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Rhetoric Unit

## Uncovering Fallacies in Documentary Film

**Abstract:** This is an introductory activity that will familiarize students with eight essential fallacies. Students will be given a specific fallacy and its definition along with examples. Student will search for their fallacy in a twenty minute screening of a documentary film. Through small group and whole class discussion, students will leave class with an expert understanding of their own fallacy as well as a solid foundation of understanding for the other seven fallacies presented.

### Common Core Standards:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1b](#) Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1c](#) Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d](#) Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2](#) Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3](#) Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4](#) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.6](#) Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

## Procedure:

1. Begin class by handing each student one fallacy. The fallacies are lengthy (about 1 page each). Three students in the class will have the same fallacy. (The eight fallacies are attached to this document).
2. Students should read over their fallacy and ask the teacher for clarification.
3. Students will group by fallacy and discuss what they have read and accordingly what they anticipate that they should look for in the film.
4. The teacher should then screen the first twenty minutes of a film. Teacher should use documentary films. Documentaries that deal with current events or topics in popular culture tend to work best- as students have some prior understanding and expectations for the topic. *Bowling for Columbine* (Director Michael Moore, 2002), is a popular and effective movie for this lesson. However, it is rated R. Another great film to use is, *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (Director Chris Paine, 2006); this film is rated PG.
5. Students will be looking for, and taking notes on, examples of their fallacy within the first twenty minutes of the film. (Please use the sheet attached to this lesson).
6. When the screening is over, students will turn back to their groups and share what they have found. Likely, students will find different examples of the same fallacy. They should be encouraged to take notes.
7. The teacher can then lead the class in a discussion about each fallacy. The students are responsible for defining the fallacy that they were assigned and discussing the examples that took note on from the film.
8. Students should take notes during the class discussion of each fallacy. Each student should have experience working with each fallacy throughout the rhetoric unit and accordingly, these notes will help their comprehension and conceptualization of the fallacies.

