

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1988 DOC. #1: *Newsweek* Cover, Jesse Jackson & *Newsweek* Poll Results

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The twin issues of race and racism rose to the surface in the 1988 campaign in ways not seen since the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction. In early April 1988 it seemed possible that for the first time in U.S. history an African American would be nominated for President by a major party. In 1984 the Reverend Jesse Jackson had run for the Democratic nomination with the support of his Rainbow Coalition, focusing on equal voting rights for all citizens. In 1988 his broader appeal for economic justice found support across lines of race, gender, and class.

In the 1988 Super Tuesday primaries held on March 8, Jackson won five states and placed second in nine others. He did this while spending a mere \$100,000 for television spots compared to the \$5 million spent by his two main challengers, Al Gore and Michael Dukakis. By mid-March, just a few months before the convention, Jackson had won more primary votes than any other Democrat and at that point had only four fewer delegates than Dukakis (Congressional Quarterly 228).

Media attention is essential for any successful presidential campaign. Many candidates get that attention by serving as an incumbent President or by paying for it through paid political advertisements. Since half of all campaign contributions come from the wealthiest 10% of the population, and he had taken a stand as an economic populist, blaming multinational corporations for increasing poverty, Jesse Jackson had a problem. It was unlikely that he would be getting much money from that top 10%.

Jesse Jackson got much of his media attention from staged events, such as marches and press conferences, which were covered by the evening news shows. Then, as he began to win delegates, his role as contender brought the cameras to him. The issue of race almost always came up when Jackson's chances of becoming the Democratic nominee were seriously considered. *Time* magazine came out and asked it in its April 11 issue: "What if Democratic voters actually nominate a black man for President?"

The documents you will see are taken from the March 21, 1988 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, after Jackson's strong showing in the Super Tuesday primaries. The first document is the cover of the magazine and the second document is a chart illustrating findings of a *Newsweek* poll conducted by the Gallup organization a few days after Super Tuesday.

> **Project 1988 doc. #1a.**

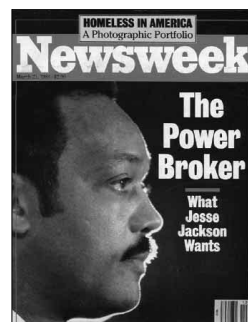
QUESTION

**What messages about Jackson's candidacy are being communicated with this cover? Explain your answer.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER

Jackson is not a genuine candidate with a chance to become the nominee. He is only running to exert power within the Democratic Party leadership.

**1988 DOC. #1a**



**Newsweek Cover, Jesse Jackson**

**PowerPoint Slide**

EVIDENCE | Jackson was labeled as a “power broker” rather than “front runner” or “serious contender,” even though he was running neck-and-neck for the lead in the Democratic primaries at this time; *Newsweek* did not ask “what Michael Dukakis wants” or “what Al Gore wants,” the assumption being that they were serious presidential candidates while Jackson couldn’t be.

### FURTHER QUESTIONS

Discuss the role of news media in determining who gets considered a serious candidate or not.

Should the news media be “gate keepers” of political legitimacy?

Discuss the possible effect of the same *Newsweek* cover with Michael Dukakis as the “power broker.”

### ADDITIONAL INFO

The April 11th *Time* magazine cover story of 1988 titled “JESSE!?” began: “Any American can grow up to be President. That idealistic sentiment began as part of the catechism of democracy, but through generations of rote it has degenerated into a kindergarten fable. Adults, of course, know the truth. The presidency is reserved for white men who have held high office and who have almost always avoided embracing a cause or expressing a sentiment that is far outside the mainstream of established opinion” (*Time* 13). The article went on to underline this “truth” by saying “But even as Jackson arouses Democratic passions, this blossoming love affair cannot forever mask the reality that if he is nominated the party will lose – and probably lose big” (*Time* 18).

Katherine Tate, in her book *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections*, argues that Jackson’s campaigns energized African American voters by stimulating their interest in Presidential campaigns. She points out that Jackson’s role as a strong runner-up to Dukakis encouraged the Democratic party to appoint an African American to the role of national chairman for the first time and to revise party nominating rules that had discriminated against candidates of color.

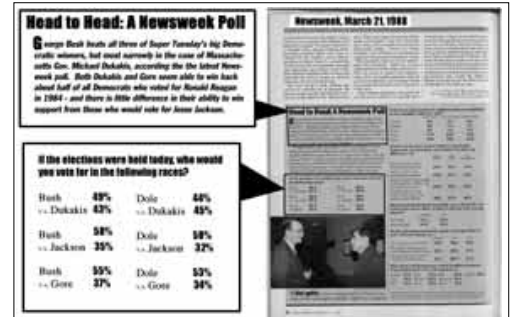
- > **Explain:** This article and poll appeared as part of the March 21 *Newsweek* cover story, *The Power Broker*, about Jesse Jackson.
- > **Project** 1988 doc. #1b
- > **Have students** read the text and poll results, or read aloud.

QUESTION	<b>Who does the opening paragraph, the poll, and the photo suggest should be the Democratic nominee?</b>
SUGGESTED ANSWER	The text, poll, and photo suggest that Michael Dukakis would be the most competitive Democratic nominee.
EVIDENCE	text and poll show him as the most competitive against Bush (the presumptive Republican nominee); the photo shows Dukakis and Bush; the 2nd sentence assumes Jackson voters will go to Dukakis or Gore, instead of Dukakis or Gore voters going to Jackson

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

- If Jackson had been a white male candidate, might the assumptions have been different? Is this a racist article?
- Why would *Newsweek* promote Dukakis over Jackson?
- Should polls be used to grant or deny legitimacy to candidates?
- Can polls help to determine how and whom voters choose?
- Do polls promote or discourage open thinking within the democratic process?
- Discuss the issue of racism in the selection of information offered about Jesse Jackson in this article.

**1988 DOC. #1b**



**Newsweek Poll Results**

**PowerPoint Slide**