



## Case Study: politics as (UN)usual

### Design Challenge:

Redesign the political campaign poster: Design a modern, unique, and visually stunning campaign poster to stimulate support from young voters.

### Design Brief:

Young voters have historically trailed others in voter turnout for Presidential elections. While young voters turned out in record numbers in 2008, it is expected to drop in 2012. It is time to give this demographic a shot in the arm, and you are just the one to give it.

The Obama "Hope" campaign poster of 2008, designed by Shepard Fairey, became a memorable and iconic poster that connected with America's youth. While many factors were at play, it is clear that Fairey's resonating design played a contributing role in galvanizing young voters.

Unfortunately, most political campaign posters have generally been designed in a bland, safe, and forgettable manner. Let's stop subjecting Americans to uninspired designs that bore the senses. Let's use design to revitalize our youth.

But first, you must find a candidate to support. Who will it be?

## **Gather: What do I need to know?**

In order to pick a candidate, each student had to display a thorough competence with the election process, political parties, the Presidency, and the 2012 candidates themselves. Prior knowledge on these issues was minimal, so students engaged in a variety of activities to build a better understanding.

Example Activities:

1. Vocabulary Builder (The Election Process)
2. Graphic Organizers (Political Parties, Roles of the President)
3. T-Chart (Written/Unwritten Qualifications to be President)
4. Illustrated Flow Chart (Becoming Your Party's Nominee)
5. Biography Sketches (Presidential Candidates)
6. Analytical Essay (Republican Primary Debates)
7. Essay Exam (The Election Process and Presidential Politics)

Once those activities were successfully accomplished, students formed design teams and orally justified which candidate they wanted to support. Provided that the arguments were sound, teams were allowed to proceed to the next stage.

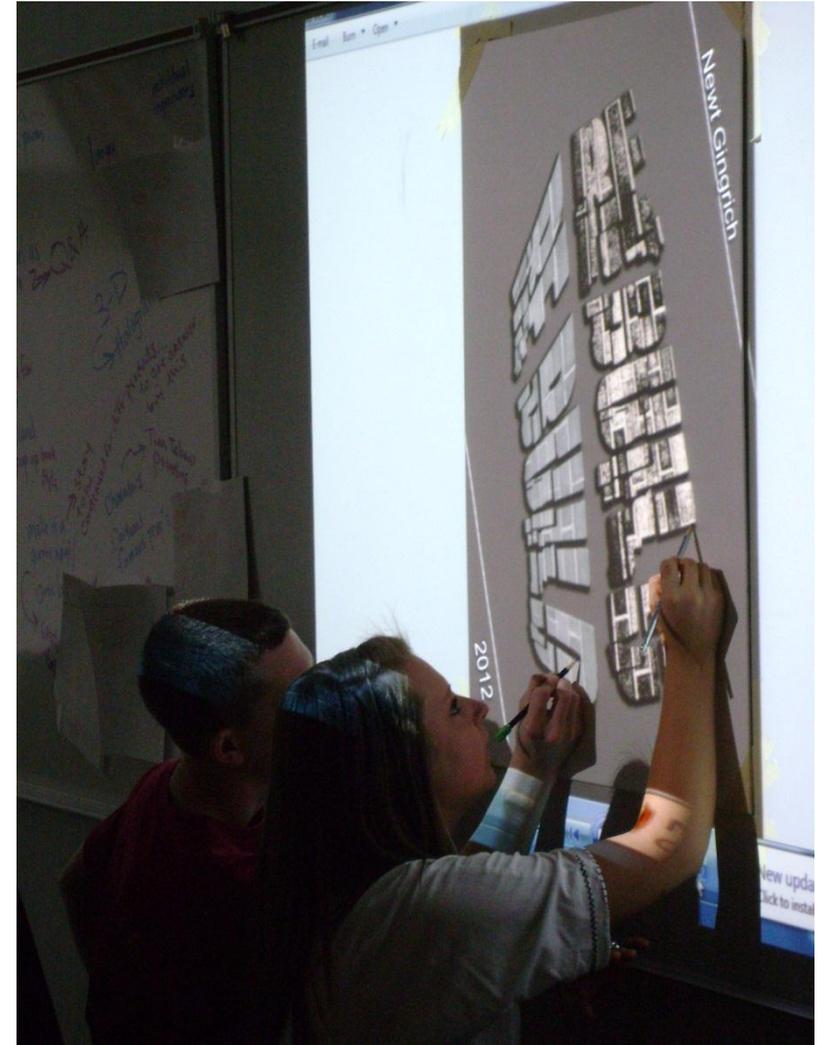
## **Glean: What is my focus?**

Once teams had successfully argued for their Presidential candidate, they were then ready to research in a more concentrated fashion. Teams spent a substantial amount of time learning about their candidate's positions on the major issues. Once teams were comfortable with their candidate's points of view, they were then challenged to narrow their focus with a series of written components:

1. Mission Statement – Each team wrote a concise mission statement that exemplified their candidate's core beliefs and values.
2. Slogan – Each team created a slogan for their chosen candidate that was short, catchy, witty, relevant, and memorable.
3. Persuasive Essay – Each student composed a persuasive essay that justified why their candidate was the best selection to lead our country for the next four years.

## **Generate: What are the possible solutions?**

Once each design team had a firm focus on their candidate's political positions and strengths, students brainstormed and mind mapped possible designs that would appeal to young voters. Once teams had come up with a variety of solutions, students voted on the most promising ideas to carry forward.



## Gauge: How do I build and test my ideas?

Once their most promising ideas had been selected, teams then sketched multiple low-resolution prototypes. These were then sent through a series of critique sessions during which students provided each other with constructive feedback. Critique sessions were structured around three different responses:

1. I Like ...
2. I Wish ...
3. What If ...

Once teams felt comfortable with their poster design, the low-resolution prototypes were digitized using Photoshop and other similar software. This allowed each team to not only gain proficiency in a new technology, but to also bring more refinement to their sketches.

## GO!: No more questions! Time to GO!

As each design team completed their final prototype, they were given a large canvas and other art supplies to take their ideas to scale. Students worked carefully to produce an excellent final product.

## Omega Activity: Candidate Connections

Once the final posters, mission statements, and slogans were complete, students felt compelled to share their original designs with the candidates themselves. Students contacted their respective candidates, which made for a very authentic audience.

**Duration:** Approximately Four Weeks

**Grade Level:** High School (9-12)

**Primary Subject Areas:** American Government, Literature & Composition

**Content Focus:** The Election Process, Political Parties, The Presidency, Writing in a Variety of Genres, Writing Evaluation

