The I-71 project presents artwork on billboards and other public signage that addresses the theater of red-versus-blue politics during the U.S. presidential campaign. The format for the artwork includes billboards, bumper stickers, and pin-on buttons. Artists engage political issues with nonpartisan nuance around Cincinnati, Columbus and along I-71, the highway that connects these two cities.

This lesson plan is designed to promote nonpartisan conversation about the US political process and elections. The students will view billboards and signage from the I-71 Project and discuss each artist’s work and how they could promote nonpartisan conversation during this election season. They will create their own nonpartisan political slogans and design bumper stickers to exhibit them. The students will have an opportunity to present their artwork to the class for discussion.

**QUOTE**

Contemporary Arts Center Curator Steven Matijcio praises co-curator Anne Thompson for “replacing the heavy-handed rhetoric so prevalent in election years with enigmatic texts that can open up new avenues of political thought.”

**VOCABULARY**

Politics  Enigmatic
Nonpartisan  Discourse
Rhetoric  Slogan

**MATERIALS**

Images of the artwork by various artists featured in the I-71 Project

White contact paper cut in long rectangles (11 in. x 3 in.) to resemble bumper stickers. *if you have access to a button machine you could also make pin-on buttons*

Permanent markers in a variety of colors
DISCUSSION

Share with the class images from the I-71 project

- Have you seen any of these works of art on billboards or signage?
- Do you feel this is an effective way to promote conversation surrounding the election? Why or why not?
- How do the works of art in the I-71 project differ from other political images often seen during an election season?

Present and discuss the vocabulary and in particular the terms nonpartisan.

Discuss the nonpartisan aspect of various artwork from the I-71 Project such as:

- Kay Rosen’s Blurred- examining the partisanship and polarization that occurs during elections.

  Co-curator Anne Thompson notes, “In Missouri, Rosen’s work spoke to red-blue conflicts generally but in Ohio, at this particular moment, it points out how political divisions can shift in surprising ways and how our opinions might not be as straightforward as they appear — or as we believe them to be.”

  www.contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/2016/09/the-i-71-project

- Mel Bochner’s Blah, Blah, Blah- examining communication and discourse during the election season.

  “Both aggressive and nonsensical, this temporary sculpture continues Bochner’s career-long investigation into the potency and limitations of language and, in the election context of Ohio, forms a wry commentary on the state of public discourse and our capacity to listen.”

  www.contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/2016/09/the-i-71-project

Show examples of partisan art such as work by Barbara Kruger or Shepard Fairey. Allow students to compare and contrast these images with the work from the I-71 Project.

Brainstorm and discuss various nonpartisan and universal issues that surround the 2016 election.

Define slogan and discuss the use of slogans in the political process. Invite students to give examples of previous political slogans and invite them to examine the intent of each slogan.

Share and discuss Lisa Anne Auerbach’s artwork in the I-71 Project. This artist incorporates political slogans from historical American elections into patterns on knit sweaters.

Brainstorm slogans that are nonpartisan such as those that encourage people to become more informed about the issues being debated during an election and to exercise their right to vote.
PROCEDURE

• Have the students work in groups to create a nonpartisan slogan for the 2016 election.
• Have each student in the group design their own bumper sticker displaying their group’s slogan.
• Using white contact paper and permanent markers have each student create a bumper sticker displaying their group’s slogan.
• Have each group present their slogan and discuss why it is nonpartisan. Encourage each member of the group to share their individual bumper sticker design.

EVALUATION

• Students will be evaluated on their contribution to class discussions.
• Students will be evaluated on their ability to discuss why their slogan is an example of nonpartisan commentary.

TEACHER RESOURCES


www.ContemporaryArtsCenter.org/exhibitions/2016/09/the-i-71-project

http://Election.Scholastic.com/

www.Democracyandme.org