



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2006 Volume III: Postwar America: 1945-1963

Persuasively Speaking: Teaching Persuasive Writing through Great American Speeches

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.03.03
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This is a curriculum unit designed for high school students to read, write and analyze persuasive writing techniques and rhetorical vocabulary. Persuasive writing is a must in high school classrooms with the inception of so many assessments asking students to write persuasive pieces. Knowing how to use the techniques of persuasive writing as well as recognizing logical and illogical fallacies, students can improve their writing.

This unit uses the speeches of Dwight Eisenhower, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon and William Faulkner as well as a variety of essays from college level composition books. Choosing speeches from the 1950s and 1960s serves dual purposes; one, it gives students a glimpse into American history and two, it allows students to really look at speeches that teachers and other academics reference so often. The goal of this unit is to give students a variety of opportunities to view others' persuasive writing and use that as a model to write a persuasive, position piece of their own.

(Developed for English III, grade 11; recommended for Junior English III, Senior English IV, and Writing Courses, grades 11-12)

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