

Responding to Comparison/Contrast through Writing: Unusual Smear Campaigns

Two-sentence summary: Students unpack two opposite concepts by creating an imaginary "Smear Campaign," pretending the two concepts are opposing each other in election. Students may create print, radio, or television ads to show how their opposing ideas support different principles.

Background knowledge needed: Mudslinging is what they called negative ad campaigns way back when. Today, they are often called smear campaigns, and elections seem to be the event that brings them out in full force.

A smear campaign is an intentional, premeditated effort to undermine an individual's or group's reputation, credibility, and character. Although they are not very popular or well-liked, they are very common.

If you like this writing assignment idea, be sure to record and save some television smear campaigns that are shown on television during the next election.

Techniques used in smear campaigns:

- Quotes are often used out of context.
- Actions are explained out of context.
- Emotions are played upon.
- Lots of adverbs are used in sentences (like *always, usually, never, definitely, clearly, etc.*).
- Already-answered-for-you types of questions are posed (*Can you really trust this person?*).
- Ominous music often plays in the background.
- Unflattering, black-and-white photos are often used.



Would you vote for me?

Comparing/Contrasting: Encourage your students to think about different perspectives as they brainstorm similarities and differences for this writing assignment. Any positive distinction might be seen as a negative characteristic from a other points-of-view. A *generous nature* might be viewed as a *money-waster* or as an *encourager of begging* by less-than-positive others. As students brainstorm for these, encourage creative and critical thinking.

Differentiating Instruction Ideas: Some students will shine with amazing creativity if asked to work alone on this task, but other students will need to talk and work with peers to create a smear campaign that shows depth of thinking. Allow for both options in your class.

A thought on the writing task: In this high-tech world of ours—where digital recording and filming are incredibly easy—encourage your students to transform written work (posters, brochures, etc.) into audio or video smear campaigns.

Order a copy of the NNWP's *Going Deep with Compare & Contrast Thinking Guide* using this [link](#).

Unusual Smear Campaign Examples

Lions versus meerkats:

Re-elect Lion!

- 2 pounds (them) versus 600 pounds (me)! C'mon. Why are we even having an election?
- I respect property while meerkats destroy it.
- I am an actual cat! Meerkats are "kat" wanna-be's.
- I am loved by vultures and coyotes for being so generous with meat.



We need a better king!

- Me being small means I eat a whole lot less of your relatives.
- We know when to come in out of the rain!
- He's so loud all the time. You can hear him from five miles away. Geez! We're trying to sleep over here!
- He doesn't ever finish his food! What a waster!



Synthetic Division takes on Long Division:

Who the heck wants Long Division?

- It's got the word "long" in it, and who would want to do it?
- You always have to change the signs when you subtract.
- You're more likely to make a mistake if you don't use the right sign.
- It takes up too much space when you have a lot of other problems to solve.
- You're always crossing off information when it's no longer needed, but how can you be sure you're crossing off the right information?

**Vote for Synthetic Division!
The quick problem solver!**

Why is Synthetic Division so great?

**Choose Long Division!
The REAL candidate!**



- It's fake! Who trusts anything fake?
- You can only use it with a degree = 1.
- It's depressing...for the polynomial, at least.
- You have to remove the variables to solve...those poor variables!
- It requires placeholders, which are always confusing!

paid for by the committee to re-elect Long Division