

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1972 DOC. #4: "Landslide" Cartoon

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

> **Project** the document.

The cartoon you see here was published one week before the 1972 election, when the polls showed that Nixon was likely to win in a landslide over McGovern. It was drawn by Herb Block and appeared on the editorial page of *The Washington Post*.

The words on the falling rocks in the cartoon refer to various scandals of the Nixon administration that Block and other journalists had covered in the year before the election. On June 17, 1972, men hired by Nixon's reelection committee were caught by police while breaking into the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate building. At the time, Nixon's Press Secretary denied the President's involvement in what he called a "third-rate burglary" (Cornog 276).

QUESTION **What are the main messages the cartoonist is giving about Nixon?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Nixon may win the election but the foundations of justice are being undermined by corruption within his administration.

EVIDENCE the statue of justice and the ground beneath the man are falling away due to "cover-ups," "secret funds," and "political espionage and sabotage"

QUESTION **Whose perspective is being portrayed in this cartoon?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The perspective is that of the cartoonist and of the editorial page staff of *The Washington Post*.

EVIDENCE the cartoonist created it (his signature is at the bottom of the drawing); its appearance on the editorial page shows that this is an opinion offered by the editors (unlike comics that would appear on a separate page of the newspaper)

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**PowerPoint Slide**

**QUESTION** | **What does this cartoon suggest about the role of money and influence in the Nixon administration?**

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** | The cartoon suggests that money received from powerful interests is causing the system to collapse.

**EVIDENCE** | text on rocks that are causing a landslide and toppling the statue of justice include: "special deals," "secret funds," and "payoffs from big interests"

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Can justice be undermined by secrecy and power?

**ADDITIONAL INFO**

Herb Block, known as Herblock, won three Pulitzer Prizes for his editorial cartoon work for *The Washington Post*. He is best known for his caricatures of Nixon as a shady and unethical character, but Herblock began during the 1950s with cartoons that took on the crusading anti-Communist, Joseph McCarthy. It was Herblock who coined the term "McCarthyism" to describe unfair practices of accusation and investigation to undermine one's opponents. Herblock later spotlighted the scandals that surrounded Nixon years before Watergate forced the President to resign.

Campaign "dirty tricks" arguably reached their zenith with Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign. Nixon's Committee to Reelect the President (CREEP) used many unethical and illegal tactics to ensure victory. During the Democratic primaries they secretly undermined the campaigns of more moderate Democratic candidates like Edmund Muskie to ensure that the left-leaning McGovern would win the Democratic nomination. Although Nixon went on to win a landslide victory over McGovern that November, the Watergate scandal ultimately resulted in the only presidential resignation in U.S. history.

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**Cartoons**