

Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary

Primaries as Democratic Turning Points

Content Focus

- Use the 2026 primary season as the modern gateway. Yesterday's May 19 primaries included Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Indiana's primary was May 5.

Historical Connection

- 1968 was also a major primary election year, but one marked by instability and public distrust. Eugene McCarthy's New Hampshire performance weakened President Johnson politically. RFK entered the race shortly after. The Democratic Party became deeply divided over Vietnam, race, generational change, and protest movements.
- This is important because students often think primaries are simply procedural elections. In 1968, the primaries became a visible sign of deeper democratic conflict.

Question

- When do primaries become more than candidate selection and instead reveal deeper conflicts inside democracy?

Student Objectives

Students compare:

- A 1968 political cartoon or campaign image

- A modern headline about current primaries

Students identify:

- Who has political power
- What voters are being asked to decide

· what conflicts are visible

- What conflicts are hidden beneath the election itself

Possible Extension: Students create their own political cartoon representing political division or voter frustration today.

Primary Sources for Lesson

LOC Sources:

Herblock Looks at 1968 <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/herblock-gallery/herblock-looks-at-1968.html>

Specific Herblock cartoon <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hlb/item/2012637687/>

Additional LOC political cartoon collection <https://www.loc.gov/collections/herblock-cartoons/about-this-collection/>



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