

Henry Clay's Run for the White House

Henry Clay Campaign Flag

Henry Clay sought the party nomination five times (1824, 1832, 1840, 1844, 1848) and ran three times in general election (1824, 1832, 1844)

ACTIVITY:

Research who won each election. Choose one president. What was their "platform" or key issue?

Mill Boy of the Slashes

Henry Clay tried to attract voters by creating a narrative about himself to which the average voter could relate. He called himself the Mill Boy of the Slashes, referencing his life growing up on a farm. Henry Clay's childhood was much more privileged than he would tell voters.

ACTIVITY:

Why do you think it is important for voters to relate to presidential candidates?

Can you think of other stories that have been told about public figures that make them seem relatable?

Hint for the teacher: George Washington and the cherry tree & Honest Abe

Sheet Music

This piece of music was written about Henry Clay by supporters. This was one way information about a candidate was shared. It is also an example how a group of people showed their support for a candidate.

ACTIVITY:

How do we share information about a political candidate today?

How do people show their support for a political candidate today?

Henry Clay, Father of the American System

This painting is a campaign image used by Henry Clay in the 1844 election. It displays symbols of his platform, called the American System.

ACTIVITY:

The American System included the strengthening of the American economy in both the north and the south.

Study the painting. What do you see? What may each object symbolize?

Hint for the teacher: Flag draping the globe (spread of American ideals abroad); plow & cattle (southern agriculture); shuttle and anvil (northern industry); ship on the horizon (shipping or Clay's ability to navigate the Great Ship of State)

Political Cartoon

Political cartoons are still an effective way of criticizing politicians.

ACTIVITY:

Study the political cartoon. Using what you know about Henry Clay, what do you think the political cartoon is saying about him?

Hint for the teacher: The criticism is that Henry Clay has shown bad behavior and that he is using his running mate (holding the Bible) to shield the insults the crowd is hurling. You can see some of the insults include drinking, gambling, swearing, and dueling.