

Advanced-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare and contrast the techniques used to establish a leader's right to rule in an ancient **portrait** and a seventeenth-century cabinet;
- compare uses of **propaganda** in antiquity, the seventeenth century, and the present;
- research examples of various ways the U.S. government has promoted its political agenda;
- create a propaganda poster for a current political leader using persuasive techniques found in artworks and modern-day media.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Cabinet on Stand* by André-Charles Boulle
- Reproduction of *Head of Emperor Caligula* by Unknown Artist
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the cabinet and bust
- Video: *The Merchants of Cool* (a VHS or DVD copy can be ordered or a streaming video can be viewed on the PBS Web site *Frontline* [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/])
- VHS or DVD player (optional)
- Student Handout: *Powers of Persuasion*

Lesson Steps

1. Discuss the life and achievements of **Louis XIV** and his belief in his **divine right to rule**. For information on Louis XIV, see "Louis XIV (1638–1715)" on the BBC Web site *History* (www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/louis_xiv.shtml) or the painting *Portrait of Louis XIV* (see Related Works of Art). Display and discuss the reproduction of *Cabinet on Stand*. Refer to the questions in step 1 of the Beginning-Level Activity and step 2 of the Intermediate-Level Activity. Then ask students how the cabinet could promote the king's right to rule. (*It uses animal symbolism and Greek heroes in its design, shows off expensive materials and the **marquetry** technique, could be sent to another country to be observed and admired, etc.*) In what ways is the cabinet ineffective in swaying opinion? (*Since it is thought that the cabinet was given as a gift to an ambassador, relatively few people would have seen it, and it cannot easily be reproduced for others to see. Also, the symbolism may be difficult to read.*)
2. Display and discuss a reproduction of *Head of Emperor Caligula*. Refer to grade-appropriate discussion questions and information outlined in steps 4–6 of the Intermediate-Level Activity.
3. Compare and contrast the techniques used to establish a leader's right to rule in *Cabinet on Stand* and *Head of Emperor Caligula*. Pass out Background Information about both objects. Do students believe one of the objects is better able to sway opinion than the other? Why or why not? Ask students how advances in technology have affected the ways political messages are spread today.

4. Discuss modern-day techniques for persuading an audience to do or believe something. Watch episodes of the PBS series *The Merchants of Cool* that you find appropriate for your class. The video can be viewed online at the PBS Web site *Frontline* (www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/), or you may wish to order a VHS or DVD copy. Review the different techniques that the media uses to persuade. (For examples of persuasive techniques, download the PowerPoint "Persuasive Strategies" on the ReadWriteThink Web site [www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson56/persuasive_strategies.pps].) Next, instruct students to choose four television or print advertisements and complete the *Powers of Persuasion* handout. Have students present examples of their findings to the class.
5. Just as companies want to convince people to buy their products, governments pay a great deal of attention to how they inform, persuade, and transmit messages about political issues. Pass out another photocopy of the *Powers of Persuasion* handout, and tell students to research examples of various ways the U.S. government has promoted its political agenda, focusing on **symbols**, press conferences, campaigns, or Web sites. (You may wish to focus this activity on iconic images, such as Uncle Sam or Rosie the Riveter, or on more recent images, such as a photograph of President George W. Bush giving a speech to sailors in May 2003 under a "Mission Accomplished" banner. See the article "White House Admits Fault on 'Mission Accomplished' Banner," on the ABC News Web site [abcnews.com/Politics/WireStory?id=4762093].) After students complete their handouts, lead a discussion on the various ways that governments and the press can **spin** stories for political advantage.
6. Tell students that they will create a propaganda poster for a current political leader of their choice. They must either draw the leader or find an image of him or her in a magazine or newspaper. They will incorporate this image within an original poster design. Students must utilize a persuasive technique found in *Cabinet on Stand* or *Head of Emperor Caligula* by either relaying a message through symbolism or associating the political leader with a past hero or legend. They must also incorporate at least one persuasive technique they learned from analyzing various forms of current-day media.

Assessment

Assess students based on their class participation, completion of two *Powers of Persuasion* handouts, and incorporation of one persuasive technique from an artwork and one from modern-day media in a propaganda poster for a current political leader.

Extension

If your school has access to video equipment, have students present a news broadcast or campaign advertisement utilizing persuasive techniques they learned from the artworks and from modern-day media. Students' videos could be broadcast on the school's local television channel, posted to a class blog, or uploaded to a site like YouTube.