



DESIGNING A CAMPAIGN BUTTON

(Three or four 50-minute class periods)

OBJECTIVE(S)

After discussing/describing the visual and technical qualities of campaign buttons, students will understand the use of art to help communicate a message; will understand the importance and significance of campaign buttons in elections since 1896; will use historical campaign buttons as primary sources for discussion of the use of color, lettering, composition, and the message to be conveyed at the time; and use active imagination to create an original design for an effective campaign button.

MATERIALS

Scratch Paper	Drawing Paper
Circle Stencils	Pencils/Colored Pencils
Erasers	Markers
"Samples of Campaign Buttons" handouts	Selected web pages to enhance lesson
Button Machine with materials (if available)	Rulers

GET READY

- ✓ Gather examples of past presidential election buttons, if possible.
- ✓ Create example campaign buttons to generate ideas among students.
- ✓ Make enough copies of the following handouts for each student: Campaign Buttons – Defined, Designing Buttons, United States Campaign Buttons, Political Catch Phrases, and The American Political Items Collectors (optional).

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Read through the Campaign Buttons – Defined handout individually or as a class. Review the Designing Buttons and United States Campaign Buttons examples handouts.
- ✓ Review, critique, and discuss the common characteristics of the political buttons in terms of overall composition, color, lettering, and the effect the message has on the viewer.
- ✓ Using Political Catch Phrases handout and discuss some of the most famous and infamous catch phrases throughout history.
- ✓ Have students select a candidate and create simple thumbnail sketches based on the combination of the student's creative, original ideas and on the common characteristics of political buttons.
- ✓ Conference with each student to select the best composition idea to create a final, original button design.
- ✓ Critique their work in progress and at conclusion as part of the culminating assessment.
- ✓ Have students write a self-critique essay and discuss the elements and meaning of their final button designs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Do you think campaign buttons are still important in political campaigns? Why or why not?*
- ★ *How have the uses and functions of campaign buttons changed since they appeared in 1896?*
- ★ *What was the most difficult part of designing your campaign button? What was the easiest?*



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ★ *Western Maryland Historical Society document with links to over 700 campaign buttons throughout history:*
www.fcpsteach.org/docs/Campaign%20Buttons.doc
- ★ *Cyberbee.com lists historical buttons dating back to 1864 through 2000 in chronological order, as well as a few miscellaneous political buttons:*
<http://www.cyberbee.com/campaign/buttons.html>
- ★ *Dr. Don's Buttons, Badges, & More web site showcasing the most current campaign buttons:*
<http://www.buttonsonline.com/2008/index.html>
- ★ *PoliticalShop.com online store for latest political buttons, campaign and otherwise:*
http://www.politicalshop.com/showitems_new.asp?mainpage=showitems&keysearch3=Election-2008
- ★ *PoliticalGifts.com web site with buttons categorized by Party affiliation:*
<http://www.politicalgifts.com/cam20but.html>



Chiesman Center
for DEMOCRACY, INC.

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Campaign Buttons – Defined

Campaign buttons are used in an election as political advertising for (or against) a candidate or political party, or to proclaim the issues that are part of the political platform.

In “celluloid” buttons, first used in 1896, one side of a metal disk was covered with paper (printed with the message) and protected by a layer of clear plastic. Since 1916, buttons have also been produced by lithographing the image directly onto the metal disk. Thousands of buttons are produced and distributed to the public. A celluloid-type button is fastened to a garment using a pin on the back side of the button (in recently-produced buttons, the pin generally fits into a safety-pin-style catch). A lithographed button may fasten with a pin-back or with a metal tab which folds over a lapel or pocket.

One of the most famous uses of campaign buttons occurred during the 1940 U.S. presidential election, when Wendell Willkie’s campaign produced millions of lithographed slogan buttons in rapid response to news items about President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Campaign buttons bear some similarity to bumper stickers, which are also used for political and other promotional messages. As a novelty item, campaign buttons are part of the hobby of collecting.



Recently, increasing advertising expenses and legal limits on expenditures have led many U.S. campaigns to abandon buttons in favor of disposable lapel stickers, which are much less expensive.

Another recent trend is the use of graphical campaign buttons, or “web buttons”, that internet users can place on their personal websites. Graphical campaign buttons are useful because they can be widely distributed for little cost.

However, wider availability of machines for producing celluloid-type buttons (as well as inkjet and laser printers and design software) now permits even small campaigns to produce or acquire buttons relatively inexpensively, even in small quantities.



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Designing Buttons

List of uses for buttons

<p><u>Campaigns</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Political ★ School Board ★ Referendums ★ Labor Unions 	<p><u>School Groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Booster Clubs ★ Cheerleaders ★ Clubs ★ Band/Choir ★ Athletic Teams 	<p><u>Fun & Novelty</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Holiday Designs ★ Coloring Designs ★ Cartoons ★ Birthday and Other Greetings 
<p><u>Name Tags</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ PTA Functions ★ Conventions ★ Meetings ★ Family/School Reunions ★ Preschool ID photos ★ Wait Staff ★ Checkout Personnel 	<p><u>Advertising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Showcase a new logo ★ Introduce a new product ★ Giveaways at trade shows ★ Promote a company slogan ★ Service reminders ★ Commemorate a special event 	<p><u>Special Events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Fairs ★ Contests ★ Amusement Parks ★ Tourist Attractions ★ Sports Events
<p><u>Fundraisers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ School and church groups ★ Boy/Girl Scouts ★ Little Leagues ★ Flea Markets 	<p><u>Public Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Say No to Drugs ★ C.A.R.E. ★ M.A.D.D. 	<p><u>Crafts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Magnets ★ Christmas Ornaments ★ Earrings ★ Tie Clips 



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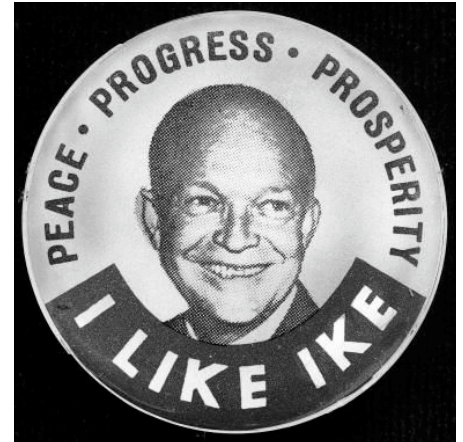
United States Campaign Buttons



William McKinley 1896
Presidential Campaign



Franklin D. Roosevelt 1936
Presidential Campaign



Dwight D. Eisenhower 1952
Presidential Campaign



Bill Clinton/Al Gore 1992
Presidential Campaign



George W. Bush/Dick Cheney
2000 Presidential Campaign



John McCain/Sarah Palin
2008 Presidential Campaign



Political Catch Phrases

The following is a list of political catch phrases: distinctive statements uttered by political figures who have gone on to become well-known or infamous.

Catch phrases are distinct from political slogans in that they are often not deliberately created sayings but may become famous for other, unintentional reasons and go on to gain “a life of their own” in popular culture and imagination.

- ★ “Read my lips: no new taxes,” said by George H.W. Bush during the 1988 U.S. presidential election. He would go on to support a bipartisan bill to raise taxes.
- ★ “We found the weapons of mass destruction,” said by President George W. Bush in an interview with Polish television, May 29, 2003.
- ★ “It’s the economy, stupid,” used by Bill Clinton in his successful 1992 presidential campaign.
- ★ “During my service in the United State Congress, I took the initiative in creating the internet,” said by Al Gore.
- ★ We are all republicans – we are all federalists,” Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural.
- ★ “Ich bin ein Berliner,” (“I am a Berliner”) said by John F. Kennedy in West Berlin.
- ★ “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” John F. Kennedy
- ★ “Four score and seven years ago...” Opening of Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.
- ★ “I am not a crook,” said by Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal.
- ★ “I’m Ross and you’re the Boss,” said by Ross Perot during the 1992 presidential election.
- ★ “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help,” said by Ronald Reagan.
- ★ “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” said by Ronald Reagan.
- ★ “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- ★ “If drafted, I will not run; if nominated, I will not accept; if elected, I will not serve,” said by General William Tecumseh Sherman in reference to the 1884 Presidential election; declarations of this type became known as Sherman statements.



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The American Political Items Collectors (APIC)

Collect what you like!

Most collectors would tell you the most important aspect of collecting is to collect what you like. It is your collection so add those things that are the most satisfying and pleasurable to you.

Availability of Memorabilia You Collect

There are wonderful examples of all types of political campaign memorabilia available today. These were produced throughout much of our nation's history and provide collectors the opportunity to build fabulous collections. Here are a few ways to find materials for your own collection:

- Trade and correspond with other collectors.
- Visit flea markets, antique shows and stores, and estate sales.
- Advertise in local newspapers and magazines.
- Advertise in trade publications.
- Talk with current and retired politicians.
- Participate in a current political campaign.
- Subscribe to mail auctions and online auctions.
- Search on-line sources such as eBay.
- Attend other collector shows such as coin and stamp shows.
- Join the APIC and attend regional and national shows.

Value of Memorabilia You Collect

Values of political items fluctuate based on a number of factors. Some things to consider:

- Many collectors are very condition-conscious; therefore, they are oftentimes willing to pay a premium price for items in superb condition.
- Some items are produced in a region where the quantity produced is quite small. With more collectors than there are items to go around, this can create an increase in value for those limited-quantity items.
- Throughout history, there have been some campaigns for specific candidates where political campaign memorabilia is virtually non-existent. Items for these candidates command premium prices.
- Specific types of political campaign memorabilia are highly prized by certain collectors. Examples may include political campaign textiles, flags, pin back buttons, 3-dimensional items, china, mechanical items, and very colorful campaign buttons.
- Note that when campaign material is offered at auction, you may see 'bidding wars' occur where two collectors "lock heads" during the auction and push the selling price of an item up, far beyond what the general population of collectors would pay for an item.
- Items created during current political campaigns can often create a flurry of excitement at that moment, causing abnormally high prices. Generally, if a collector has the patience, these items become available at some point in the future for more reasonable prices once the dust settles.



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The American Political Item Collection

Value of Memorabilia You Collect

(Continued)

- There are collectors who believe that political campaign memorabilia can be a good investment. While it may be true that money can be made in the hobby, most collectors would indicate that this is not their number one reason for collecting.

Areas of Specialization

While many collectors are interested in all political campaign memorabilia for all political campaigns, there are those who have decided to become more specialized. The list of specialty areas is endless, but here are some examples:

- Memorabilia from each presidential campaign
- Pin back buttons only
- Focus on a single candidate
- Focus on a single election year
- Single Political party (Democrat, Republican, Socialist, etc.)
- Single-day event buttons
- Political items with advertising tie-in
- 3-D items
- Locals races
- Women suffrage movement
- Prohibition movement
- Social causes
- Civil rights