

TEACHER GUIDE

1968 DOC. #3: "Nixon's the One" Poster

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1968 Richard Milhous Nixon hired a team of advisors and an advertising agency to help him change the old "Tricky Dick" image that had followed him since the "Checkers" speech days. His team recommended that he soften his image as the anti-Communist tough talker who had attacked Adlai Stevenson so viciously in the 1952 and 1956 campaigns. In his campaign for a new image, Nixon avoided difficult issues like Vietnam and appealed to the "forgotten Americans" who were not protesting the war (Cornog 270).

> **Project** the document.

This poster was designed by artist J. Michaelson and paid for by the National Youth for Nixon-Agnew Committee. In the image he is surrounded by his wife, Pat, his running mate, Spiro Agnew, and by other Republican politicians. The three young people in the left background are his daughters, Tricia and Julie, and Julie's husband, David Eisenhower (son of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower). In the center right background are two superstar athletes of the time who were Nixon supporters: the Los Angeles Lakers' center Wilt Chamberlain and Green Bay Packers' quarterback Bart Starr.

QUESTION What are the messages that the artist is trying to portray about Nixon?

SUGGESTED ANSWER Nixon is hip.

EVIDENCE poster designed to look like a rock poster; psychedelic "Milhous" button

SUGGESTED ANSWER He is patriotic.

EVIDENCE White House; stars and stripes; eagle

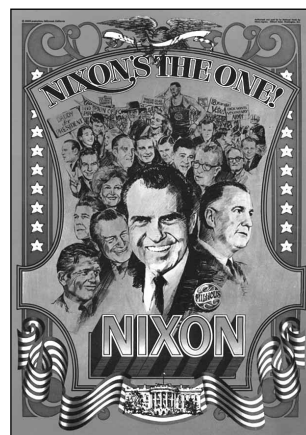
SUGGESTED ANSWER Many important people support him.

EVIDENCE images of politicians and sports celebrities

SUGGESTED ANSWER He is a cool father.

EVIDENCE images of his daughter and son-in-law

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PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION **Who is the target audience for this poster?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER **The target audience includes young people and voters attracted to a youthful image.**

EVIDENCE "The National Youth For Nixon-Agnew Committee" commissioned this poster; the poster's psychedelic style was very contemporary in 1968; use of celebrity athletes including Wilt Chamberlain; young activists are holding placards with appeals to the youth vote such as: "18 year old vote," "Student Coalition" and "Dick wants volunteer army"

QUESTION **How does this poster relate to Nixon's qualifications to be President?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER **The poster doesn't speak to Nixon's qualifications.**

EVIDENCE nothing in the poster relates to Nixon's many qualifications – vice-Presidential experience, foreign travels, career as a Senator; it sells image, not substance

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Can you think of other examples of candidates who have tried to court the youth vote by appearing to be cool?

Young people below the age of 25 are much less likely to vote in Presidential elections than their elders. Why do you think this is?

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Republican Party leaders surrounding Nixon include New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller; New York City Mayor John Lindsay; California Governor Ronald Reagan; Nixon's running mate Spiro Agnew; Michigan Governor George Romney; Illinois Senators Everett Dirksen and Charles Percy; Texas Senator John Tower; Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater; Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke; and Michigan Congressman Gerald Ford. The students for Nixon in the background provided a stark contrast to the young people who protested Humphrey at the Democratic convention in Chicago.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Target Audience (youth)