

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 2000 DOC. #3: Convention Entrances

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ever since the first so-called “Hurrah Campaign” of 1828, the concept of “partying” — as part of political Parties — has been central to U.S. presidential election campaigns. From the streets in 1840 filled with giant rolling balls and log cabin floats to the sports arenas in 2000 filled with paper flags and balloons, voters have clapped and cheered in celebration of their chosen candidate. The candidate, however, has not always been present to hear their enthusiasm.

In the earliest years it was thought to be inappropriate for a candidate to appear in public in search of high office. Andrew Jackson broke this tradition when he embarked on the first campaign trip to New Orleans in 1828 and later traveled by stage coach from his home in Nashville to his inauguration in Washington DC (1828 doc. #1). When Party nominating conventions were begun in the mid-19th century it was still taboo for candidates to actually appear at the convention for fear of seeming “unpresidential.” Before the 20th century and the dawn of “whistle-stop campaigning” aboard railroad cars, very few voters actually ever saw the candidate or the President in person.

It wasn’t until 1932 with Franklin Roosevelt’s decision to accept the Democratic nomination in person that candidates began to actually appear at nominating conventions. Not coincidentally, this was also the time when the mass media, first radio and then television, began to play a major role in bringing the voices and the images of candidates before the public.

The next documents you will see are live clips of first George W. Bush then Al Gore appearing at their respective convention centers to accept their Party’s nominations. Notice the style of entrance and the imagery that each candidate and Party chose in order to highlight the themes of their campaign. Keep in mind that these events are highly staged with little left unscripted.

> **Play** both clips without pausing.

**QUESTION** | **What do the candidates’ entrances at their conventions suggest about each of them and what concerns about the candidates might the campaigns be hoping to address by staging the entrances in this way?**

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** | George Bush is a popular, strong, and independent leader. This seems to address concerns about his intelligence and preparedness for the job.

**EVIDENCE** | he arrives by himself on the podium, standing above the crowd; he is smiling but serious as the crowd shows their admiration for the candidate

### 2000 DOC. #3a



## Republican Convention Bush’s Entrance

**Video Clip**  
1 min. 30 sec.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** Al Gore likes people and is easily approachable, he is a loving husband and capable of deep feeling and empathy. This seems to address criticism that Gore was “wooden,” unemotional, and boring, and to counteract the acknowledged adultery by the previous President (Bill Clinton).

**EVIDENCE** he arrives from among the crowd, shaking hands and giving high fives; he gives his wife, Tipper, a long kiss and gestures to her in appreciation; he touches his heart and breaks into a wide smile as he thanks the crowd

**QUESTION** **What techniques do the convention designers use to rouse enthusiasm and to give delegates the sense of being actively involved in the process of nomination?**

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** “We the People” for Bush and upbeat instrumental music for Gore; handmade and professional signs with the candidate’s name; U.S. flags and cowboy hats; balloons; red, white and blue banners; and cheers and applause.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Should TV networks cover the Democratic and Republican conventions as news? How much of it should they cover? Should they be required to give equal time to both Parties? What about news coverage of 3rd Party conventions?

Do you think political events like this are really as scripted as this analysis suggests?

Do mass celebrations promote or discourage thoughtful participation in the political process? Why or why not?

**2000 DOC. #3b**



**Democratic Convention  
Gore’s Entrance**

**Video Clip**

1 min. 40 sec.

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**“Hero”**

**“Media Bias”**

**Reaching Voters** (TV coverage of conventions)

- Consider Andrew Jackson’s image addressing the crowd from on top of a stagecoach in 1828 (doc. #1) and the Whig party parade for William Henry Harrison in 1840 (doc. #3). Compare and contrast 19th century styles of candidate speaking and voters partying with the 21st century styles that you see at the Gore and Bush conventions. How and why might they be different? How and why might they be the same?