



Citizens, Not Spectators

Lesson 1: Slogans in Presidential Elections

Lesson Overview

From *Tippecanoe and Tyler Too* to *Yes, We Can*, students will trace the development and use of slogans in presidential elections in the United States. The lesson allows students to compare slogans that are issue-related to those that are more generic. Students are then asked to analyze how these types of slogans are used and the effects they are meant to have on voters.

Suggested Grade Level

High school (grades 9–12)

Estimated Time to Complete

Two class periods

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students should be able to

- define the term *slogan* and categorize at least three different types;
- analyze the evolution of slogans in presidential elections from 1840 to today;
- describe the relevance of the slogans to the issues of the day; and
- explore how the development of new media types impacted the type of slogan used in presidential elections.

Materials Needed

Teacher Resources

- Teacher Resource 1

- Teacher Resource 2

Student Handouts

- Student Handout 1
- Student Handout 2

Procedure

1. *Introduce the lesson.* Begin the lesson by giving students five advertising slogans and asking them to identify either the product or company associated with them. Then give the students five additional advertising slogans, this time, as incomplete sentences, and see how quickly they are able to complete them and identify their source. A list of common advertising slogans has been provided in Teacher Resource 1. However, the teacher should feel free to use any advertising slogans he or she feels the students would be able to identify quickly.

Ask students the following questions:

- What are these “phrases” commonly known as? (They should be able to immediately categorize them as slogans or taglines).
 - Why are they so easily recognizable? Students should suggest things like: their repetition on TV or radio, often accompanied by an image or a song/melody, etc.
 - What is the definition of a slogan? (1) A war cry; (2) a brief, attention-getting phrase used in advertising or promotion; (3) a word or phrase used to express a characteristic position, stand, or goal to be achieved—a motto.
2. *Transition.* How else are slogans used? Ask student to give categories of slogans and an example of each of these non-ad slogans. (i.e. Social Issues: anti drugs, anti violence, healthier living, cleaner environment, etc.; Political issues: legislation, anti war, anti tax, campaigns, etc.). Share the following slogans with students and ask if they can identify them in American History.
 - Remember the Alamo (battle cry at the Battle of San Jacinto)
 - Remember the Maine (rallying cry during the Spanish-American War)
 - Remember Pearl Harbor (both a slogan and a song to encourage patriotism and sacrifice during WWII)
 - Lips That Touch Liquor Must Never Touch Mine (slogan of the Anti Saloon League)
 - Make Love, Not War (against the Vietnam War)
 - Black is Beautiful (political slogan of a cultural movement in the 1960s by African Americans)
 - The Buck Stops Here (a phrase from President Harry S. Truman in reference to government accountability)

- Any similar phrase the students might like to add.

3. *Slogans and Elections.* During an election season, slogans can be used by:

- a political party. For example, in the 1946 congressional elections, “Had enough?” was used by the Republican Party, which had been out of power since 1930 and was asking voters if they were tired of Democrats.
- a group trying to convey a message to politicians and voters. For example, in the 1960s, an anti Vietnam War and anti Lyndon B. Johnson slogan was: “Hey, Hey, LBJ, how many kids you kill today?”
- a particular candidate. In 1952, John F. Kennedy’s senatorial race slogan was, “He can do more for Massachusetts.” Sometimes candidates adjust terms from everyday advertisements. In 2006, “got guv?” was a play on the “Got Milk?” ads. Jim Oberweis, a dairy owner, used this in his campaign for Illinois governor.

Ask students to recall any political slogans used in elections either from their own lifetime or from history.

Ask students to briefly discuss why slogans have been used this way in the political arena. Do they see these as a help or hindrance to the political process? This discussion should be very brief, as they will get to talk about this more after their activity.

4. *Slogans in Presidential Campaigns.* Certainly slogans have been used in presidential races. Ask students if they know the current slogan used by the Obama Campaign (Forward) and the Romney Campaign (Believe in America)?

- Tell students they are going to complete the activity, “What’s in a Slogan?” Student Handout 1 has a list of 72 slogans used in 36 presidential campaigns from 1840 to 2012.
- Divide the class into 12 small groups of 2 or 3 (depending on the size of the class). Distribute Student Handout 2 (the directions for the activity). Give each group a set of slogans as divided in Teacher Resource 2. Each group will be responsible for determining the relevance of the slogans assigned to the campaign by identifying the historical, social, and/or economic context of the phrase. For example, what was the relevance of “Tyler and Texas” to the 1840 campaign of William Henry Harrison? What did the slogan reveal about the campaign? The time period? What perception, if any, do you have of the voting populace?
 - i. You, the teacher, will need to determine how much time students have to complete this task, perhaps one or two nights. Or you may use this opportunity to work with a librarian to set up research time.
- Once the groups have completed their assignment, each group, in chronological order of election year, should share its findings with the class. All students should take notes on the presentations.

- Upon completion of the presentations, randomly re-divide the class into new groups of 4 or 5, (depending on the size of the class). The new groups will try to analyze the evolution of the slogans over the 36 presidential elections by answering the questions given in Student Handout 2.
 - Ask each group to share their answers with the class and allow for a discussion to unfold based on their responses.
5. *Concluding the lesson.* Ask the class to examine the slogans of the current presidential campaign (Based on when you do this lesson, please add any additional slogans that surface during this campaign season). Use the following questions to hold a discussion:
- What specific issues are linked to any of these slogans?
 - What kind of reaction and or emotions are these slogans supposed to elicit?
 - How are these slogans similar to the ones of the mid-to-late 1800s? How are they different from the ones of the mid-to-late 1800s?
 - Is the use of slogans beneficial or harmful in the political campaign? Explain your answer.
 - If you could develop a new slogan for each or either of the candidates, what would it be and why?