

TEACHER GUIDE

1860 DOC. #4: Douglas "Taking the Stump" Cartoon

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is expected today that presidential candidates will travel many thousands of miles meeting voters and giving speeches during the course of their campaigns. This was not always so.

In 1860 Stephen Douglas became the first presidential candidate to "take the stump" or to travel extensively to seek votes. The term "stump" came from the practice of giving speeches on top of a tree stump. At this time many people felt that it was undignified and inappropriate for a presidential candidate to lower himself by coming right out and asking to be elected. Douglas was strongly criticized in the press for "begging, imploring and beseeching the people to give him his wish" as one Republican newspaper, the North Iowan, suggested (Boller 110). To defend himself he said that he was on his way to see his mother in Clifton Springs, New York as he made speeches throughout the East.

> **Project** the document (1860 doc. #4a).

The Democratic Party convention had a serious split, with Southern Democrats supporting slavery everywhere it existed and Northern Democrats supporting popular sovereignty or local community approval of slavery. This resulted in two Democratic candidates, Douglas and Breckinridge, running for President in 1860.

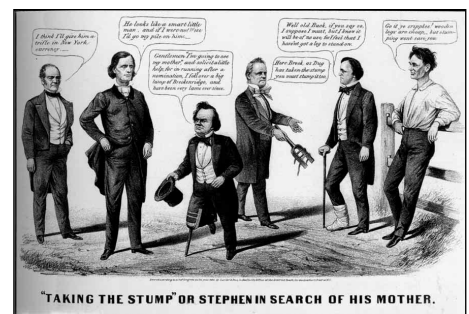
Political cartoons of this time period were often complex constructions with lots of characters each giving little speeches. The figures in the cartoon from left to right are: Constitutional Unionist candidate John Bell, former Virginia Governor Henry A. Wise, Northern Democrat candidate Stephen A. Douglas, President James Buchanan, Southern Democrat candidate John C. Breckinridge, and Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln.

QUESTION At first glance, without reading the words, does this cartoon seem to be in favor of Lincoln or of Douglas? Why?

SUGGESTED ANSWER It favors Lincoln.

EVIDENCE Douglas is portrayed as smaller than anyone else, he is frowning, his hat is in his hand as though asking for a handout and he is portrayed as disabled which would have been a sign of weakness in that era; Lincoln is seen as relaxed, not wearing a suit, and leaning on a split-rail fence which represents his image as the common man (the "rail-splitter")

1860 DOC. #4a



Douglas "Taking the Stump" Cartoon

PowerPoint Slide

> Project doc. #4b (cartoon with text boxes).

QUESTION **What does the author mean by Douglas' statement, "I fell over a big lump of Breckinridge and have been lame ever since"?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The author is poking fun at the Democratic party split between Breckinridge and Douglas. He accentuates Douglas as a "lame" or unfit candidate.

QUESTION **What does the author imply by Lincoln's statement, "Go it ye cripples! wooden legs are cheap — but stumping wont save you."**

SUGGESTED ANSWER To "take the stump" and ask for votes is a sign of weakness that won't help the divided Democratic Party win the election.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Today it is not only acceptable for candidates to stump for votes, it is inconceivable that anyone could get elected President without months (or years) of televised public appearances asking for votes. Has this change been good or bad for our democratic system?

Are political cartoons a good way to review the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate? Why or why not?

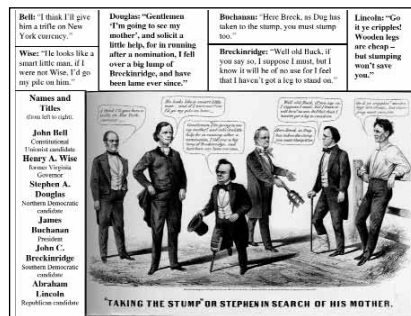
CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Reaching Voters

Stumping has come a long way since 1860. Today's presidential candidates go to extremes to publicly court different voting groups. 2000 doc. #7 explores attempts by both Al Gore and George W. Bush to seek votes from African Americans and women; 2000 doc. #12 shows both candidates on the comedy TV show, *Saturday Night Live*, trying to be funny and attract the youth vote; 2004 doc. #7 presents Bush and Kerry TV commercials targeting the Latino vote; and 2004 doc. #8 analyzes campaign web sites designed to target religious voters.

1860 DOC. #4b



Douglas "Taking the Stump" Cartoon (with text boxes)

PowerPoint Slide

ADDITIONAL INFO

Although he had debated Douglas two years earlier, when nominated in 1860 Abraham Lincoln refused to stump for votes, maintaining a dignified contrast with his active rival.

Douglas was criticized relentlessly in the press for his public appeal for votes. On his month-long journey "to see his mother" the Republican press had a field day. One Republican handbill exhorted: "A Boy Lost! Left Washington, D.C. some time in July to go home to his mother. He has not yet reached his mother, who is very anxious about him. He has been seen in Philadelphia, New York City, Hartford, Conn., at a clambake in Rhode Island.... He is about five feet nothing in height and about the same diameter the other way. He has a red face, short legs, and a large belly. Answers to the name of Little Giant, talks a great deal, very loud, always about himself. He has an idea that he is a candidate for President" (Boller 110).