

PERSUASION

TEACHER RESOURCES



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Faculty of Classics

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Persuasion: Teacher Resources

The Art of Persuasion

It is possible to change someone's mind, but it is not always easy. People's beliefs and opinions are often deeply held and influenced by many factors, such as their personal experiences, cultural background, and values. Therefore, it is important to approach discussions and conversations with respect and an open mind, and to be willing to listen and consider other perspectives.

That being said, there are certain strategies that can be effective in persuading someone to change their mind. These include presenting **logical and well-reasoned arguments**, using **reliable evidence** to support your position, and **framing your message** in a way that is relevant and appealing to the person you are trying to persuade. It is also important to be respectful and considerate, even if you disagree with the other person's perspective.

Ultimately, the key to changing someone's mind is to have a respectful and open dialogue, and to be willing to listen and consider other perspectives. It is also important to recognize that it is not always possible to change someone's mind, and it is okay to agree to disagree.

It is important to allow people to change their minds because it allows for personal growth and the ability to adapt to new information or experiences. When people are open to changing their minds, they are more likely to be receptive to new ideas and perspectives, which can broaden their understanding of the world and help them make more informed decisions.

Allowing people to change their minds also promotes a culture of open-mindedness and curiosity, which can lead to more productive and respectful discussions and interactions. When people feel that they are free to express their thoughts and opinions without fear of judgment or criticism, they are more likely to be open and honest, which can lead to more meaningful and authentic conversations.

Think of a time when you were able to change someone else's mind. What strategies did you use to do this? If you used multiple, which do you think was most effective and why?

Activism

In the film Mary talked to Mikaela who is an activist, but what does it mean to be an activist and how do they change people's minds?

An activist is someone who actively works to bring about social, political, or environmental change. Activists may engage in a variety of activities, such as protesting, lobbying, campaigning, and raising



Figure 1. Protesters at a Climate rally

awareness about issues they are passionate about. Activism can take many forms, including grassroots organizing, participating in community events and meetings, and using social media and other platforms to amplify their message.

Being an activist requires a willingness to take a stand and speak out against injustice or inequality. It also requires a willingness to take action, whether that means participating in protests, writing letters or emails, or volunteering time and resources to support a cause.

Activism can be a rewarding and fulfilling way to make a difference in the world and bring about positive change. However, it can also be challenging, as activists often face opposition and may encounter resistance or backlash for their efforts.

What is an issue that you are passionate about? Are there ways that you could become an activist for that cause? Some examples might include writing a letter to your local MP or holding a fundraiser for a relevant charity- give it a try!

In order to persuade people, it's useful to understand why they don't already agree with you. Imagine a person who disagrees with all of your arguments. Write down their objections and your counter arguments to them as a way of strengthening your position

Slogans

Slogans are a powerful tool for activism that can be used to effectively communicate the message or goal of a movement. They can help to mobilize people around a particular cause and create a sense of community and solidarity among people who are passionate about the same issue. They are typically snappy, witty, and convey a lot in only a few words.

Hashtags, which are used much like slogans, also have functionality on social media that enables people to easily search for and find posts and information related to a particular topic. They can also be an effective tool for raising awareness about a cause, as sites such as twitter promote trending hashtags.

Come up with a slogan and/or a hashtag for the following causes:

A campaign for less homework

A campaign to save turtles from plastic pollution

A fundraiser for homeless people

A movement promoting the benefits of reading

TOP TIP: Using techniques such as alliteration and rhyme can help make slogans more memorable

One of the most famous 'slogans' in history is "Veni, vidi, vici". It is a Latin phrase meaning "I came, I saw, I conquered." And it is believed to have been coined by Julius Caesar after he defeated Pharnaces II of Pontus in the Battle of Zela in 47 BC. The phrase has since become a cultural reference and has been widely used and quoted in various contexts, such as military, music, art, literature, and entertainment.

The phrase has become a cultural reference because it represents the idea of victory and success, and has been used to imply a sense of determination and resilience. It has also been used to symbolize the idea of overcoming obstacles and achieving one's goals.

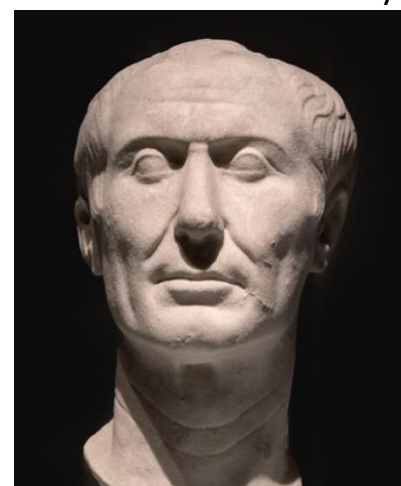


Figure 2. The Tusculum portrait of Julius Caesar

Speech Writing- the art of Rhetoric

In the ancient world speech making was an important part of civic life. In Ancient Athens, citizens were often expected to give speeches, for example when they spoke in the assembly and if they ever had to go to court- there were no MPs or lawyers to speak on your behalf.

Because speech making was so important to their political and judicial processes, the ancient Greeks were interested in how to make the best speech possible.

Aristotle believed that the art of persuasion, or rhetoric, was key to convincing a group of people to act in a certain way. He identified three approaches to persuasion:

- Ethos- the credibility or authority of the speaker on the subject being discussed.
- Logos- using logical and factual arguments to persuade the audience.
- Pathos- appealing to the emotions of the audience in order to gain their acceptance.

Take a look at some famous speeches from any period in history. Analyse them for elements of Ethos, Logos and Pathos. Of the three elements, which one do you think is most important and why?

Oratory, the art of public speaking, was not formally taught until the 5th century BC but it eventually became a central part of Greek education, and there is a canon of 10 orators known as the “Attic orators” who are considered the best speech makers and writers of the Classical period.

Demosthenes

Demosthenes was one of the 10 Attic orators. He started out making his living as a logographer- speech writer- for private legal cases. Though he wouldn't have spoken on behalf of the clients that employed him, his speeches would have been an important part of their cases.

In 354 BC, he gave his first public political speeches and spent much of his career opposing the expansion of Macedon. He worked to restore Athens' dominance and defend its freedom, trying to form an alliance against Macedon and stop Philip II's plans to conquer other Greek states. His speeches are a significant source for the study of the 4th century BC and offer important insight into the political feeling and culture of the contemporary society.



Figure 3. Demosthenes practices his craft

According to Plutarch, Demosthenes was initially ridiculed for his awkward speaking style and struggled with a speech impairment that made it difficult for him to pronounce certain sounds clearly. Demosthenes worked hard to improve his delivery, including his diction, voice, and gestures. In order to do this he is said to have used some very strange methods: speaking while holding his breath, while running, and with his mouth full of stones, as well as shaving half his head to force him into the social isolation he felt he needed to perfect his writing. It is unclear whether these stories are historically accurate, but they do paint the picture of Demosthenes as very dedicated to his craft.

Try some of these more modern techniques for strengthening your voice:

- Practice breathing from your diaphragm by placing your hand on your stomach and taking deep breaths, feeling your hand rise and fall as you inhale and exhale.
- Try Vocal warm-ups including lip trills, tongue twisters, and hums.
- To improve your projection, try speaking in a forward, upward direction, rather than down or to the side. You can also practice speaking in a slightly higher pitch than you normally would, as this can help your voice carry further.

Roman Speech-Making

Speech-making was also important in the roman world.

Quintilian wrote *Institutio Oratoria*, a textbook on rhetoric, around 95 AD. It covers the education and development of the orator, and emphasizes that a good orator must also be a good person, who delivers just and honourable messages in service to society.

In *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian discusses the importance of gesture in public speaking. He argues that gesture can be used to enhance the meaning of the words being spoken, and that a speaker should use gestures appropriately and with restraint in order to effectively convey their message.

Quintilian believes that gestures should be natural and not forced, and that they should be used to emphasize certain points or ideas rather than being used constantly throughout a speech. He also advises speakers to pay attention to their facial expressions and to use them in conjunction with gestures to convey emotion and meaning.



Figure 4. Chirogram from *Chirologia*, 1644.

Watch a political speech (from any era) analyse the gestures of the speaker including their stance and hand movement. What do you notice? What do you think they are trying to convey?

Make a list of all the gestures you can think of that are commonly understood in the modern world. For example, a handshake or a wave as a welcome/greeting.

Research gestures from other periods. How do they compare? Is this an easy task?

Dangerous speeches

Political speeches can be dangerous for a number of reasons. One potential danger is that they can be used to spread misinformation, propaganda, or incite violence, which can lead to confusion and misunderstanding among the public as well as increased discrimination. This can have serious consequences, as it can influence people's decisions and actions, and even contribute to societal divisions and conflicts. Additionally, political speeches can be used to manipulate and deceive people, which can have serious consequences for individuals as well as society as a whole. For example, politicians may use their speeches to make false or misleading promises in order to gain support, which can lead to disappointment and mistrust among the public if those promises are not kept.

Demagogues

In ancient Athens, in particular, there was concern about the danger that powerful oratory posed to Democracy. If politicians only needed to be good speakers it was thought that they could convince the people of anything, regardless of whether it was right or not.

Demagogues were a type of leader in ancient Athens who gained power and influence through their ability to appeal to the emotions and prejudices of the masses. They were often charismatic and skilled speakers who used their platforms to manipulate and deceive the public in order to further their own agendas. In some cases, demagogues were able to gain a significant amount of power and influence. They were viewed with suspicion and mistrust by many in the city, as they were seen as potentially dangerous and destabilizing forces.

For example, demagogues played a significant role in the execution of the Athenian generals in the aftermath of the Battle of Arginusae, which took place in 406 BCE. After the battle, which resulted in a victory for Athens but also significant losses, eight generals were put on trial for their failure to properly retrieve the bodies of the dead and wounded during a storm. One demagogue in particular, Kallixenus, played a key role in inciting the public against the generals and promoting the idea that they should be executed for their perceived failure, despite the fact that they had played a key role in the victory at Arginusae.

The influence of demagogues in the trial and execution of the Athenian generals highlights the power that these leaders had to shape public opinion and influence political decisions in ancient Athens. It also illustrates the dangers of allowing demagogues to wield too much power, as they may prioritize their own agendas over the greater good.

Hitler

In the modern world the speeches of Hitler are a prime example of how dangerous powerful political rhetoric can still be. Hitler was a skilled orator who used his speeches to spread propaganda, sow division and hatred, and incite violence against Jews and other segments of the German population. His speeches were powerful and dangerous for a number of reasons:



Figure 5. Adolf Hitler in office seating on his desk. Bavarian national library, Hoffmann phototheque, image number hoff-1956. Picture of 1936, published in IB in 1937, special issue titled : Adolf Hitler's Germany.

- He appealed to emotions: Hitler was able to tap into people's fears, anger, and resentment, and use them to his advantage. He exploited people's feelings of economic insecurity, national pride, and hatred of minority groups in order to gain support for his ideology.
- He used propaganda and misinformation: Hitler's speeches were filled with lies and misinformation, which he used to manipulate the public and gain support for his policies. He used slogans and propaganda to present himself and his ideas as the solution to Germany's problems, even though they were often harmful and extreme.
- He was able to mobilize the masses: Hitler's speeches were able to rally large crowds and mobilize people to action. He used his charisma and rhetorical skills to inspire and energize his followers, leading them to commit violent acts and carry out his policies.

Hitler's speeches were powerful and dangerous because they were able to sway the opinions and actions of large numbers of people, leading to widespread suffering and destruction during his regime.

Developing listening skills and being critical listeners

Being a good, critical listener means actively listening and evaluating what you hear, rather than just passively accepting it. Here are some tips for becoming a critical listener:

1. Pay attention: Make an effort to focus on the speaker and what they are saying, rather than getting distracted by other things.
2. Avoid interrupting: Allow the speaker to finish their thoughts before you respond. Interrupting can prevent you from fully understanding their message.
3. Ask clarifying questions: If something is unclear or you don't understand a point being made, ask for clarification. This can help you better understand the speaker's perspective.
4. Evaluate the evidence: When listening to an argument or presentation, consider the evidence being presented. Is it reliable and credible? Are there any biases or agendas that might be influencing the speaker's perspective?
5. Consider different perspectives: Try to understand the speaker's perspective, even if you don't agree with it. This can help you see the issue from different angles and can help you form a more well-rounded opinion.
6. Reflect on what you hear: After the speaker has finished, take some time to think about what you heard. Consider the speaker's points and how they relate to your own beliefs and values.

By following these tips, you can become a more critical listener and better evaluate the information you hear.

Look up a modern political speech. Use as many of these steps as you can to evaluate what is being said. Do you agree with the speech? Why?

Look up a modern political speech. Use as many of these steps as you can to evaluate what is being said. Do you agree with the speech? Why?

Read More

Ancient Texts

For more information on the lives of Julius Caesar and Demosthenes, try

Plutarch's Lives (Julius Caesar, Demosthenes)

For more on the art of Rhetoric, look at:

Aristotle's Rhetoric

Quintillian's Institutio Oratoria