss with your classmates what they consider to be the most important aspects of a candidate's image.
- What role does a candidate's family play in promoting his or her image?
- Discuss what is meant by "charisma." Is it something tangible? Is a candidate's charisma equally evident in the coverage given by all forms of the media?