

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1972 DOC. #3: Photo of Campaign Workers with Brochures

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Democratic Party platform in 1972 was the most liberal of any major party platform since Franklin D. Roosevelt. It called for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, amnesty for war resisters, school busing for racial integration, an end to capital punishment, and a ban on the sale of handguns. One especially controversial plank read, "Americans should be free to make their own choices of lifestyles and private habits without being subject to discrimination or prosecution" (Boller 355).

The 26th Amendment to the Constitution was made into law in 1972. This allowed young people between the ages of 18 and 21 to vote for the first time. McGovern was identified with young people during his campaign but less than half of the newly enfranchised voters actually chose to vote in the election. Those young people who did vote split fairly evenly between Nixon and McGovern.

In many campaigns, workers are hired to hand out leaflets about their candidate to the public in the weeks before an election. This photo from The *New York Times* archives shows two campaign workers leafleting on a street corner in the affluent Upper West Side neighborhood of New York City, ten days before the election.

> **Project** the document.

QUESTION **Which candidate does each man support? How do you know?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The man on the right supports Nixon and the man on the left supports McGovern.

EVIDENCE the man on the right is carrying a bag with Nixon's name printed on it and wearing a button that says "for President Nixon"; the younger man's age, clothing, and hairstyle suggest he is more likely to be a McGovern supporter

QUESTION **What might this photograph suggest about the target audience for each candidate?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER McGovern sought the votes of white, liberal, college-age students. Nixon was looking for votes from white, conservative, middle-class voters.

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Don Hegan/New York Times

**Photo of Campaign Workers with Brochures**

**PowerPoint Slide**

**EVIDENCE** | both workers are white; the young man working for McGovern looks like a “typical” college student of that time, having long hair and casually dressed in bell bottom pants; Nixon’s worker is a middle-aged man dressed in an overcoat and tie, characteristic of a white-collar worker; they are both working in an affluent neighborhood where white college students and their prosperous parents might live

### FURTHER QUESTIONS

Why might The *New York Times* have chosen to use this photo? Does it stereotype McGovern and Nixon supporters?

Do you think today’s campaigns are conscious of the dress and look of their campaign workers? Should they be?

How might a candidate’s stand on social issues help to determine the age and social class of his or her target audience?

### ADDITIONAL INFO

McGovern’s enemies labeled him “the candidate of the three A’s: acid, abortion and amnesty.” This charge hurt him and was not entirely honest. He did not favor the legalization of marijuana but was in favor of reducing punishment for marijuana-related offenses from jail time to a simple fine. He did not favor “abortion on demand” but did believe that the Federal government should allow the states to decide. He favored amnesty for war resisters, but only after the war was over (Boller 229).

A Gallup poll in February 1972 reported that “youth 18-24 are less satisfied than the total electorate with the way President Nixon is handling his job” (Jamieson, *Packaging* 297). In a March 14 memo Republican strategists decided on a two-pronged approach for targeting youth. First, they chose to reach out to young voters who were employed and had not attended college by using posters, print ads, radio, and TV spots. Second, they proposed to “minimize, through the use of copy media, general encouragement to vote among 18-24 years olds, especially among college students” (Jamieson, *Packaging* 298). McGovern’s strategy was unsophisticated by comparison. The Democratic National Committee simply released three TV commercials and a radio appeal in the form of public service announcements encouraging youth to register to vote.

### CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

**Media Bias**  
**Reaching Voters** (leaflets)