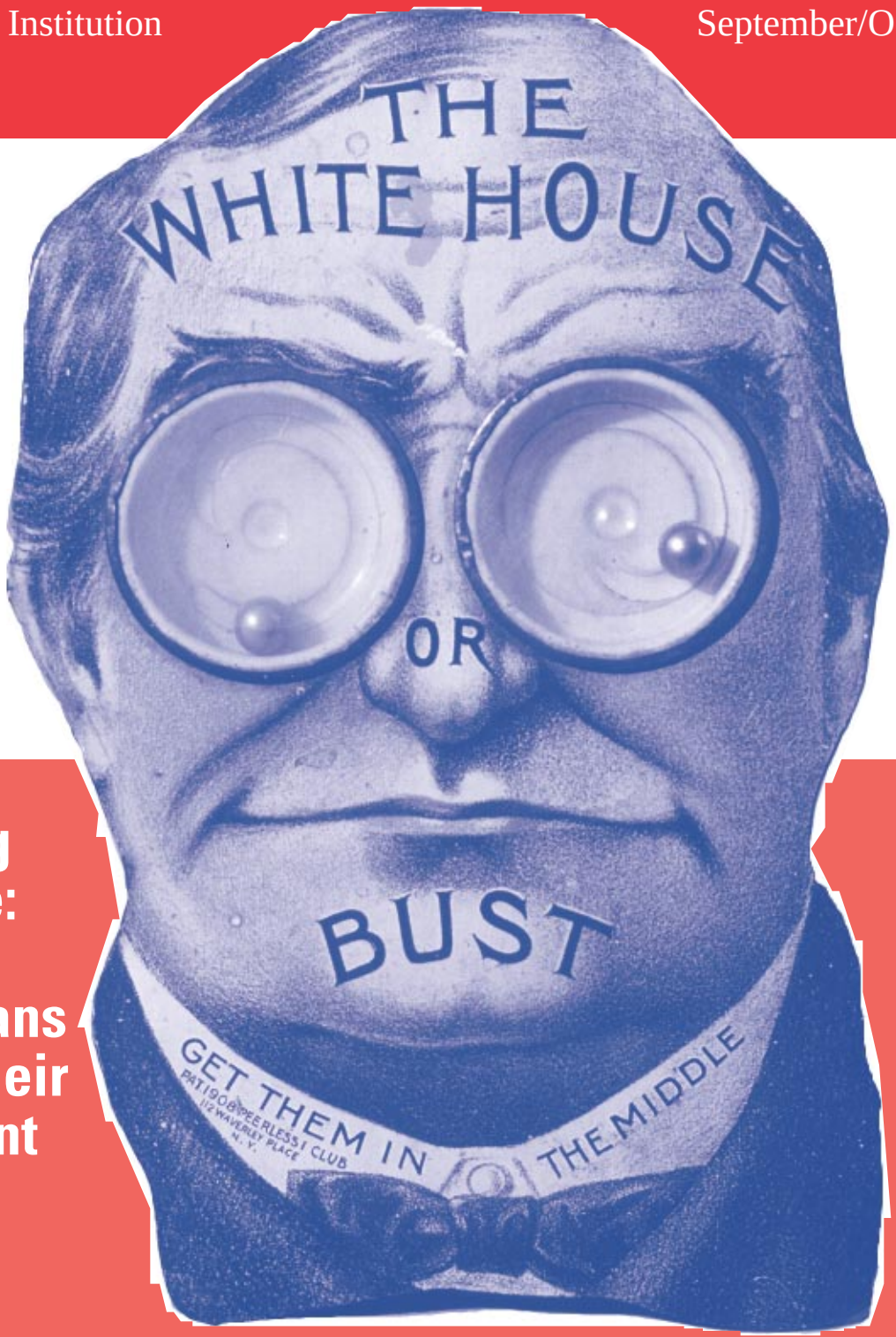
ART to Zoo

TEACHING WITH THE POWER OF OBJECTS

Smithsonian Institution

September/October 1996

Inside



Subjects

Art

Geography

Language Arts

Social Studies

Grades

4–9

Winning the Vote: How Americans Elect Their President

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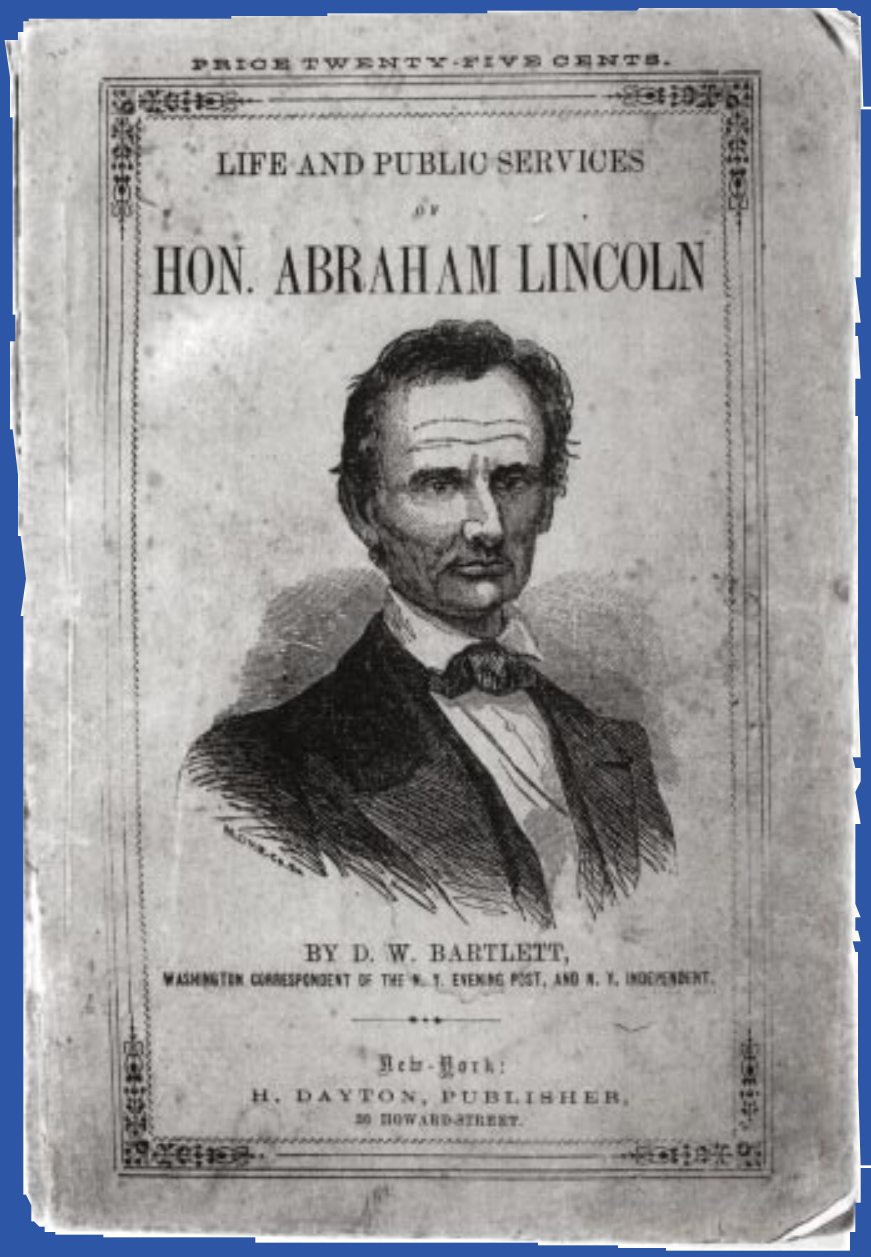


Art to Zoo's purpose is to help teachers bring into their classrooms the educational power of museums and other community resources.

Art to Zoo draws on the Smithsonian's hundreds of exhibitions and programs—from art, history, and science to aviation and folklife—to create classroom-ready materials for grades four through nine.

Each of the four annual issues explores a single topic through an interdisciplinary, multicultural approach.

The Smithsonian invites teachers to duplicate *Art to Zoo* materials for educational use.

You may request a large-print or disk version of *Art to Zoo* by writing to the address listed on the back cover or by faxing to (202) 357-2116.

Cover photo William Jennings Bryan presidential campaign game, 1908.

Above photo Abraham Lincoln campaign biography, 1860. During the nineteenth century, political parties emphasized the character and accomplishments of their candidates in carefully crafted campaign biographies.

Opposite photo William Jennings Bryan paper hat, 1896. Democratic newspapers distributed this elaborate paper hat during the 1896 presidential campaign.

Winning the Vote: How Americans Elect Their President

During the long, sweltering summer of 1787 a delegation of more than fifty men from twelve former British colonies cloistered themselves behind the locked doors of Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The stated purpose of their meeting was to amend the Articles of Confederation, a loose framework for our young nation's government. However, when the delegation adjourned in September its members had instead fashioned an entirely new Constitution and with it the uniquely American institution of the presidency.

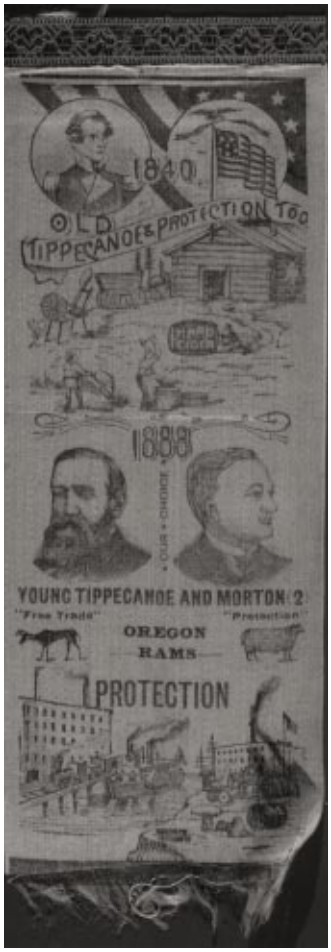
The office of the presidency and the informal process of electing the president are the themes of this issue of *Art to Zoo* and are among the many topics visitors can explore in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The activities that follow include objects from that museum and encourage your students to consider the powers of the presidency as well as the informal methods that have evolved to select candidates for America's highest elected office.

Defining the Office

The Founders at Philadelphia in 1787 were confronted with a series of fundamental questions as they fashioned their executive creation. Would the president possess almost monarchical authority, or would his powers be more like those of the state governors? Should the presidency encompass a single individual or perhaps a panel of executives? Would the federal legislature (Congress) elect the president or would the nation's voters? Should the president serve only a single, lengthy term or be eligible for reelection to several shorter terms?

These were difficult issues for the Founders to resolve. Many had resented the powerful royal governors who had presided over their states before the Revolution. Others had equally strong feelings about the perceived weaknesses of the Executive under the Articles of Confederation. Despite their differences, however, the Founders agreed on who should serve as the first president—he was sitting in the same room with them. George Washington, the hero of the Revolution and now the presiding officer of the Philadelphia Convention, was to many a living embodiment of the presidency. In no small measure the powers granted to the Executive are a testimony to the confidence placed in Washington's personal qualities of leadership and integrity.

The institution of the presidency as created by the Constitution represented a bold new experiment in government. The president was to be many things—the head of the executive branch, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and the head of state. His powers were wide-ranging and included the authority to command the armed forces, veto congressional legislation, negotiate treaties with foreign powers,



Benjamin Harrison presidential campaign ribbon, 1888. The party faithful often wore ribbons like this one to show their support for a candidate.

appoint officials (including ambassadors and Supreme Court justices), grant pardons and reprieves, receive foreign ambassadors, and call Congress into special session.

The constitutional process that they established for electing the president reflected the Founders' concern that the right person be selected for a job with a four-year term of office and unlimited possibility for reelection. The ideal candidate would be, like Washington, a leader of national stature who possessed the experience and maturity necessary to carry out his duties. With so much power entrusted to the presidency, the delegates chose not to enact a system in which popular votes alone could determine the outcome; they feared that voters might select regional candidates lacking in national perspective.

To prevent this possibility, the Founders created the Electoral College. In this body, each state was allocated as many electors as it had senators and representatives in Congress. Members of the Electoral College were chosen through methods determined by the state legislatures. To elect a president, electors would meet in their respective states to cast their votes. The candidate with the greatest number of votes would be named president, and the candidate with the second greatest number of votes would be named vice president. (This procedure was modified in 1804 by the Twelfth Amendment, which placed the president and vice president as a "team" running on the same ticket.)

Political Parties

A gradual development in the American process of electing a president was the formation of political parties. Some of the Founders did not welcome parties; there is no mention of the role or function of national parties in the Constitution. They shared the eighteenth-century notion that parties, or "factions," were injurious to a representative government. Others disagreed and went on to form America's first political parties.

Historians continue to debate the precise evolution of American political parties but generally agree that a viable national party system had emerged by the late 1830s. National political parties brought together diverse local and regional coalitions who wanted to voice their opinions in a national forum. An important part of their strategy was to gain control of Congress and the presidency.

The broadly based Democratic, Whig, and (later) Republican Parties were products of the steadily expanding franchise, or right to vote, during the early nineteenth century. By 1840, property restrictions for voting had largely been repealed, enabling most white males over the age of twenty-one to vote. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the electorate continued to expand as people outside the system struggled to obtain the vote. The franchise was extended to African American males in the 1870s (although later severely restricted in some states), to women and Native Americans by the 1920s, and to all eighteen-year-olds in the 1970s. Each influx of new voters added strength to the political parties.

In addition to changing the dynamics of elections, the emergence of national political parties created a new role for the president—that of party leader. It was a position that many presidents found uncomfortable but necessary to assume in their pursuit and exercise of the Executive office.

Selecting the Candidates

Political parties introduced to American presidential elections several informal practices that have no constitutional definition. Instead, they complement the Constitution by providing an effective means to select candidates of proven ability and national reputation.

Early on, presidential candidates were chosen by a few influential party members who assembled in state and congressional caucuses. It became clear by the late 1830s, however, that this process did not appear democratic enough to the thousands of newly enfranchised voters. Thus was born the curiously American ritual of the quadrennial national party convention.

From the beginning, conventions were highly stylized and emotive affairs, partly reminiscent of religious revival meetings and attended by an enthusiastic cross section of the party's faithful. A convention's primary function was not always to select a candidate but to

Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivering a radio address, 1936. Our thirty-second president was the first Chief Executive to make extensive use of radio to communicate with American voters.

reconcile competing factions and unite the party behind the nominee. As part of this reconciliation process, convention delegates drafted a statement of party principles—a platform—that represented the views of those assembled. Candidates would pledge to uphold their party platforms, but seldom have elected presidents used these principles as a basis for enacting their legislative agendas.

National conventions became less important in the candidate selection process by the mid-twentieth century, as reformers within both major parties advocated a series of state primaries as a means of more actively involving the party rank and file. Once they became widely adopted, primaries virtually guaranteed to establish major party nominees well before the national conventions took place.

American political parties also transformed the national presidential campaign into a colorful spectacle. An eclectic mixture of American popular culture and politics, the national campaign pitted the major parties in a titanic battle to market their respective candidates to the wider electorate.

Around 1840, national campaigns began to surround the presidential election process in an atmosphere of unrestrained hoopla. The party faithful marched in torchlight parades; sang official campaign songs; devoured adoring campaign biographies; subscribed to party newspapers; and displayed buttons, banners, ashtrays, mugs, and every manner of memorabilia emblazoned with the name and image of their candidate.

These seemingly frivolous efforts were directed toward a very serious end: convincing as many voters as possible to cast their ballot for the party's nominee. Because of peculiarities in the Electoral College system, a difference of only a few thousand popular votes was often enough to garner a candidate the total count of a state's electoral votes—and possibly the presidency.

The Changing Campaign

During most of the nineteenth century, presidential candidates were not expected to play a public role in the national campaign. The lack of efficient transportation made it difficult for candidates to interact with voters outside their immediate regions. Not until 1928 did national speaking tours by both major party candidates become a staple of the presidential race. The only significant exception to this general inertia was the whirlwind eighteen-thousand–mile speaking tour in 1896 of the Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan.

The technological progress of the twentieth century brought profound changes in the style of the national presidential campaign. By the 1930s, radio carried the voices of the candidates directly into millions of American homes. Within a generation, television had completed the picture by providing the voters with visual images of the candidates. Thus presidential politics had merged with the media revolution. It was now desirable that candidates have both a polished speaking voice and a photogenic quality if they were to be successfully marketed to the electorate.

Televised debates between the major party candidates became a part of the national presidential campaign in 1960. Historians and political scientists continue to study the electoral impact of televised debates, and millions of voters watch them each election year.

More recently, television introduced the "electronic town meeting" to the presidential contest. In this increasingly popular broadcast forum, candidates answer questions from voters across the nation. Presidential politics have even moved into the realm of cyberspace. Major and minor parties have eagerly set up World Wide Web sites to disseminate their candidate's views on a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues.

These changes remind us that the process of electing the president will no doubt continue to evolve, as it has over the past two centuries. In a manner befitting a free and open society, Americans will determine how to select those most qualified to compete for our nation's highest office: the presidency.

LESSON PLAN
Step 1

LEARNING ABOUT THE PRESIDENCY

Objectives

■ Identify the powers of the presidency as defined by the U.S. Constitution.
■ Interpret an electoral map of a presidential contest.
■ Examine the function of the Electoral College.

Materials

■ Copies of Activity Pages 1A and 1B, pages 7 and 8.
■ Copies of maps of the United States.
■ Chalkboard, chalk.
■ Pens or pencils.

Subjects

Geography, language arts, math, social studies

Procedure

1. Tell your students that you are going to describe an important national event for them to guess. Give these details: This event takes place once every four years in November; many Americans take an interest in it; the press begins to cover this event at least one year before it happens; if you watch television, listen to the radio, or read the newspapers you see many advertisements and hear stories about it; thousands of people meet every four years during the summer to prepare for it; and although it is not a sporting event, some people have described it as being like a long-distance race. Your students will probably conclude that you have described the election of the president of the United States.

2. Ask students why Americans show so much interest in the election of the president. They will probably conclude that Americans want to pick the right person for the most powerful elected office in America. Ask them to describe the president's job—what does the president do? Have a volunteer list the class' responses on the chalkboard.

3. Give each student a copy of Activity Page 1A and tell the class that they will be reading part of the president's job description from the U.S. Constitution. Direct them to the section entitled "Who can be president?" and choose a few volunteers to read the paragraph aloud. (*Some students might find the eighteenth-century language of the Constitution difficult to understand and may need extra coaching.*) Have your students answer the questions that follow the paragraph. Encourage them to consider why the president must be at least thirty-five years old and have lived in the United States for fourteen years. Answers may vary, but students will probably conclude that the president must be old enough and have lived in the United States long enough to have had a wide range of experience with national issues. (*Life expectancy was significantly shorter during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than it is today, making thirty-five a relatively mature age then.*)

4. Direct students to the section entitled "Some duties of the president." Choose volunteers to read the paragraphs aloud and then have students write their responses to the questions that follow each paragraph. Encourage them to compare their answers to the class' list of presidential duties (on the chalkboard).

5. Ask students to describe how they think the president is elected. Students will probably conclude that the president is elected by a majority of popular votes in the general election. Give each student a copy of Activity Page 1B, "The Electoral College" and a U.S. map (with states' names). Tell them that they will be learning about the presidential election of 1888 and that the result might surprise them. (*To establish a context, you may wish to tell your students that this election occurred between the Civil War and World War I.*)

6. Tell students to mark the electoral map on Activity Page 1B with the names or U.S. Postal Service abbreviations of each state in 1888 (territories are already marked). Be sure to stress that the electoral map shadings indicate which candidate won which states. Direct your students to write answers to the questions on the activity page. Next, tell them that the small numbers on the map represent the electoral votes of the states. (*Use the Introduction as a guide to discuss the concept of the Electoral College).* Be sure to stress that a state's number of electors is equal to its number of senators and representatives.

7. Ask your students to add up the numbers in the states with dark shading (electoral votes for Benjamin Harrison) and the numbers in the states with light shading (electoral votes for Grover Cleveland). (*You may have students add the numbers on the chalkboard.*) Which candidate had the greater number of electoral votes? Students should conclude that Harrison did. Tell them that as a result, Harrison won the election even though he had fewer popular votes than Cleveland.

8. Conclude the lesson by initiating a discussion on the relative merits of the Electoral College system. Is it a fair way of electing the president? Does it still work? Should the system be changed? (*Students might not see the benefits of having the Electoral College. You may wish to mention that the system encourages the stability of well-organized, locally based parties at the expense of less-established, third-party movements.*) Be sure to emphasize that the 1888 election was an exceptional case and that candidates who garner the greatest number of popular votes also usually win the Electoral College vote.

ACTIVITY PAGE 1A
The President on Paper

WHO CAN BE PRESIDENT?

(From Article II, Section 1 of the U. S. Constitution)
No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty-five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

How old must one be to run for president?

How many years must one be a resident of the United States to run for president?

SOME DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT

(Excerpted from Article II, Section 2)
The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States . . . and he shall have Power to Grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States.

What duties of the president are described in this paragraph?

SOME DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT continued

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two-thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for.

What can the president do, if he or she receives the Senate's approval?

(Excerpted from Article II, Section 3)
He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them . . . he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

What can Congress expect the president to do?

What other duties of the president does this paragraph describe?

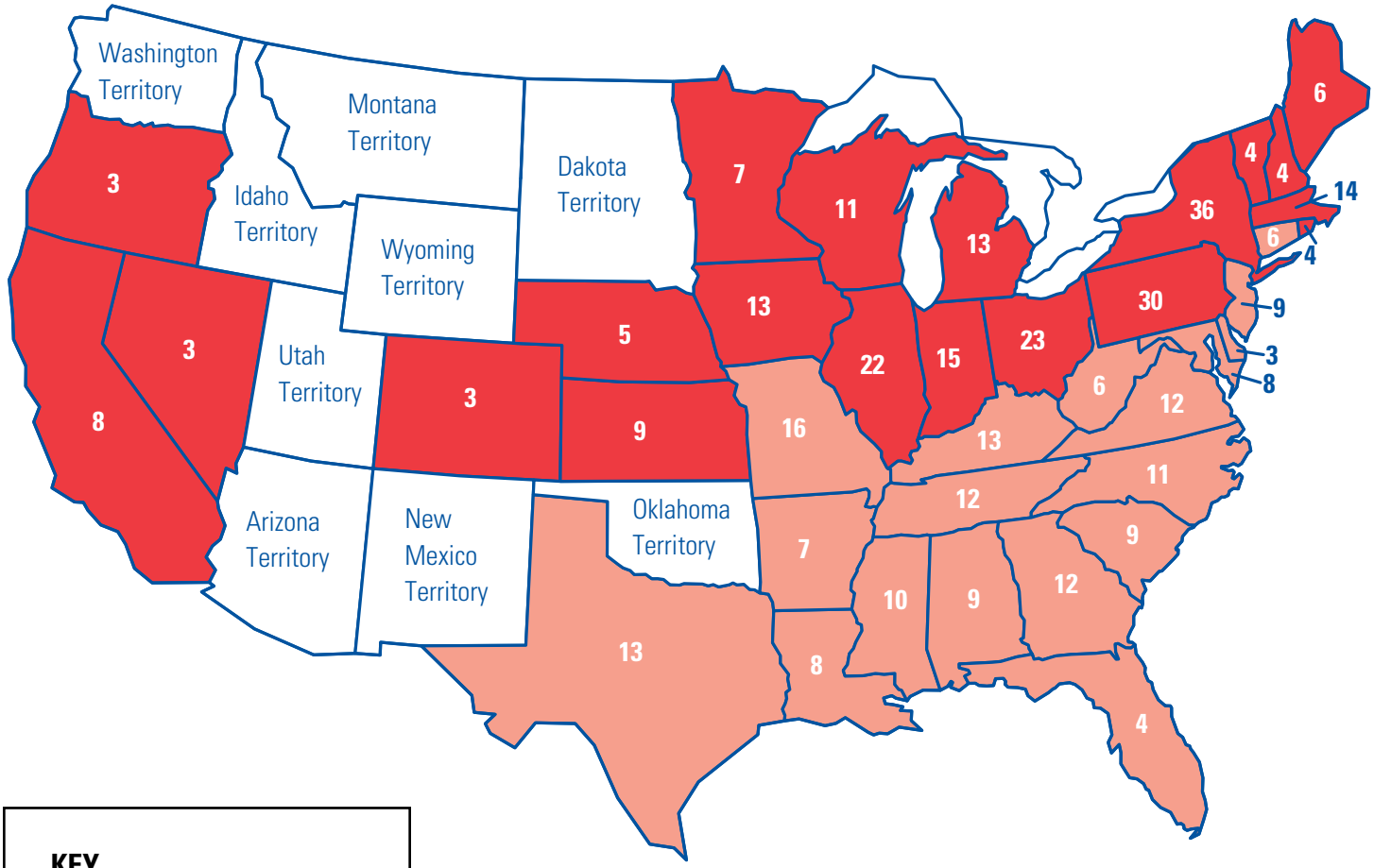
ACTIVITY PAGE 1B
The Electoral College

Who were the candidates?

Which candidate had the most popular votes?

Who do you think won the election?

Count up the number of electoral votes: ___ Cleveland ___ Harrison



KEY

- Benjamin Harrison (R)
- Grover Cleveland (D)

Popular Votes

Cleveland	5,537,857
Harrison	5,447,129

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?

_____

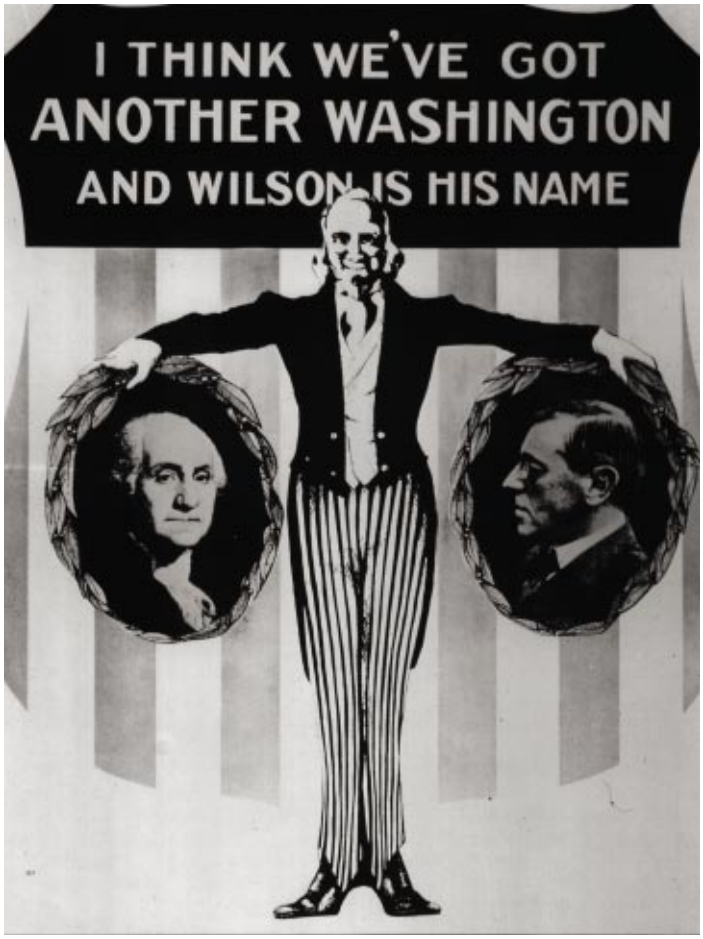
Activity Page 2B

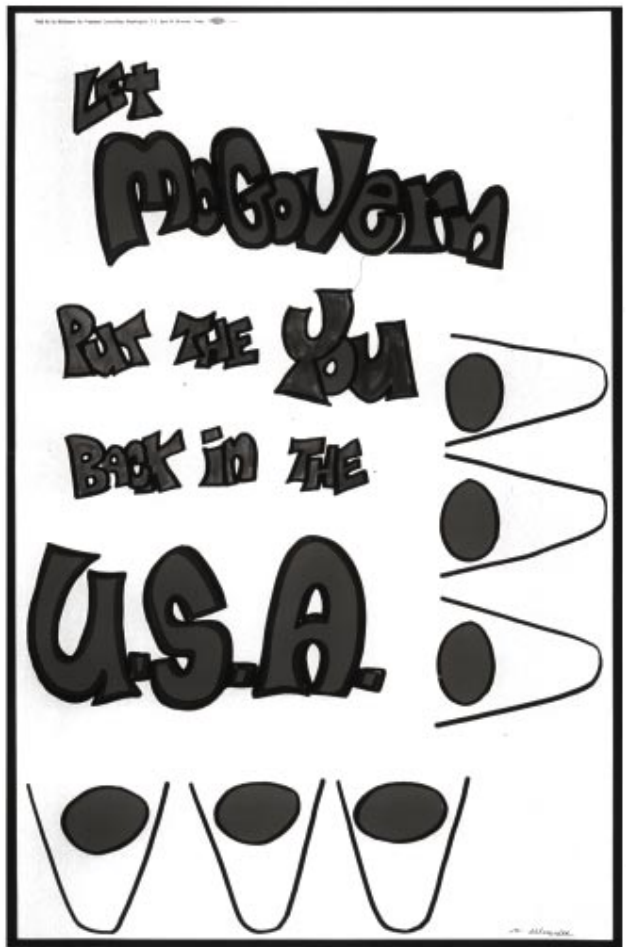
Object 2

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?

LESSON PLAN
Step 3

HELP A CANDIDATE

Objectives

■ Identify methods used to promote presidential candidates.

■ Create campaign promotional materials for a real or fictional candidate.

Materials

■ Copies of Take-Home Page, page 14.

■ Crayons, markers, paper, pencils, pens.

Subjects

Art, language arts, social studies

Procedure

1. Using the Introduction as a guide, tell your students that presidential campaigns have changed dramatically over the past century. Emphasize that candidates in the nineteenth century were not expected to play a public role in the campaign and were often unable to travel extensively because of the poor state of transportation. Stress that much of the seemingly frivolous election memorabilia students examined in Lesson Plan Step 2 was directed toward a very serious end: to convince as many voters as possible to cast their ballot for the candidate.

2. Ask your class what methods candidates use today to convince Americans to vote for them. Answers may vary, but students will probably mention television and radio advertisements, press conferences, televised presidential debates, electronic "town meetings," and World Wide Web sites. Emphasize the role in presidential campaigns of changing communications technologies.

3. Continue the class discussion by asking your students to consider the skills candidates must have to use these new communications technologies effectively. (*You may wish to focus your questions on television and radio first.*) Students will probably conclude that it is helpful for candidates to have a polished speaking voice, a photogenic quality, and the ability to respond quickly to detailed questions.

4. Give each student a copy of the Take-Home Page. Tell your class that they have just been hired as managers of a presidential campaign (either real or fictional—their choice). Their job is to promote their candidate so that Americans will vote for him or her. Stress that students can use whatever medium they wish—television, radio, a public rally or parade, posters, or buttons—to publicize their candidate.

5. Direct your students to the Take-Home Page. Tell them they can use the back of the sheet (and other paper as necessary) to design a poster or button, write a short radio advertisement, or draw a story board for a television commercial.

6. After your students have completed the Take-Home Page, ask them to share their work with the class. Students who have created posters or buttons can interpret their design to the class, while those who have written television or radio advertisements can read, perform, or otherwise convey the message of their commercials. To conclude the activity, you may wish to have the class vote for the most convincing campaign materials.

TAKE-HOME PAGE
You're the Campaign Manager

To the teacher
■ Duplicate this page for students.
■ Use with Lesson Plan Step 3.

Publication of *Art to Zoo* is made possible through the generous support of the Pacific Mutual Foundation.

My candidate is

_____

People should vote for him/her because

_____

_____

_____

Directions: Use the back of this page to promote your candidate by designing a button or poster or by writing/drawing a television or radio commercial.

TRABAJO PARA HACER EN LA CASA
Tu Eres el Director(a) de Campaña

Al maestro (a)
■ Copie esta página para los alumnos.
■ Usela con el tercer paso del plan de la lección.

Esta publicación ha sido posible gracias al generoso aporte de la Pacific Mutual Foundation.

Mi candidato(a) es

_____

Debemos votar por el/ella porque

_____

_____

_____

Instrucciones: A la vuelta de la página, diseña un botón o un cartel, redacta un comercial para la radio o televisión que da a conocer a tu candidato!

RESOURCES

BOOKS AND TEACHING GUIDES

Boller, Paul F. *Presidential Campaigns*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Cunliffe, Marcus. *The Presidency*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Dover, E. D. *Presidential Elections in the Television Age: 1960–1992*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994.

Fischer, Roger A. *Tippecanoe and Trinkets Too: The Material Culture of American Presidential Campaigns, 1828–1984*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

McCormick, Richard P. *The Presidential Game: The Origins of American Presidential Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Mee, Charles L. *The Genius of the People*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Melder, Keith E. *Hail to the Candidate: Presidential Campaigns from Banners to Broadcasts*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

Post, Robert C., ed. *Every Four Years*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Exposition Books, 1980.

Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr., ed. *Running For President: The Candidates and Their Images*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Go to the official White House World Wide Web site, **http://www.whitehouse.gov**, for information on the current president.

Campaign '96 Online (**http://campaign.96.com**) offers a comprehensive guide to candidates' Web sites.

Current presidential campaign news appears on the Politics Now site, **http://www.politicsnow.com**.

The complete texts of all presidential inaugural addresses appear on **http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/inaugural/index.html**.

The United States Information Agency maintains an extensive list of articles and a glossary of election terms at **http://www.usia.gov/elections/process.htm**.

Note: Because of the rapidly evolving nature of the Internet, some of the uniform resource locators (URLs) above may have changed since publication.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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