

Caucuses and Elections

How do presidential candidates, their campaigns and their supporters attempt to win the vote of the American electorate?

For a hundred years after the Civil War, Iowa was a reliably Republican state. Only during the crisis of the Great Depression in the 1930s did Iowa show up in the Democratic column on election night. However, beginning the 1950s, the Democratic Party took on new life in the face of rural/urban divisions, the growing strength of labor unions, and attention to national issues like civil rights and the Vietnam war. Cities pushed for more equitable representation in the legislature against rural resistance.

Despite its smaller size and population, Iowa became very important in the election of a U.S. President. Each state has its own process for selecting delegates to national political conventions where the parties nominate their candidates. Iowa uses a caucus system. Members of each party meet together in local meetings called caucuses to select delegates to a county convention that chooses delegates to the district and state conventions. The state conventions are held in June and choose delegates to the national convention. Because the process takes many months, the local caucus has to meet in January or early February to get all the steps done. Because of that timing, the Iowa caucus becomes the first official step anywhere in the nation in selecting a president, and news reporters flock to the state to find out which candidates are ahead.

In 1972, Senator George McGovern gained national attention when he came out on top of the Iowa caucuses. In 1976, Jimmy Carter made a major effort to score well in Iowa. He did and went on to become the Democratic Party's nominee, and eventually, the president of the United States. After that, the Iowa caucus attracted national attention as candidates from both parties flocked to the state to make their case to Iowa voters in local cafes, church basements, and similar venues. The winner of the Iowa caucus doesn't always become the party's candidate, but a poor showing in Iowa often leads candidates to withdraw.

From its early years when Republicans almost always won most elections, Iowa now has two competitive parties. Nevertheless, Iowa voters tend to keep incumbents in office. Harold Hughes, a Democrat, and Robert Ray, a Republican, both won re-election to the governorship several times, and Terry Branstad became the longest serving governor in U.S. history. Charles Grassley and Tom Harkin represented different parties but both hung on to their U.S. Senate seats through multiple elections. The majority in the legislature, however, has shifted numerous times, sometimes even split between the state senate and the state house.

Supporting Questions

How do presidential candidates, campaigns and their supporters portray their political opponents?

- ["King Andrew the First," 1832](#)
- ["An Available Candidate: The One Qualification for a Whig President" Political Cartoon, 1848](#)
- ["Save America" Speech, 1920](#)
- ["Peace, Little Girl \(a.k.a. Daisy\)," 1964](#)

What kind of positive images do campaigns and their supporters create for their presidential candidates?

- ["Farmer Garfield: Cutting a Swath to the White House" Campaign Poster, 1880](#)
- ["The Song of Armageddon," 1912](#)
- ["Stonewall Wilson" Song, 1916](#)
- ["Safeguard America!" Speech, 1920](#)
- ["Hoover the Humanitarian," 1928](#)

How do presidential candidates and their campaigns attempt to establish a personal connection with the electorate?

- ["For President of the People, Zachary Taylor," 1848](#)
- ["Letter from Thomas T. Swann to Abraham Lincoln," 1860](#)
- [Ulysses S. Grant Campaign Poster, 1872](#)
- ["Eleven Reasons Why Iowa Should Re-elect Senator Cummins" Leaflet, 1920](#)
- [Presidential Candidate Henry A. Wallace Campaigns at William Penn College, 1948](#)

*Printable Image and Document Guide

Additional Resources

[The Living Room Candidate](#) - "The Living Room Candidate" website contains more than 300 commercials from every presidential election since 1952.

[Pictorial Americana: Selected Images from the Collections of the Library of Congress - Presidential Campaigns](#) - This website from the Library of Congress contains primary sources related to each presidential campaign between the years 1836 and 1908.

[Presidential Campaign Posters from the Library of Congress](#) - This website is a companion to the Library of Congress' book, *Presidential Campaign Posters From the Library of Congress: Two Hundred Years of Election Art*.

["Some Account of Some of the Bloody Deeds of General Jackson"](#) - One of the most well-known "coffin hand bills" distributed during the election of 1828.

"King Andrew the First," 1833



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Weitenkampf, 1833

Description

The caricature is of Andrew Jackson as a despotic monarch, probably issued during the fall of 1833 in response to the president's September order to remove federal deposits from the Bank of the United States. The print is dated a year earlier by Weitenkampf and related to Jackson's controversial veto of Congress's bill to recharter the Bank in July 1832. However, the charge, implicit in the print, of Jackson exceeding the president's constitutional power, however, was most widely advanced in connection not with the veto but with the 1833 removal order, on which the President was strongly criticized for acting without congressional approval. Jackson, in regal costume, stands before a throne in a frontal pose reminiscent of a playing-card king. He holds a "veto" in his left hand and a scepter in his right. The U.S. Constitution and the arms of Pennsylvania (the United States Bank was located in Philadelphia) lie in tatters under his feet. A book "Judiciary of the U.S. States" lies nearby. Around the border of the print are the words: "Of Veto Memory", "Born to Command" and "Had I Been Consulted."

Text-Dependent Questions

- How does the artist portray President Andrew Jackson? What does the artist include in the drawing to achieve this portrayal?
- According to the cartoonist, is President Andrew Jackson respecting the separation of powers among the three branches of government? Provide evidence from the cartoon that led you to your decision.
- Consider the reasons for independence from British rule as listed in the Declaration of Independence. From the perspective of the artist, how do Jackson's actions contradict those reasons?

Citation Information

Weitenkampf, 1833. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“An Available Candidate: The One Qualification for a Whig President” Political Cartoon, 1848



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Currier, Nathaniel, New York, 1848

Description

This political cartoon shows a man in a military uniform, with epaulets and a plumed hat, holding a sword and seated on a pile of skulls. The cartoon serves as a scathing attack on Whig principles, as embodied in their selection of a presidential candidate for 1848. Here the “available candidate” is either General Zachary Taylor or Winfield Scott, both of whom were contenders for the nomination before the June convention. The figure sits atop a pyramid of skulls, holding a blood-stained sword. The skulls and sword allude to the bloody but successful Mexican War campaigns waged by both Taylor and Scott, which earned them considerable popularity (a combination of attractiveness and credibility termed “availability”) among Whigs. The figure here has traditionally been identified as Taylor, but the flamboyant, plumed military hat and uniform are more in keeping with contemporary representations of Scott. The print may have appeared during the ground swell of popular support which arose for Scott as a rival to Zachary Taylor in the few months preceding the party’s convention in Philadelphia on June 7, 1848. On June 9, Zachary Taylor captured the Whig nomination.

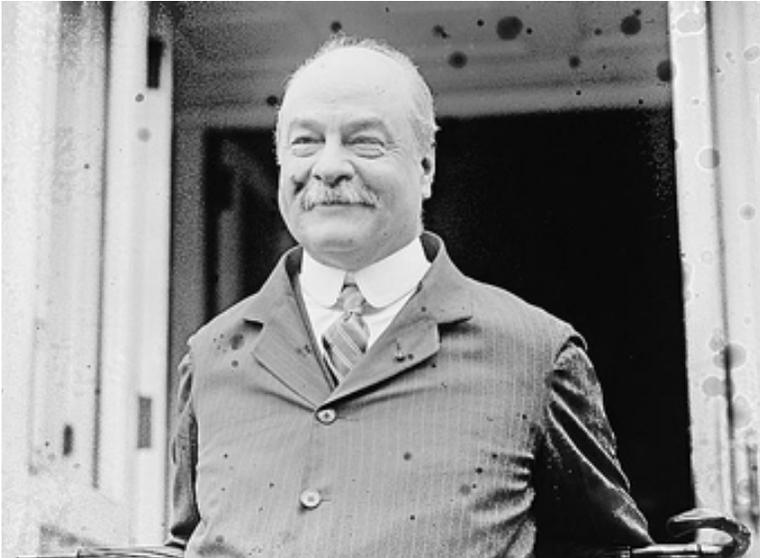
Text-Dependent Question

- Using specific evidence from the cartoon, explain how the cartoonist tries to turn the Mexican-American War into a liability for the Whig Party. Do you feel the artist was successful?

Citation Information

Currier, Nathaniel, New York, 1848. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Save America” Speech, 1920



[Link to Audio Resource](#)

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Butler, Nicholas Murray, Columbia University, 1920

Description

This speech was made by Nicholas Murray Butler, the president of Columbia University. The speech, made in 1920, was in support of the Republican party, which Butler said will lead and guide the United States to avoid division. He said, “There are elements in our population with deductions which sound strange to the American ear. Such men frankly proclaim their preference for the political philosophy of Lenin and Trotsky to those of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Webster and Lincoln.”

[Transcript of Nicholas Murray Butler’s Speech](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- According to Butler, why is it especially important that the Republican Party win the upcoming presidential election? What’s at stake?
- Use passages from the speech to explain how Butler contrasts the Republican Party with the Democratic Party.
- Considering the context surrounding the election, which line of this speech would be especially powerful in convincing listeners to vote for the Republican Party?

Citation Information

Document: Butler, Nicholas Murray, Columbia University, 1920. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Audio: Butler, Nicholas Murray, Columbia University, 1920. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Peace, Little Girl (a.k.a. Daisy),” September 7, 1964



Courtesy of Library of Congress, “Daisy,” Schwartz, Tony, Campaign to Re-elect President Lyndon B. Johnson, 7 September 1964

Description

Arguably the most famous television campaign advertisement in history, “Peace, Little Girl (a.k.a. Daisy)” depicts a young girl peacefully picking flower petals only to be interrupted by a countdown and nuclear explosion, followed by a request for voters to re-elect President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Text-Dependent Questions

- What images did the director of this advertisement be sure to carefully include? Why did he choose to include them? What do some of these images represent?
- Speculate about the type of emotional response the director of this campaign advertisement intended to create. Was the director successful? Why or why not?
- How does this campaign advertisement portray the incumbent, President Lyndon B. Johnson? How does it portray his challenger, Senator Barry Goldwater? Use specific evidence from the advertisement to defend your interpretations.

Citation Information

“Daisy,” Schwartz, Tony, Campaign to Re-elect President Lyndon B. Johnson, 7 September 1964. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Farmer Garfield: Cutting a Swath to the White House” Campaign Poster, 1880



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Butler, Nicholas Murray, Columbia University, 1920

Description

James A. Garfield, Republican candidate for president in 1880, is depicted as a farmer in his wheat field using a scythe to clear his wheat field of both weeds and dangerous snakes. His “scythe” holds the words honesty, ability and patriotism, as he swipes at the “weeds” of calumny, falsehood, fraud, venom, hatred, defamation and malice.

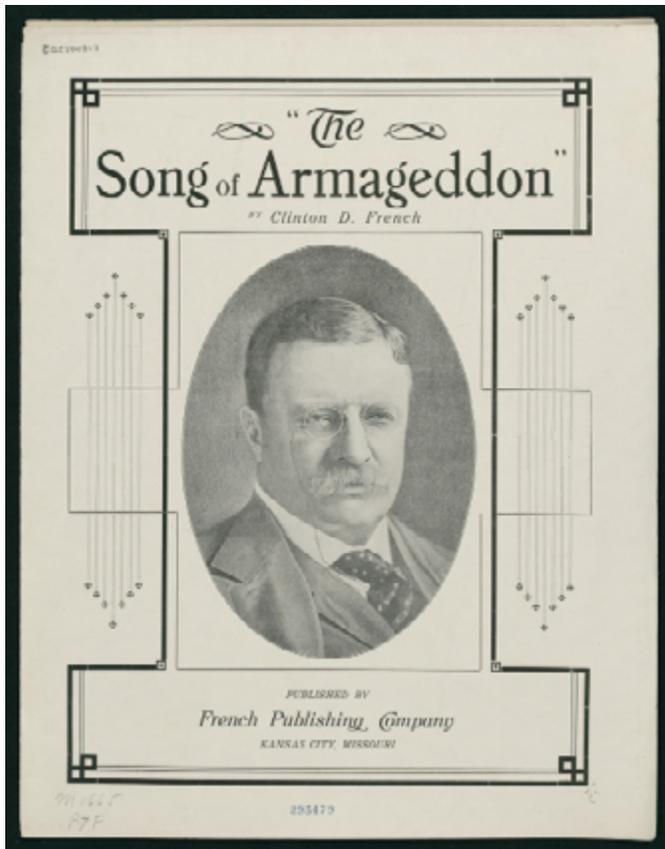
Text-Dependent Questions

- Based on the specific imagery used in the drawing, describe the kind of person and candidate the artist believes James A. Garfield to be.
- How does the portrayal of Garfield contrast with that of his opponents in the poster?
- What about this campaign poster would resonate with voters today?

Citation Information

“Farmer Garfield: Cutting a Swath to the White House,” Currier & Ives, New York, 1880. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

"The Song of Armageddon," 1912



Courtesy of Library of Congress, French, Clinton D., French Publishing Company : Kansas City, Missouri, 1912

Description

"The Song of Armageddon" emphasizes the Progressive Party's call for honesty in government and the major political parties in 1912. The song was composed by Clinton D. French.

[Transcript of "The Song of Armageddon"](#)

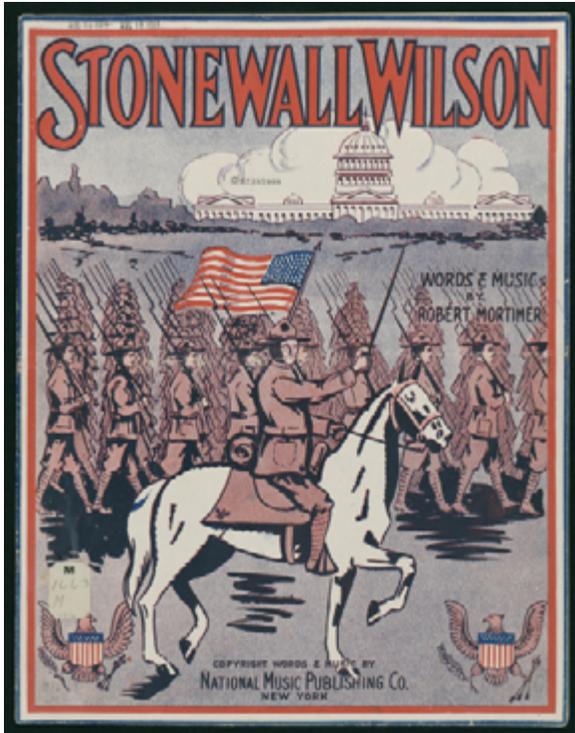
Text-Dependent Questions

- How did the writer of the song feel about American government and society at the time this song was written? How do you know?
- According to the lyrics of the song what separates the Progressive Party and its candidate, Theodore Roosevelt, from the Democratic and Republican parties?
- What type of voter would find this song and candidate appealing? Specifically, which part(s) of the song would most appeal to them?
- Describe the role religion plays in this campaign song. Why is it useful to frame the election in religious terms?

Citation Information

"The Song of Armageddon," French, Clinton D., French Publishing Company : Kansas City, Missouri, 1912. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Stonewall Wilson” Song, 1916



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Mortimer, Robert, National Music Publishing Co. : New York, 1916

Description

“Stonewall Wilson” is a song supporting the 1916 re-election campaign of President Woodrow Wilson. It depicts Wilson as a strong, dependable leader both militarily and economically. Wilson won the election and defeated Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Hughes - the Republican candidate

[Transcript of “Stonewall Wilson” Song](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- Before reading the song, characterize President Woodrow Wilson based on only the cover. What pieces of evidence led you to your decision?
- After reading the song lyrics continue your characterization of Wilson. Has anything changed? Which lines from the song support or challenge your original characterization?
- Verse two refers to Wilson as “Stonewall Wilson.” Given the context of the time period, why was this reference made?
- Identify and list the passage in the third verse of the song that makes reference to former President Theodore Roosevelt’s domestic program. Given what is known about the Roosevelt’s failed candidacy as the Progressive Party nominee in 1912 in an election that was won by Wilson, why would the lyricist link the two?

Citation Information

“Stonewall Wilson,” Mortimer, Robert, National Music Publishing Co. : New York, 1916. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Safeguard America!” Speech, 1920



[Link to Audio Resource](#)

Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 1928

Description

The speech was made by Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, the sister of President Theodore Roosevelt. She was supporting the Republican ticket of Senator William Harding and Governor Calvin Coolidge in the 1920 general election as “100 percent American, true patriotism, who have not failed to show marked efficiency and ability in public office.”

[Transcript of Corinne Roosevelt Robinson’s Speech](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

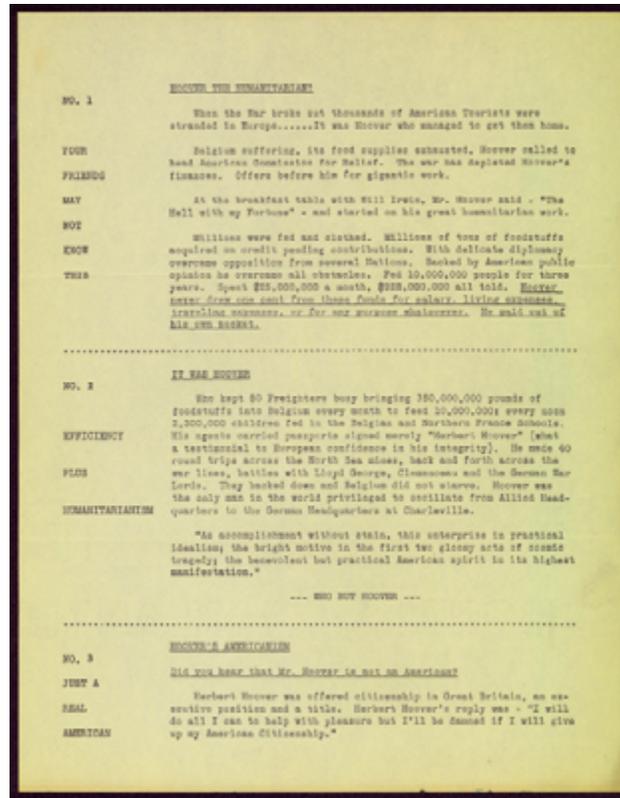
- According to her speech, what does Corinne Roosevelt Robinson seem to like most about the Republican Party?
- How does Roosevelt Robinson characterize the Democratic Party? What specific words and/or phrases does she use to achieve this characterization?
- Roosevelt Robinson is the sister to former President Theodore Roosevelt, who died not long before this recording (Theodore Roosevelt died January 6, 1919). Are there any parts of the speech that reflect bias on her part? If so, which ones?

Citation Information

Document: Robinson, Corinne Roosevelt, 1920. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Audio: Robinson, Corinne Roosevelt, 1920. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Hoover the Humanitarian,” 1928



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 1928

Description

The campaign literature contains information on Herbert Hoover's humanitarian efforts during World War I that was used during his presidential campaign in 1928. This pro-Hoover pamphlet focuses on his achievements in the mining industry and during World War I as food administrator for the federal government.

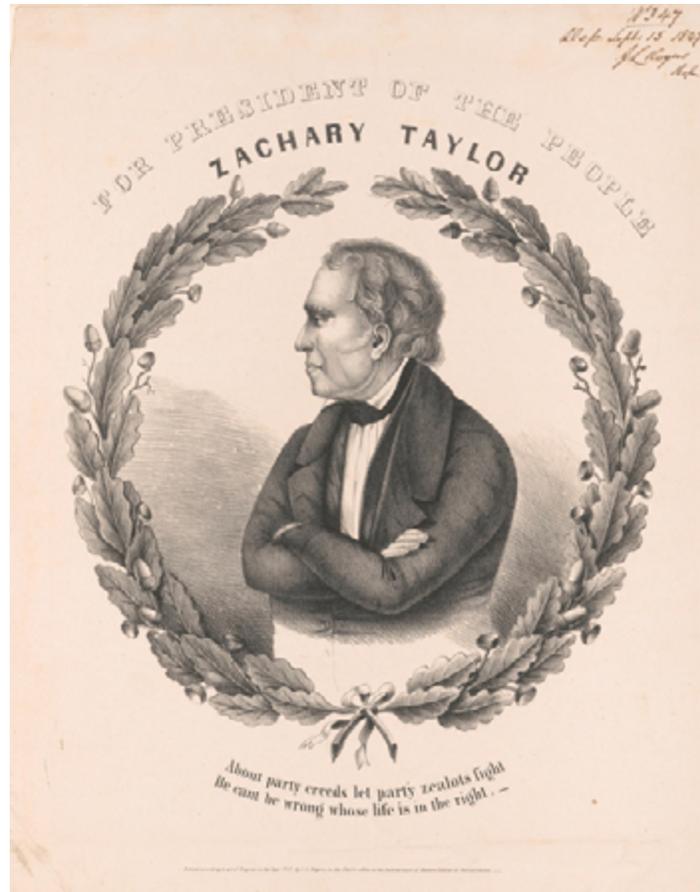
[Full Transcript for "Hoover the Humanitarian"](#)

[Transcribed Excerpt from "Hoover the Humanitarian"](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- What purpose did the author have in mind when he or she authored this literature? What language (ex: word choice, phrases, statistics, examples, anecdotes, tone, etc.) does the author deliberately use in his/her attempt to achieve it?
- What are Herbert Hoover's finest qualities according to the information included in this literature? Which specific parts of the text led you to this decision?
- In what way do the skills Hoover demonstrated during World War I transfer to the presidency? What skills did Hoover already demonstrate outside of politics that would be necessary as president? What other skills would he need?

“For President of the People, Zachary Taylor,” 1846



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rogers, J.L., 1846

Description

This print shows a campaign banner for Whig presidential candidate Zachary Taylor. Although Taylor was not formally nominated by the Whigs until June 1848, he had already begun to attract a following in 1846. Here is a half-length portrait of Taylor, in civilian dress, head in profile and arms folded across his chest, appears in a wreath formed by two oak branches. Below the portrait is a couplet reflecting the candidate's still independent status: "About party creeds let party zealots fight / He cant be wrong whose life is in the right."

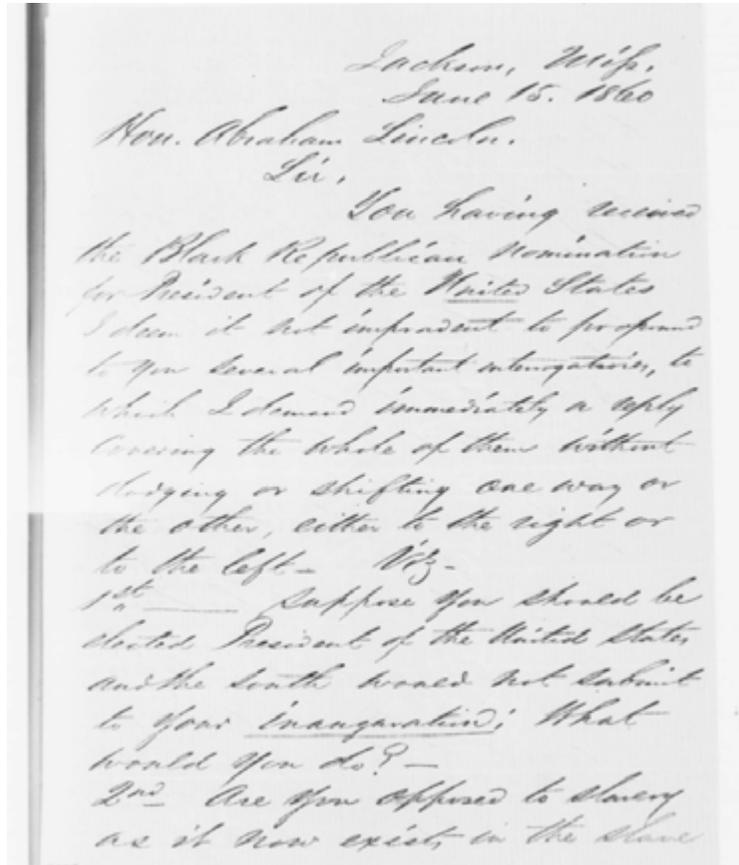
Text-Dependent Questions

- Interpret the couplet below the image of Zachary Taylor: "About party creeds let party zealots fight / He cant be wrong whose life is in the right." How might this couplet along with the title of the poster help Taylor appeal to and connect with voters?
- Contrast this campaign poster with the way the Whig candidate (presumably Taylor) is portrayed in "[An Available Candidate: The One Qualification for a Whig President](#)." Which one is more effective? Why?

Citation Information

Rogers, J.L., "For President of the People, Zachary Taylor," 1846. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Letter from Thomas T. Swann to Abraham Lincoln, June 15, 1860



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Swann, Thomas T., 15 June 1860

Description

In his letter to the newly-nominated Republican candidate for president, Thomas T. Swann requests an explanation of Abraham Lincoln's positions on five important issues. Swann served as a politician in Maryland. He was most known for pushing back against abolitionists and utilizing a political strategy built on the platform of entrenching white power and displacing independent African Americans.

[Transcript of 1920 Senator Albert Cummins Leaflet](#)

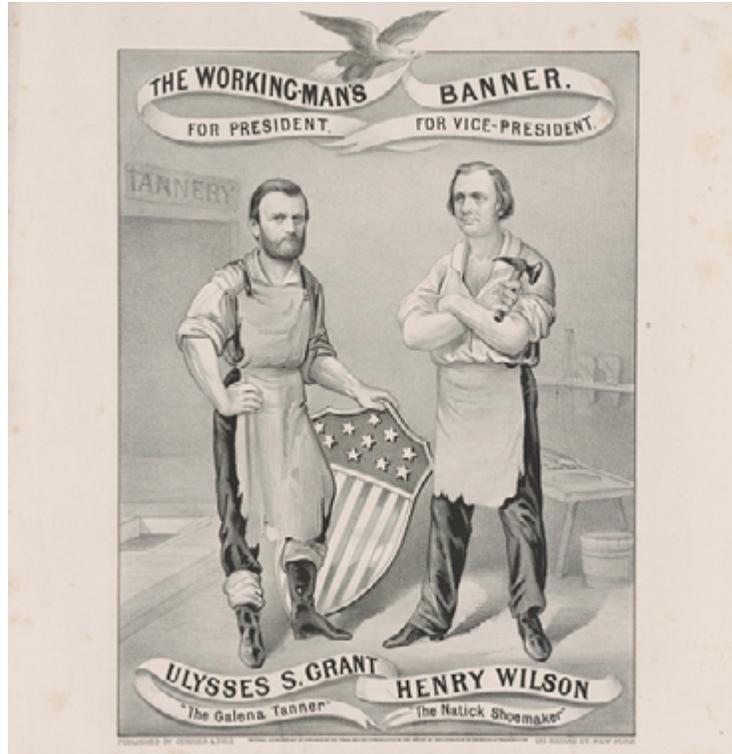
Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe the tone of the letter. Use evidence from the letter to support your decision.
- How does this primary source help us understand the interaction between presidential candidates and the electorate at the time this was written? What specific word choice or passages from the letter led you to believe this?

Citation Information

Swann, Thomas T., 15 June 1860. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Ulysses S. Grant Campaign Poster, 1872



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, George S. Mills, Jr., Collection, 1948

Description

This campaign poster depicts the 1872 Republican presidential nominee Ulysses S. Grant as a tanner working alongside his running mate Henry Wilson, who is drawn as a shoemaker. The print shows a Republican campaign banner designed to appeal to the labor vote by invoking the working class origins of candidates Ulysses S. Grant and Henry Wilson. Grant wears a tanner's apron and jackboots and holds a shield decorated with stars and stripes. He is identified as "The Galena Tanner." Henry Wilson, who holds a hammer, is identified as "The Natick Shoemaker." Wilson actually began his career as a shoemaker in Natick, Massachusetts. Grant stands near the door to a tannery, and Wilson stands before a shoemaker's bench.

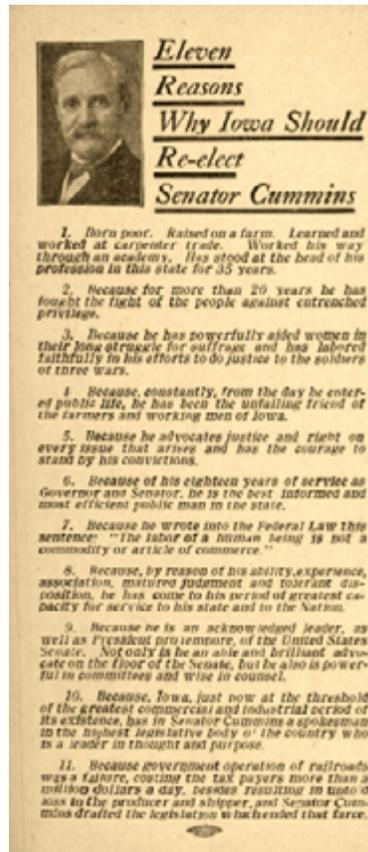
Text-Dependent Questions

- How are Republican candidate for president Ulysses S. Grant and his running mate Henry Wilson portrayed by the author of this campaign poster? Use specific evidence from the poster to support your claim.
- At this particular time Grant is most widely known for leading the Union Army to victory over the Confederacy during the Civil War. Why would the artist depict Grant the way he did? What does this tell us about presidential campaigns?

Citation Information

"The Working-Man's Banner. For President, Ulysses S. Grant, 'The Galena Tanner.' For Vice-President, Henry Wilson, 'The Natick Shoemaker,'" Currier & Ives : New York, 1872. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Eleven Reasons Why Iowa Should Re-Elect Senator Cummins” Leaflet, 1920



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 1920

Description

This 1920 campaign leaflet listed 11 reasons as to why Iowa should re-elect Senator Albert B. Cummins. He was the 18th governor of Iowa and served as the U.S. Senator for Iowa for 18 years. Cummins was a member of the Republican Party.

[Transcript of 1920 Senator Albert Cummins Leaflet](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- According to the leaflet, what personal attributes and qualities does Senator Albert Cummins display that the average, “every day” voter would appreciate? Which major groups of Iowans would these attributes and qualities appeal to?
- Consider the context surrounding this leaflet and the election of 1920. What events during the time period would make these listed qualities and characteristics desirable to voters?
- If these same qualities and characteristics were used to describe a candidate for Iowa senator in 2017, would they be effective? Why or why not?

Presidential Candidate Henry A. Wallace Campaigns at William Penn College, 1948



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, George S. Mills, Jr., Collection, 1948

Description

The 1948 Progressive Party presidential candidate, Henry A. Wallace, is seen visiting with William Penn College president, Cecil Hinshaw, and students on the campus grounds in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Wallace, who was a native to Iowa, also served as Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Agriculture and would become the 33rd vice president of the United States under Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Text-Dependent Questions

- Use the source information provided as well as specific evidence from the photograph to describe the type of individuals Henry A. Wallace is meeting with.
- How would you describe the interaction between Wallace and those that surround him? Use specific evidence from the photograph to support your claim.
- Consider your answers for #1 and #2 above to explain how this photograph could be used to characterize Wallace.
- What benefits are there for presidential candidates to campaign in this way? What challenges does this type of campaigning present?