

Ben Gurion and Begin: Fashion, History and Politics

Framing this unit

In this unit, we will analyze how political leaders in the past used fashion to transmit political and moral values. We will examine the differences between two prime ministers – David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin – and the influence of their respective clothing on their voters and the nation as a whole. Students will vote on their preferred prime minister and create their own poll comparing the fashion choices of Israeli prime ministers throughout history. To summarize their findings, students work in groups and advise a current world leader on how to dress in order to win votes.

Discussion

Using [this educator's guide](#), have an opening discussion about personal and political fashion choices, focusing on photographs of Ben Gurion and Begin.

Throughout this activity, we will discuss the power of fashion as a political tool, the importance of understanding the messages that fashion choices can convey, both our choices and those of others (especially people in power).

In conclusion, do you think that politicians' fashion choices have an impact on the way people vote? Why or why not?

Group Activity

Voting on the Best-Dressed Israeli Prime Ministers

Ask students to vote on the best-dressed Israeli prime minister using this [poll](#) created using Playbuzz. Students can create their own poll using pictures of other prime ministers found using NLI resources or Google Images.

Hold a short discussion about students' choices: why did they vote this way?

Creative Activity

Based on the examples of Begin and Ben-Gurion whose dress styles were influenced by their political ideologies, we will look at modern leaders and their choice of clothing. In pairs, students choose a current Israeli politician and "dress" them as a way of encouraging their popularity among voters, based on the instructions in this [worksheet](#).

Primary sources in this lesson



Photograph of David Ben-Gurion on his morning walk in the Negev, 1961



Romanian immigrants working at Tarshiha, 1949



Menachem Begin at home, 1958



David Ben-Gurion, Nechemia Argov, and Yitzhak Rafael



Menachem Begin at the Western Wall, 1981