

TEACHER GUIDE

1864 DOC. #3: "Lincoln-Ruin / McClellan-Peace" Poster

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the middle of a devastating civil war it is remarkable that the election of 1864 happened at all. The United States became the first country ever to hold a general election during a major war. Even when Lincoln thought that he would lose there was never serious consideration given to postponing or calling off the election.

The Democrats ran a vicious campaign against Lincoln, calling him among other things a filthy storyteller, a liar, thief, and butcher (Boller117). The Democrats were confident that people had grown weary of the war and of Lincoln's leadership. They complained about Lincoln's abuse of power as President by censoring the press, extending military rule, and arresting and detaining his war critics without trial.

On January 1, 1863 President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation in which all slaves in the areas held by the Confederacy were declared forever free. The Democrats believed that Lincoln would lose the election by turning the war from a conflict to preserve the union into a battle to abolish slavery. The Democrats used the Emancipation Proclamation and his decision to arm African Americans and to allow them to serve in the U.S. Army as evidence of the President's shift in intent. McClellan ran as an avowed white supremacist with his supporters using some of the most racist material ever disseminated by a major candidate.

In March 1863 Congress passed a national draft law to conscript young men to serve in the Union army. This was an unpopular law and riots broke out in New York City in July when the first names were selected for the draft. Over 100 people died in the four-day uprising. Many opposed the draft including workers, recent immigrants and "Peace Democrats" who opposed the war.

The document you will see next is a campaign poster from the 1864 election.

> **Project** the document.

QUESTION	At first glance is this poster in support of Lincoln or McClellan? Why?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	It is in support of McClellan.
EVIDENCE	largest words combine Lincoln with "draft" and "ruin"; McClellan is linked with "Union" and "peace"
QUESTION	What messages does the left side give about a possible Lincoln presidency? Explain.
SUGGESTED ANSWER	Electing Lincoln will lead to many bad things.
EVIDENCE	"more debt, harder times, another draft, universal anarchy, and ultimate ruin"

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PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION **What messages does the right side give about a possible McClellan presidency? Explain.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Electing McClellan will lead to good things.

EVIDENCE “restore prosperity, reestablish the Union in an honorable, permanent and happy peace”

QUESTION **Does the author of this poster support or oppose racial equality? Give evidence to support your answer.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The author strongly opposes racial equality.

EVIDENCE Lincoln and the “ Black Republican ticket ...will bring on Negro Equality,” which will lead to “anarchy” and “ultimate ruin”; McClellan’s defeat of “Negro equality” will lead to “prosperity” and “peace”

QUESTION **Who is the target audience for this poster? How do you know?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The target audience includes those opposing emancipation, equal rights for African Americans, and the draft.

EVIDENCE Negro equality and the draft are ruinous

SUGGESTED ANSWER The poster also targets those wanting an immediate end to the war.

EVIDENCE peace brings honor, happiness, and prosperity

FURTHER QUESTIONS

What role does race play in today’s presidential campaigns? Can you think of examples from contemporary campaigns where presidential candidates have “used the race card” to gain votes?

ADDITIONAL INFO

McClellan opposed his own party’s peace plank and spoke out for Union preservation at all costs. Lincoln went on to lead the Union to victory and hold the nation together. On April 14, 1865, just days after the Confederate surrender, Lincoln was assassinated and his Vice President Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Attack

Fear

Race

Target Audience

Consider the campaign posters and TV ads from the 1968 campaign, during a time of urban riots and the Vietnam War (1968 docs. #1, 2, 5, 6, and 7). Examine the use of fear, race, and war in these two wartime elections a century apart.