

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1840 DOC. #1: Quote From *Baltimore Republican*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

After Andrew Jackson won a second term in 1832, the National Republicans never nominated another presidential candidate. The Whig Party then emerged out of the defunct National Republicans and other anti-Jackson groups. In the election of 1836 Martin Van Buren was the Democratic Republican candidate and was Andrew Jackson’s hand-picked successor. The Whigs’ strategy in 1836 was to run three candidates in different parts of the country in an attempt to force a decision in the House of Representatives, as had happened in 1824. But this strategy backfired and Van Buren won in a landslide. In the election of 1840 the Whigs chose to run only one candidate against Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, who had garnered the most votes of Whig candidates in 1836.

The newspapers of the early United States were mostly owned and operated by political parties. If you read a Democratic newspaper in 1840 you got news that supported Democrats and bashed the opposition. The Democratic Party of 1840 sought to continue the policies of Andrew Jackson under President Martin Van Buren.

The opposition to “King Andrew” and the Democrats came from a new political party, the Whigs. The Whigs named themselves after the English party that had traditionally sought to limit the power of the king.

At their convention in December 1839 members of the Whig Party were divided on whom to support. In the end, William Henry Harrison, a relatively unknown retired general, was nominated over better-known candidates Henry Clay and Winfield Scott. The *Baltimore Republican*, an anti-Whig newspaper, printed this remark, which was supposedly made at the Whig convention by one of Clay’s friends after Harrison’s nomination.

“Sea coal” refers to coal from the earth as opposed to charcoal made from burning wood. It was so called because it was coal that washed up on shore or because it was transported by ship.

“Give him a barrel of hard cider and a pension of two thousand a year and, my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in a log cabin, by the side of a ‘sea-coal’ fire and study moral philosophy” (Boller 66).

> **Project** slide with quote.

QUESTION **What message about Harrison is communicated through this quote?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Even his own party members consider Harrison to be a lazy, alcoholic dreamer.

EVIDENCE “give him a barrel of hard cider,” he’ll sit the remainder of his days...and study moral philosophy”

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*“Give him a barrel of hard cider and a pension of two thousand a year and, my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in a log cabin, by the side of a ‘sea-coal’ fire and study moral philosophy”.*

—*Baltimore Republican*, December 1839

**Quote from *Baltimore Republican* Newspaper Article**

**PowerPoint Slide**

QUESTION

**Why might an anti-Whig newspaper choose to print this remark by a Whig who supported Clay about Whig nominee Harrison?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER

The newspaper might want to use the Whig Party's internal divisions against them, and to portray the Whig candidate as a poor choice for President.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Do newspapers and television news programs today tend to report news in ways that are obviously more favorable to one party than another? Is this a good thing or a bad thing for democracy?

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**Attack**  
**Media Bias**