

Lesson Plan

Positions and Persuasion

Book: *Kamala Harris*

Series: Groundbreaking Women in Politics

Level: Voyager

Objective

To help students create a persuasive speech that combines details from a text with their own ideas and experiences.

Supplies

- *Kamala Harris* book
- Notebooks and pencils

Before the Activity

Read the *Kamala Harris* book as a class, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

To start, open the book to the “A Deeper Look” special feature about crime on pages 20–21. This feature describes Kamala Harris’s beliefs and actions related to the death penalty during her time as a prosecutor. Invite a volunteer to read this text out loud.

Next, turn to pages 24–26, which describe Harris’s actions as California’s attorney general. Invite another volunteer to read from the last paragraph on page 24 (“As attorney general ...”) to the first paragraph on page 26 (“... to let her voters down.”).

Last, turn to pages 31–33, which describe Harris’s work in the US Senate. Choose a volunteer to read this text out loud, starting with the last paragraph on page 31 (“Once in the Senate ...”).

These excerpts describe three different points in Harris’s career. In some cases, her actions have seemed to support different beliefs at different times. For example, critics have accused Harris of changing her mind on issues such as the death penalty. Some critics have implied that this means she is unreliable. Today, students will take a deeper look at this criticism and the ideas behind it.

First, ask students to write a response to the following questions in their notebooks:

- Have you ever changed your mind on a topic or issue? What caused you to change?

Give students a few minutes to write their answers. Then introduce a second topic for students to write about:

- Do you think it's fair to expect politicians to maintain the same beliefs and positions over the years? Why or why not?

After giving students a few more minutes to write, ask each student to write a persuasive speech on this topic. Each speech should follow the same pattern:

- Start with a story of when you (or someone else) changed your mind, making sure the story is a good fit for the side you take
- Segue into stating your opinion on whether it's okay for politicians to change their minds
- Give evidence or examples to support your position
- Wrap up with a conclusion that succinctly restates the main idea (i.e., your view and why it's correct)

Evaluation

Have students take turns presenting their speeches to the rest of the class, using the following system to award up to 10 points for each speech:

- 2 points for clearly stating a position
- 2 points for opening with a story that is a good fit for that position
- 2 points for choosing evidence or examples that support the position
- 2 points for explaining this supporting information in a way that is easy to follow
- 1 point for ending with a relevant, compelling conclusion
- 1 point for speaking in a clear, engaging manner

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational texts, grade 1 (RI 1.2).