

TEACHER GUIDE

1904 DOC. #1: Parker “Jeffersonian Principles” Poster

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Other than traveling to seek votes, the main means of communication with voters in the early 20th century came from print sources (e.g. newspapers, postcards, and posters). Alton Parker was the chief justice of the New York Court of Appeals when he accepted the Democratic Party nomination. He ran a very quiet campaign, only going out “on the stump” for one brief speaking tour to support his candidacy.

> **Project** the document.

The text in the yellow box outlines the Democratic Party platform. Party platforms are the principles that a political party agrees to when it mounts a campaign. Platforms are sometimes statements of how their party differs from their opponents. In some election years there have been major conflicts at the party convention over particular planks, or parts, of the party platform. The Democrats in 1904 used their party platform as the main selling point against the popular President, Theodore Roosevelt.

QUESTION **What messages are being communicated about the Democratic candidates in this poster?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The poster is attempting to connect the images of the candidates with those of the Founding Fathers.

EVIDENCE phrase “return to Jeffersonian principles” with U.S. flags

SEE NOTE →

> **Have students read** the text “Excerpts from the Democratic Platform” on the handout

QUESTION **What messages about the Democratic platform and these candidates are being communicated by the text from this poster? Give evidence.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The Democrats are opposed to U.S. imperialism yet support free trade.

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Parker “Jeffersonian Principles” Poster

PowerPoint Slide
Text on Student Handout

NOTE

“Jeffersonian principles” refers to the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, particularly that democracy, liberty, and equality are the means to defeat tyranny and ignorance.

EVIDENCE text: “no colonial exploitation,” “freedom for Filipinos,” but supports “open door” policy allowing the U.S. to trade with China, “we denounce protectionism (tariffs)”

SEE NOTE →

SUGGESTED ANSWER They are antitrust but not antibusiness (like the Socialists).

EVIDENCE text: “gigantic trusts a menace,” but “capital and labor ought not to be enemies”

EVIDENCE text: “improvement of waterways,” “protection for all American citizens abroad,” “investigation of corrupt government departments

FURTHER QUESTIONS

What makes a campaign poster effective?

It was common in the first-half of the 20th century for party platforms to appear in campaign literature. Why do you suppose this practice has faded in recent years?

Do you know of any party platform in a recent election campaign? Why or why not?

NOTE

“Open Door” refers to a statement that McKinley issued in 1898 to the other imperial powers that were beginning to carve up China: “Asking only the open door for ourselves, we are ready to accord the open door to others” (A. Brinkley, *American History* 570).

ADDITIONAL INFO

Parker was a judge known for his caution about making any kind of political statement. Few people really knew about his stand on the issues prior to the Democratic convention. He was called, “the Enigma from New York,” “Mummy” and “the Sphinx.” The *New York Sun* suggested that he had “the salient features of a sphere” (Boller 184). His deliberate low profile was a pronounced counterpoint to Teddy Roosevelt’s desire for public visibility.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Foreign Policy