Lesson Plan: Logos in the Political Landscape

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Featured resources:

KQED'S The Lowdown: Politics by Design

KQED Art School: Logo Design with Mark Winn

Objectives

- Students will be able to explain how political symbols and logos are used to represent candidates and political parties.
- Students will be able to design their own political logo to represent a candidate, activist, or cause.

Essential Question/Big Idea and Lesson Context

Why are logos so important to a political candidate or political campaign? How do log design choices help communicate an idea or feeling about what a candidate or activist stands for?

Logos haven't always been used by political candidates or parties, but their use and presence has grown significantly in the last several decades. As candidates seek to stand out from one another in the election process and draw people to their campaigns, the logo has become a growing part of the candidate's visual identity and brand. This lesson seeks to provide insight into the history and use of symbols and logos in the American political system, and how modern graphic designers play an ever-expanding role in building the image of a politician or political party.

Introduction/Hook

Quick write: Can you think of a political logo or symbol from any of the most recent elections? Can you describe it visually? Do you remember the candidate or the issue? Do you remember where you saw it? What makes it memorable?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Mini-lesson/Direct instruction

- Discuss the introduction activity responses to identify what logos or symbols students recall from any recent political campaigns or elections. Make a list of the logos and the elements of the design that made it memorable.
- As individuals or a class, read The Lowdown post. After reading, identify the purpose of a logo in today's political landscape. How does a graphic designer think about and plan a logo design for a

candidate? Why is it potentially difficult to create a successful logo for a politician?
● **Optional:** View and discuss this Business Insider video: The Origins of Political Logos. Ask students how animals came to be used by candidates or parties. How was the use of these animals different or similar to the logos of political candidates or parties today?

Guided practice

● Using the images of various candidate logos found in the CNN Drawing Voters In: Campaign Logos Bring Artistic Touches to Politics ask students to compare and analyze logo designs from recent national campaigns. What design elements do they share? Which ones stand out and why? What symbols are being used and what do they represent?
● Optional: Have students view KQED Art School: Logo Design with Mark Winn for a short overview of how a graphic designer plans and creates a logo.

Independent practice

● Students plan and design a logo to represent an existing political candidate, party or issue. They can choose a local politician/activist, a mainstream political party or a current issue they are interested in.
● Students list 5-10 words that describe their person, party, or issue
● Students then draw 3-5 thumbnail sketches of a logo that include symbols, lettering, or initials. Remind them a logo is contained in a small area or built upon a simple shape, and that the drawings are meant to be small and quick ideas (artistic talent not required)!
  ○ Students can do this on paper using color pencils or markers. You can also try this project using free online vector drawing tools like YouiDraw and Vectr. Both online tools require students to create a free account. If students have access to iPads or Chromebooks, you can also use also Adobe's free Illustrator Draw or Photoshop Sketch apps.
  ○ Remind students that logos aren't about being the "perfect artist" but about using interesting and appropriate letter styles, small graphic choices and colors to represent their candidate or issue.
● If there is time, you can review and discuss student thumbnail designs and ask questions or make suggestions.
● Have students select their best thumbnail sketch and redraw, refine, ink, and color their design larger on a separate sheet of paper. Remind them to carefully center the logo on the page, without making it too small and leaving too much empty space, but also not so large that there isn't some space around it.

Assessment/reflection

Remind students that as designers, their job is to look carefully at each other's work and first convey what is working well in a design before offering suggestions for improvement.

- Students share their logo designs in small groups or with the class
- Instruct students to focus their conversations on explaining their design and choices for symbols, color or style.
- Post the logo designs around the classroom so students can see each other's designs.
- Students write down and answer the following questions about the designs:
  - Describe which design you think makes interesting use of color and why.
  - Describe which design you think makes interesting use of lettering and why.
  - Describe which design you think makes effective use of a symbol and why.
  - If you had more time, how might you improve or change your own design?

Extension/homework

Spread the word: If you want to build on the application and use of the logo, have students plan and design a poster that presents additional imagery and written content supporting their positions. Be sure to include the logo as a featured design element in the final design.

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.