The Power of Words

Classroom Activities

These exercises were developed by Pete Pattisson for Campaign! Make an Impact.
About this lesson:

The ability to deliver a compelling and convincing speech has always been an important campaigning skill throughout history to the present. In this lesson, students will learn about how to create and deliver a powerful speech to support their campaign. They will learn the ingredients of a good speech by watching some of the greatest speeches in history. They will then be challenged to create, practice and make their own one minute speech. They will come to appreciate the power of words!

Where this lesson fits in with Citizenship Programme of Study:

This lesson enables young people to develop the Key Process of Advocacy and Representation, in particular their ability to:

a. Express and explain their own opinions to others through discussions, formal debates and voting.
b. Communicate an argument, taking account of different viewpoints and drawing on what they have learnt through research, action and debate.
c. Justify their argument, giving reasons to try to persuade others to think again, change or support them.

It will also enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Key Concepts and Range & Content of Citizenship, according to the particular campaign they are running.

Where this lesson fits in with the History Programme of Study:

This lesson enables young people to develop the Key Process of Using Evidence, in particular their ability to:

a. Identify, select and use a range of historical sources, including textual, visual and oral sources, artifacts and the historical environment.
b. Evaluate the sources used in order to reach reasoned conclusions.

It will also enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Key Concepts and Range & Content of History, according to the particular campaign they are running.

Where this lesson fits in with Campaign! Make an Impact:

This lesson can link with Campaign! Make an Impact in a number of ways:

- The lesson could be used at the Identify your issue stage, to enable young people to make a compelling case for their issue, especially if the whole class must agree on one issue. It would, in other words, be an opportunity for students to make a mini-campaigning speech to convince their peers of the merits of the issue they want to campaign on.
In the **Become an expert** stage, one group or individual could be tasked with becoming an expert on making a campaign speech. Clearly a good speech must be informed and accurate, as well as passionately delivered.

The most obvious place for this lesson however would be nearing the end of the campaign, when students are ready to lobby or advocate directly to a real audience about their chosen campaign issue – this might be their peers, the head teacher, the police, local councillors etc. Students will be particularly keen to master good speech-making at this stage, because they will see the immediate relevance of it to their campaign.

Alternatively or additionally, the lesson could be used in preparation for a debate. The debate could either be to help students chose a campaign issue, to deepen their understanding of a campaign issue, or as part of an action in itself (a public debate can be a campaigning action). Either way, a good debate needs good speeches!

### Creating and Delivering a Compelling Speech

**Learning Question / Objective:**

- What are the ingredients of a great speech? / To understand the ingredients of a great speech.
- Can you make a great speech? / To be able to put these ingredients into practice by delivering a great speech.

**Resources:**

- Projector / Interactive Whiteboard
- Access to the Internet and YouTube
- ‘Power of Words’ PDF
- Mix & Match Speech Sheet
- One Minute Speech Help sheet – Simple and Advanced Versions
- Speech Checklist
- Speech Transcripts
  - Barack Obama: *Words Matter*
  - Martin Luther King: *I Have a Dream*
  - Will Smith: *Live 8*
  - Barack Obama: *Yes We Can!*
  - Ann Widdicombe: *Fox Hunting*
  - William Wilberforce: *Abolition Speech*
  - Christabel Pankhurst: *Women’s Right to Vote*
Learning Steps

Optional Starter Activity:

Using the ‘Mix & Match Speech’ PDF, show students a quote from a famous speech and ask them to identify the speaker. Scroll down to the page after the quote to reveal the correct answer (transcripts are available to download). You might like to use the document in the following ways:

- You may want to change the order of the quotes or add new ones to make them more appropriate and relevant to your students.
- Split the class into small teams and ask them to discuss and then answer (you could use mini-whiteboards if you have them).
- Find the speeches on YouTube and either play them with the volume down and ask students to say what the speech is.
- Block the image on the screen so they can just hear the speech and ask them who is making it.

Introduction:

Explain to students that all the great campaigners in history have used speeches to support their campaigns. Words matter!

Play this clip of Barack Obama’s famous ‘Words Matter’ speech (up to 1.20mins).

**NB You can go direct to the Internet to get each clip, or just click on the hyperlinks in this document.**

http://tiny.cc/8zYue

Or here’s another inspiring speech from Obama that you may prefer:

http://tiny.cc/EYGdw

Don’t forget to click on the ‘full screen’ tab at the bottom right hand corner of the YouTube screen, to make the image bigger.

Alternatively, you could use the historical example of William Wilberforce’s great abolition speech against the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Read out, or ask a student to read out, a section from the transcript. The section highlighted in red is particularly compelling, where he speaks of the number of slaves who died.

Step 1: The Ingredients of a Great Speech

Explain to students that there are 3 key ingredients to a good speech:

- Keep It Simple
- Repeat, Repeat, Repeat!
- It's a performance!

Keep It Simple:

All good speeches have a very simple message; one big idea that the speakers wants to get across. So think about what that big idea is and stick that that. Keep it simple.

Perhaps the most famous example of this comes from one of the most famous speeches ever made; Martin Luther King’s ‘I Have a Dream’ Speech. This speech captured the hopes of a whole people in one simple phrase.

http://tiny.cc/EvWlP

Will Smith uses the same approach in this clip from Live 8. The only point he wants people to remember is that a child in Africa dies from poverty every 3 seconds. The most appropriate section starts from 1.20mins.

http://tiny.cc/tLyaz

2. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat:

Once a good speaker has found their big, simple idea, they repeat it, repeat it, and repeat it.

This clip shows Obama hammering home his famous campaign message, ‘Yes We Can’. The best section starts from 10.45mins.

http://tiny.cc/3ETA6

Or if you want a more musical version of it, click here:

http://tiny.cc/INNyQ

Extension: for more able students, explain that good speech-makers often speak in ‘3s’. They will repeat a variation of a phrase three times, for example, in Ann Widdicombe’s speech against fox hunting in the House of Commons she says, “I am not against… I am not against… What I am against is”.

http://www.bl.uk/learning/citizenship/campaign/myh/speeches/transcript1/widdecombetranscript.html

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3. It's a performance!

Even the best written speech in the world will have no impact if it is not delivered well. A great speech is a performance! That means you must be passionate, emotional, and even funny. Make it funny, and people will listen. In order to do this you need to practice. The key is not to read your speech, but to perform it. Make some basic notes, then practice, practice, practice.

In the following clip, Ann Widdicombe MP makes a memorable speech against fox hunting in the House of Commons. She speaks with passion and emotion, but also uses humour to get her point across.

http://www.bl.uk/learning/citizenship/campaign/myh/speeches/transcript1/widdecombetranscript.html

Your students may also enjoy this one – not a campaigning speech, but a great one from a speaker who knew how to use humour and even poetry to get his point across; Mohammed Ali:

http://tiny.cc/QPvJk

Does this speech follow the rules?

Play the following speech by Christabel Pankhurst, campaigning for the right for women to vote.

http://www.bl.uk/learning/citizenship/campaign/myh/speeches/transcript2/pankhursttranscript.html

Ask the students to judge it according to the three ingredients of a good speech. It may help to give them a copy of the transcript of the speech.

- Does she keep it simple?
- Does she repeat, repeat, repeat?
- Does she perform?

Here are two more contemporary (and amusing) clips of how not to do it!

http://tiny.cc/iBXh0

http://tiny.cc/wrKp2

Step 2: Preparing a One Minute Speech

Now that your students have understood the three key ingredients of a good speech, it’s their turn to prepare a one minute speech.

Students should work in pairs, small groups or their campaign teams, depending on how their projects are organised. Using the One Minute
Speech Help sheet (there are two versions – simple and advanced), give students at least 20 minutes to prepare and practice a one minute speech. The content of their speeches could either be something generic, such as a speech about their favourite football team, or it could be about their chosen campaign issue.

Step 3: Make that speech!

There may not be time for everyone to make a speech, but each group could nominate one speaker. The speaker will then come up and present their speech to the class. Other students will use the Speech Checklist to rate the speaker and give constructive feedback.

The speeches can be used in three ways:

1. **Choosing an issue** - If you have decided that the class must all campaign on the same issue, it may be that you challenge students to make a speech in support of their preferred issue, followed by a class vote to decide what issue the class campaigns on.

2. **Real Audience** - Having practiced this in class, the real aim is to make the speech in front of an appropriate audience, for example if your students are campaigning for safety on their local streets, they may want to make the speech to their local police officer.

3. **Debate** - To make the speeches more engaging, you may want to build them into a debate. This could work at two stages of Campaign! Make an Impact. If you are choosing an issue that a whole class will campaign on, you might want to have a debate at the ‘Identify Your Issue’ stage. Alternatively, you could use it at the final stage of your campaign, perhaps as part of a public event to raise awareness of your issue. A public debate can be a campaign action in itself.