

LESSON PLAN

Step 2

PROMOTING THE CANDIDATE

Objectives

- Identify the role of political parties in presidential elections.
- Interpret objects from presidential campaigns.

Materials

- Copies of Activity Pages 2A–C, pages 10–12.
- Pens, pencils.

Subjects

Social studies, language arts

Procedure

1. Ask your students to review what they learned by reading the portions of the Constitution included in Activity Page 1A. Is there any mention of the presidential campaign process? Does the Constitution say anything about political parties? Using the Introduction as a guide, tell your students that the writers of the Constitution did not anticipate the scope of national political parties and would not have imagined the large expense and permanent organization necessary to run a modern presidential campaign. Be sure to emphasize that ever since political parties were formed, they

have profoundly shaped the way Americans elect their president. (*You may wish to remind them of party-driven institutions such as conventions and primaries.*)

2. Give each student a copy of Activity Pages 2A–C. Tell your students that they will be examining objects at the Smithsonian Institution that originally came from presidential campaigns of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Stress that political parties created these objects to provide simple and direct reasons for voters to consider their candidates' character and personal qualifications.

3. Direct your students to Object 1 but do not tell them what it is—an 1840 campaign ribbon for Whig candidate William Henry Harrison. Ask them to look carefully at the object, examining both the text and pictures. Is it clear who the candidate is? What qualities make this candidate trustworthy enough to be president? (*Some students might find the nineteenth-century language difficult to understand and may need extra coaching.*) Answers may vary, but students will likely conclude that voters were encouraged to elect Harrison because he was, like George Washington, a military hero and farmer and so presumably well prepared for the presidency.

4. Repeat the inquiry process outlined in lesson step 3 for the remaining objects on Activity Pages 2A–C. (*Be sure to consult the key to campaign objects and possible answers provided in the Introduction and this lesson plan.*) Have students write their answers in the spaces provided on the Activity Pages.

5. Conclude the activity by asking your students what these campaign objects might indicate about the qualities American voters seek in their president. Students will probably conclude that voters seem to want proven leaders who can keep the nation at peace and economically strong.

KEY TO CAMPAIGN OBJECTS

Object 1

1840 campaign ribbon for Whig candidate William Henry Harrison.

Message to voters:

Consider Harrison because he was, like George Washington, a military hero and farmer and so is well prepared for the presidency.

Object 2

1956 comic book (aimed at women voters) for Republican candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Message to voters:

Consider Eisenhower because he brought about economic prosperity by balancing the budget, cutting taxes, and reducing inflation; ended the war in

Korea; conducts himself with honesty and integrity; and took action on civil rights during his first term.

Object 3

1912 campaign poster for Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson.

Message to voters:

Consider Wilson because he displays the leadership qualities of George Washington.

Object 4

1972 campaign poster for Democratic candidate George McGovern.

Message to voters:

Consider McGovern because he would address the concerns of ordinary people if he were elected.

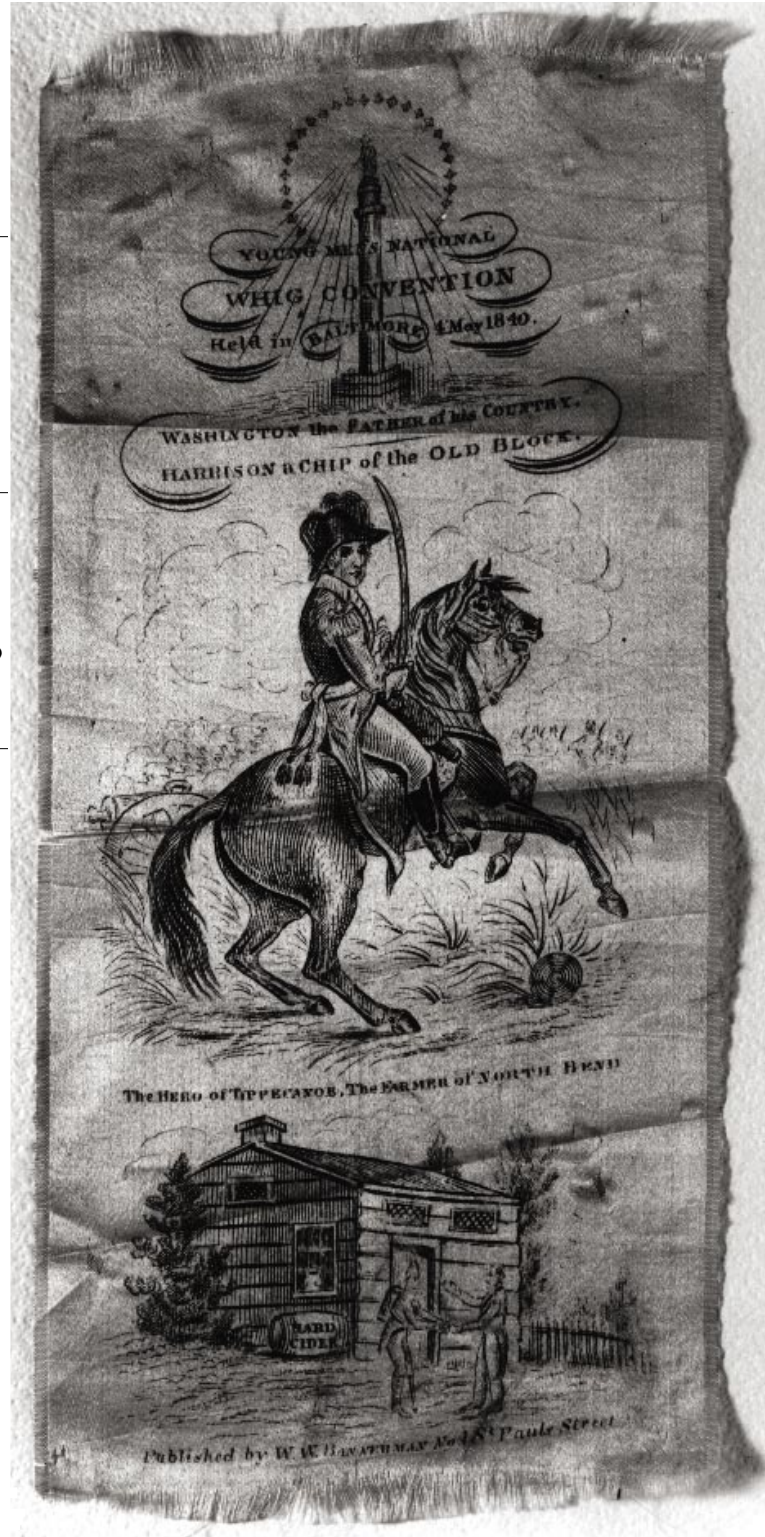
Activity Page 2A

Object 1

What is the candidate's name?

What party did the candidate belong to?

Why should voters choose this candidate?



Activity Page 2B

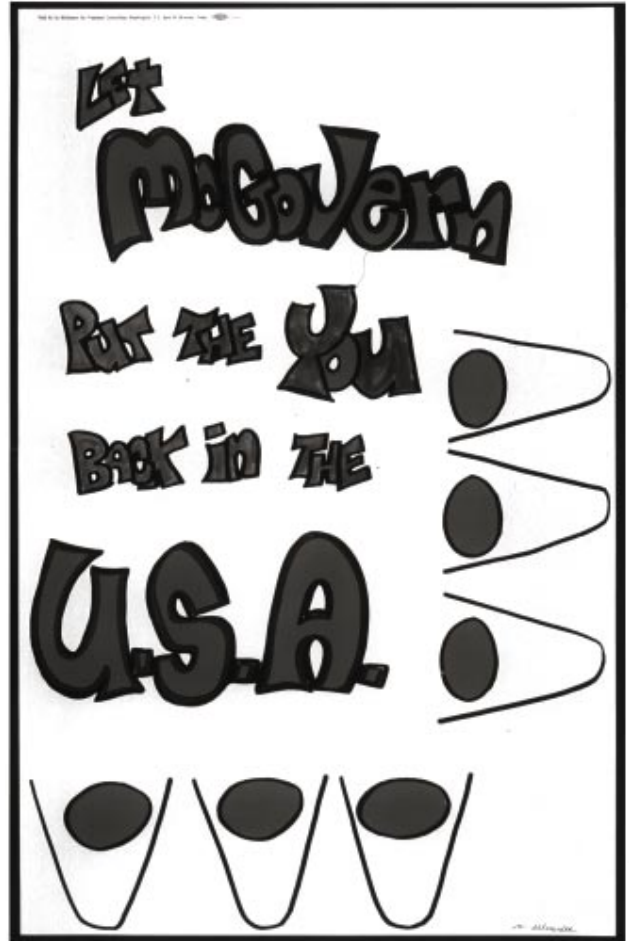
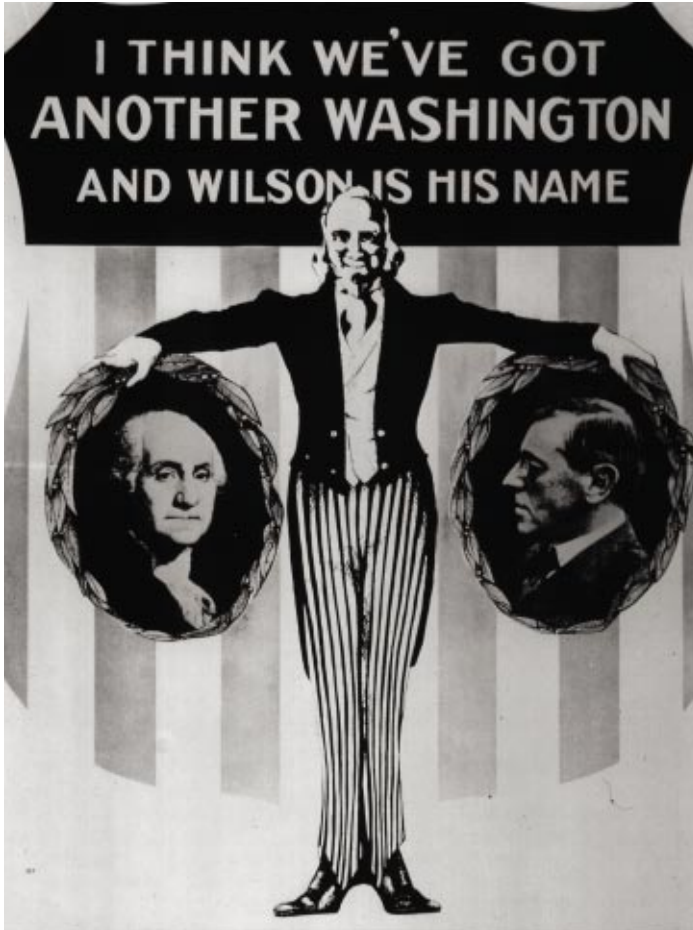


Object 2

What is the candidate's nickname? (Your teacher can tell you his full name.)

Why should voters (especially women) choose this candidate?

Activity Page 2C



Object 3

What is the candidate's name?

Why should voters choose this candidate?

Object 4

What is the candidate's name?

Why should voters choose this candidate?
