

Senate Cabinet Confirmation Hearings: Writing and Delivering a Persuasive Speech

Lesson Overview:

In a democracy, good ideas aren't enough – you have to persuade others to agree. You have to garner the votes to move an idea forward or it will die in committee. This lesson helps students develop their ideas into solid proposals that win people over. In this particular lesson, student will pretend to be a US Senator and will urge a yea or nay vote on a Presidential Cabinet nominee.

Duration of the Lesson:

Multiple days

Materials List:

- Classroom projector and screen
- Internet access
- Classroom whiteboard/chalkboard
- Index cards, one per student
- Copies of handouts (at end of this document)

Oregon Social Sciences Academic Content Standards & Social Science Analysis Standards

- 6.28 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of these arguments.
- 7.30 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources and diverse media while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments
- HS.6 * Examine institutions, functions and processes of the United States government.
- HS.71 Construct arguments using precise claims, integrating and evaluating information provided by multiple sources, diverse media, and formats, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary strengths and weaknesses.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to... (SWBAT)

- Name Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals
- Defend a claim using evidence and reasoning
- Deliver a persuasive speech to an audience

Essential Question:

How can we use words to persuade an audience to feel, think, or act in a particular way?

Procedure:

| Time | Activity |
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| 10 min | <p>Opener Use the resources in CLP’s current event on the President’s Cabinet to introduce what a cabinet is and who Trump has nominated for confirmation by the Senate. Show this overview: What to expect during confirmation hearings for Trump's cabinet picks, Campaign Legal Center, Jan 15, 2025 https://youtu.be/pABldH6Mnk0?si=9J9pIKZLxnRYYYYOO</p> |
| 20 min | <p>Model As a class, watch some clips of C-SPAN coverage of nomination hearings. Example: here is a clip from Oregon’s Senator Wyden and Idaho’s Senator Crapo on the Treasury Secretary nominee Scott Bessent: https://www.c-span.org/program/us-senate/senators-wyden-and-crapo-on-treasury-secretary-nominee/655027</p> <p>Number off students 1 or 2 so that half the class evaluates Wyden’s speech and half evaluate Crapo’s speech.</p> <p>Once students have watched the video clips of their assigned Senator, ask your students to write down:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the message the Senator wanted to give the rest of the Senate? 2. What did he do to make his message convincing? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Content (ideas) b. Delivery (voice and physical presence) <p>Next, have students partner up with the opposite speech to share what they observed.</p> |
| 3 min | <p>Direct Instruction Introduce the three types of appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. And then draw a triangle on the board labeling each point one of the appeals to show how all three work together to persuade. Add the definition to make it clear. It will look something like the handout below. Repeat this so you have two triangles on the Board. Label one Wyden and the other Crapo.</p> |
| 10 min | <p>Guided Practice Have students write examples of what they heard each Senator do on the triangle next to the appeal they think is the best fit. Once all students who wanted to add to the diagram have finished, review these and discuss the categories (some may overlap).</p> <p>Check for understanding Discuss: What could have been better in each of the three categories? (logos, ethos, pathos)</p> |
| 10 min | <p>Application Introduce the assignment for the students next. They will be writing and delivering their</p> |

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| | <p>own persuasive speech as if they are a Senator voting on the nomination of a particular Cabinet nominee. Stress that long-winded speeches may be common in the Senate but we are only going to require 1 min speeches. Let students know they can express their own opinion on whether or not the nominee should be confirmed, but that they must support their ideas with evidence and analysis.</p> <p>Decide how to distribute the cabinet nominee assignments. Will you have students draw names from a hat? Will you include some who were already confirmed or just the remaining who haven't had a Senate vote yet?</p> <p>As the students begin to panic, reassure them that there is a wealth of information available on all Trump's nominees and show them the Ad Fontes Media Bias Chart for how to identify quality sources for facts. Hand out the first worksheet called Pre-Writing Cloze (parts missing so fill in the blanks). Tell them that this is a roadmap to guide their process. Once they have a topic, they will fill this in then gather new evidence on the back.</p> |
| 10 min | <p>Closing Hand out research notes page (below) and assign each student a Cabinet nominee.</p> |
| Next class period but length of time spent researching will vary | <p>Inquiry Research time The level of support you offer students will depend on their experience and skill with navigating sources and understanding background info.</p> |
| Will vary | <p>Once students have gathered enough evidence, hand out the Optional Speech Organization sheet and read as a class. Clarify any parts that students don't understand. Give students writing time to begin their drafts.</p> |
| Will vary | <p>Once most students have a first draft, pair them up and have them complete the Persuasive Speech Peer Editing Worksheet to give feedback to each other. You may want to model how to be kind and constructive in the phrasing of this feedback if needed.</p> |
| Will vary | <p>Students who have received peer feedback should move to revising their drafts.</p> |
| Will vary | <p>Schedule students for the performance part of their speeches. Once everyone knows their date and time, review what it takes for successful delivery of a live speech. Ask students to think on any excellent speeches they've ever heard, whether it be from a wedding, a graduation, an assembly, or even a dinner toast. Have them identify what aspects of the performance made it memorable. Remind them that Senate speeches are broadcast live to the whole country and should be formal, not like most wedding toasts!</p> <p>Hand out the overview called Preparing for Effective Delivery of a Persuasive Speech and read it as a class. Clarify any parts students found confusing.</p> |

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| | Introduce your performance assessment rubric and go over what will be expected of your students. Decide if you will be including student feedback as well as a teacher evaluation of the speeches. Plan for rehearsal time, perhaps in student pairs at first. |
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Assessment(s):

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formative - The Pre-Writing Worksheet will give you an idea of who is struggling and who knows where they are headed ● Peer - The peer editing will create a safety net to catch anyone who isn't quite ready to present yet. ● Summative - The final speech can be assessed both in writing and delivery, as the teacher chooses |
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Modifications/Variations:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The topic of the speeches can be by student interest to make it more accessible. ● The length of the speeches can be adjusted to accommodate student ability, experience, readiness. ● Sometimes students who fear public speaking to a whole class will willingly speak to a smaller student group. |
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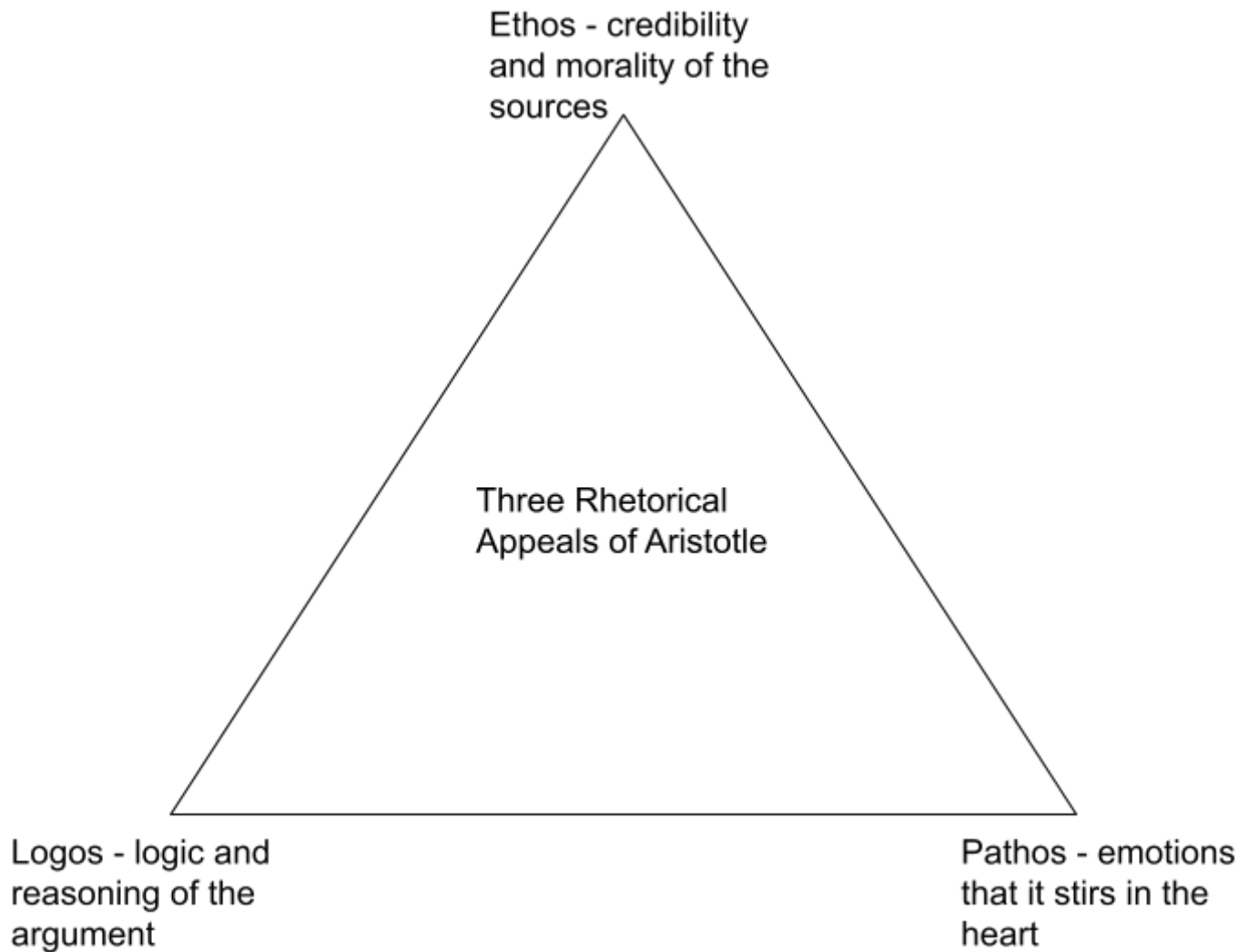
Lesson Recommendations:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's easier to guide students through the inquiry phase if they are all speaking on the same topic but it's far more interesting to sit through the speeches if they are all on different topics! ● Start with impromptu speeches on ordinary objects and their importance (this stapler is essential to the educational world...) ● Many students need help finding credible sources for their research phase. Steering them toward particular articles can save a lot of time. ● School and public libraries have databases with peer reviewed articles on topics and are searchable. |
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Lesson Reflections:

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| What worked well in the lesson? Why? | |
| What would I modify for future implementation? | |

Three Appeals of Rhetoric





Research Notes

My nominees name is: _____, contender for _____

Using only credible sources, record facts here to use as evidence in your speech.

| Source | Findings |
|--------|----------|
| | |



Optional Speech Organization: Senate Cabinet Confirmation Hearing

Directions: Use this sheet to help you organize the order of your ideas. Research the nominee before you decide if you want to urge The Senate to confirm or oppose President Trump's nomination of the Cabinet contender. As you write your first draft, you can follow this guide.

Thesis:

- “Senator Grassley, fellow Senators, I recommend we (confirm or oppose) the nomination of (name of nominee) for (Cabinet position) because (main reason or reasons).”

Body:

- Summarize the nominee’s background, emphasizing the parts that support your thesis above.
 - Logos: What has the candidate done that makes them good/bad for this job? What information do we need to know about this person to help us make this decision? Give examples.
 - Ethos: How well respected is the candidate in their field? Who endorses this candidate and who is opposing their nomination? Is the candidate wise and experienced or reckless and ignorant?
 - Pathos: What wonderful things make us trust this person and want us to have them advise our President on important issues of the country? OR What are the red flags that make us worried about this candidate steering the country and having the President’s ear? Give examples.

Counterpoint

- I recognize that others (you can even name them) may say _____ because _____.
- However, the evidence shows that _____ (stress that your recommendation is stronger than theirs because....)

Conclusion

- It is with the best interest of our nation that I urge a (yea/nay) vote for (name of nominee) as (role in the President’s Cabinet).

Persuasive Speech Peer Editing Worksheet

Author's name:

Your name:

| | <i>Check the draft:</i> | <i>Respond below with your answers and explanation:</i> |
|----------------|---|---|
| Thesis | Is the thesis clear? Can you tell whether the speaker supports or opposes the nomination? | |
| Logos | What evidence from the speech supports the speaker's take on the nominee? List it. What information would make the argument stronger? What are you still wondering? | |
| Ethos | Do you trust the speaker did a thorough and fair analysis of the nominee? What other information would add more credibility to the speaker? | |
| Pathos | What are the emotional appeals in the speech? Does it pull you in a direction? | |
| Praise | What is effective with this speech? | |
| Propose | What could the author do to make this speech better? In what ways are you still unconvinced? | |

Preparing for Effective Delivery of a Persuasive Speech

Your goal: To persuade the audience to feel, think, or act in a particular way.

Even well written speeches can fail, if not well delivered. Here are some key elements to ensure success:

- Look at your audience and perform for them, don't read to to them
- Ensure your audience can hear you without having to strain
- Use your body language to convey your message, as well as your voice
- Use visual aids or props, if appropriate
- Dress professionally and address the audience with respect
- Project confidence in your research and analysis, without arrogance
- Generate enthusiasm by being authentically dedicated to your topic
- Vary the rhythm of your sentences to keep your audience awake (no lullabies)

Which of the above do you think you need the most help with?

How much practice do you think you will need?

Who would you feel most comfortable rehearsing with?

Who do you think could give you the best feedback?

Thinking about people who speak for a living, who do you think would be good role models for you?