

The power of television debates

Language

Election vocabulary, comparatives and superlatives

Level

Elementary; (equivalent to CEF level A2)

Comment

This lesson marks the 50th anniversary of the first televised presidential debate in the US. At the end of the lesson you can watch a video of part of the original debate and compare it with the 2010 UK election debate or stage your own debate in the classroom.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Write the words from exercise 1 on the board. How many of the words do the students know? Give students copies of the worksheet and ask them to complete exercise 1 in pairs. Check through the answers.
- 2 Read through the questions in exercise 2 together. Students then quickly read through the article and look for the answers. Check through the answers.
- 3 Students read the article again and decide if the statements in exercise 3 are true or false, correcting the false ones. Check through the answers. As an optional exercise, ask students to write 3 more true / false sentences themselves. Students then read out their sentences for other students to say if they are true or false.
- 4 In pairs, students complete exercise 4. They should first try doing the exercise without referring back to the article. Then let them check facts with the article. Finally, check through the answers together.
- 5 In groups, students discuss the answers to the questions in exercise 5. Invite some students to share their answers with the rest of the class. If you have the classroom facilities, you could show students a short extract from each of the 1960 and 2010 TV debates. There are links at the end of the teaching notes to two video clips. Ask students to compare what they read with the actual Nixon / Kennedy debate. Then ask them to compare the 1960 video with the 2010 video. What has changed in 50 years? What is the same?
- 6 Either ask students to think of a theme to debate or provide them with one. It could be something related to a local issue or the school. Then follow the instructions on the worksheet to set up the class debate. If your students don't already hold opposing views on the theme, ask them to put themselves in the place of someone else and see their side of the argument. Then stage your debate.

Reading eLesson

Answer key

1

- 1 election
- 2 candidate
- 3 leader
- 4 party
- 5 vice president
- 6 debate
- 7 moderator

2

- 1 the 50th anniversary of the first televised presidential debate
- 2 Senator John Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon
- 3 four television debates
- 4 2010

3

- 1 False (Almost 70 million people watched it.)
- 2 True
- 3 False (He did wear make-up.)
- 4 True
- 5 False (No-one was sure who was going to win.)
- 6 True

4

- 1 most popular
- 2 paler
- 3 healthier, more relaxed
- 4 darker
- 5 better
- 6 more convincing

5 Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QazmVHAO0os> (video (with subtitles) of the first presidential debate)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rk5HvJmy_yg (part of the first UK election debates)