

VOTE

2008

Made available in your area by:



Developed by:

Dr. Sandra Cook, Newspapers In Education,
North Carolina Press Foundation,
UNC-CH, JOMC
CB3365, Carroll Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3365
(919) 843-5648 • (919) 843-4734 (Fax)
sandynie@unc.edu

www.ncnewspapersineducation.org

Also visit North Carolina's online newspapers at www.ncpress.com.

Copyrighted. Printing rights must be purchased.



Introduction to Vote 2008

Why study the 2008 election?

The 2008 election carries great significance. Having served two full terms, President George W. Bush cannot run for reelection. Several candidates vied for their parties' nominations, fueling interest in and discussion about effective leadership and policies to address the challenges the country faces at home and abroad.

History will record many "firsts" in this year's primary and general election. Arizona's United States Senator, Republican John McCain was chosen as his party's nominee early in the primary season. He will be the oldest candidate elected to office, if he wins in the fall. Two Democratic candidates competed for the nomination until June when Illinois' United States Senator Barack Obama secured the nomination. Senator Obama is the first African-American nominated by a major political party and, if he is elected, he will be the first to serve as president of the United States. If New York's Senator Hillary Clinton had won, she would have been the first female to capture the nomination for either of the major political parties.

Other contests add to the importance of the 2008 election. All levels of government will be affected by choices that voters make in 2008.

Why use newspapers to study the election?

To promote literacy and citizenship learning

The newspaper is an effective tool for promoting literacy as demonstrated in a research report titled *Measuring Up*, published by the Newspaper Association of America Foundation on its Web site at www.naafoundation.org. Other research shows gains in vocabulary from reading newspapers.

Two other noted studies show the correlation between newspaper reading and civic engagement. In his book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam concludes that "pure readers (that is, people who watch less TV than average and read more newspapers than average) belong to 78 more civic organizations than pure viewers (controlling for education). Precisely the same pattern applies to other indicators of civic engagement including social trust and voter turnout."

The relationship between reading newspapers and civic engagement is also described by Peter Levine in his newly-published book, *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens* (University Press of New England):

"The 2000 American National Election Study found strong, statistically significant relationships between people's frequency of reading a newspaper, on one hand, and their likelihood of volunteering, working on a community issue, attending a community meeting, contacting public officials, belonging to organizations, and belonging to organizations that influence the schools (but not protesting or belonging to an organization that influences the government). To illustrate these relationships with an example: 42.4 percent of daily newspaper readers belonged to at least one association, compared to 19.4 percent of people who read no issues of a newspaper in a typical week. These relationships do not control for background factors, such as education, which might increase both community participation and newspaper readership. But the most carefully controlled studies do find that residents who engage in their communities also seek information from a high-quality source, and vice-versa. It seems likely that having information about current events gives one relevant facts and motives to participate; and that participation leads one to seek information."



Vote 2008 was written by Sandra Cook,
Newspapers in Education, NC Press Foundation.



Table of Contents

Introduction:

Introduction to Vote 2008	2
Letter to Parents	6
Teacher Evaluation	7

Introductory Activities:

How Much Do You Know? (C) ES, MS, HS	9
Getting the News (C) MS, HS	10
Election Scavenger Hunt ES, MS, HS	11
Bingo MS, HS	12
Learning Every Day (C) ES, MS, HS	13-15
Follow Along on the Road to the White House (ES, MS, HS)	16
Defining Terms (C) ES, MS, HS	17
Election Words (C) ES, MS, HS	18

The Home Front (Local):

Speaking Out About Local Concerns (C) ES, MS, HS	20
Advice to a Local Candidate (C) MS, HS	21
People and Places in Your Community (C) ES, MS, HS	22
A Community at Work (C) ES, MS, HS	23
A Speech to Win Support (C) ES, MS, HS	24
Appealing to Voters (C) ES, MS, HS	25
Identifying Local Political Leaders and Their Parties (C) MS, HS	26
Addressing Important Issues (C) MS, HS	27

The Candidates:

What is a Leader? (C) ES, MS	29
Marks of Leadership (C) ES, MS, HS	30
What Photos Say (C) ES, MS, HS	31
Words that Fit (C) ES, MS, HS	32
Assessing Character (C) ES, MS, HS	33
Give Some Advice (C) ES, MS, HS	34
Campaign Advertising (C) ES, MS, HS	35
Candidates' Web sites (C) MS, HS	36
The Ideal Candidate (C) ES, MS, HS	37
A Poem to Describe a Candidate (C) ES, MS, HS	38
Inside and Out (C) ES, MS	39
Running for Office (C) ES, MS, HS	40
Getting to Know a Local Candidate (C) ES, MS, HS	41
Getting the Facts on Candidates for National Office ES, MS, HS	42
Getting the Facts on Local and State Candidates (C) ES, MS, HS	43
A Pyramid of Facts (C) MS, HS	44
Challenges and Achievements (C) MS, HS	45
On the Campaign Trail ES, MS, HS	46
Comparing Candidates (C) ES, MS, HS	47
Compare and Contrast (C) MS, HS	48



Legend

C - Denotes activities suited for use with newspapers that cover community or local news

ES, MS, HS - Denotes "suggested" difficulty rating of activities:
Elementary School (ES), Middle School (MS), High School (HS)



Legislative Branch of State Government (C) MS, HS 49
 Your State's Congressional Delegation ES, MS, HS 50
 U.S. Senators ES, MS, HS 51
 Help Wanted-What Does It Take To Be US Senator? ES, MS, HS 52
 Help Wanted: What Does it Take to be President? ES, MS, HS 53
 The President's Company MS, HS 54
 The First Lady MS, HS 55
 Incumbency (C) MS, HS 56
 Recognizing Candidates for Public Office ES, MS, HS 57
 Examining What Candidates Say (C) MS, HS 58
 Keeping Track of What Candidates Say (C) MS, HS 59
 Building with Quotes (C) MS, HS 60
 Interviewing Candidates (C) ES, MS, HS 61
 Taking a Thorough Look at Candidates (C) MS, HS 62
 Image (C) MS, HS 63

Issues:

Statements on a Key Issue (C) ES, MS, HS 65
 Challenging Questions (C) MS, HS 66
 Writing in Support of Candidates (C) ES, MS, HS 67
 Your Tax Dollars (C) ES, MS, HS 68
 Local Issues (C) MS, HS 69
 Rating the Issues (C) MS, HS 70
 Interpreting Cartoons (C) MS, HS 71
 Watching with a Critical Eye MS, HS 72
 Keeping Track of Campaign Spending MS, HS 73

Political Parties and Activism:

Learning About Political Parties (C) ES, MS, HS 75
 What Platforms Say 76
 Party Connections MS, HS 77
 Differences Within Parties MS HS 78
 Choosing a Political Party (C) MS, HS 79
 Single Issue (C) MS, HS 80
 Special Interests MS, HS 81
 Organizing (C) MS, HS 82

Media:

Sending Your Message (C) MS, HS 84
 A Close Look at Photos ES, MS, HS 85
 Judging Newspaper Coverage 86
 Cartoons and Funny Faces (C) ES, MS, HS 87
 Endorsements (C) MS, HS 88
 Opinions Are Not Equal MS, HS 89
 Political Advertising: Who Is Targeted? 90
 Analyzing Ads (C) MS, HS 91



Negative Advertising (C) MS, HS 92
 Political Ads (C) MS, HS 93
 Designing Ads (C) ES, MS, HS 94
 Rate the Debate MS, HS 95
 The Debate Goes On MS, HS 96
 Comparing Coverage MS, HS 97
 Persuasive Speech in Politics MS, HS 98

Predictions and Results:

Predicting the Outcome (C) ES, MS, HS 100
 Looking Ahead to Election Day Coverage (C) ES, MS, HS 101
 The Ballot (C) ES, MS, HS 102
 The Polling Place (C) ES, MS, HS 103
 Voter Turnout (C) MS, HS 104
 Analyzing Voter Turnout ES, MS, HS 105
 The Votes are Counted ES, MS, HS 106
 Comparing 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 ES, MS, HS 107
 Beyond the Election (C) ES, MS, HS 108

Appendix:

Case Studies 110-111
 Glossary of Election Terms 112-114
 Bibliography 115-118

Thank you for incorporating **Vote 2008** into your curriculum.



VOTE

2008

Dear Parent:

To increase students' knowledge of current events and the election process and encourage community involvement, our class will be using newspapers in the classroom along with specially-designed teaching materials. Our study will cover local, state and national elections and integrate reading and writing along with social studies. Activities will require reading for information, summarizing, interpretation and analysis and written and oral evaluation of photos, stories, ads, letters to the editor, political cartoons, columns and editorials. Students will be asked to predict and plot the actual election results. Students will also compare media.

To assist in our study, encourage your child to read newspapers, listen and view news programs and Web sites, and explore other sources of election information available in your home and in public and school libraries.

I hope students in our class learn that they can help solve problems through voting and involvement in community life. I hope too that they realize their potential as future leaders.

I appreciate your support of our efforts.

Sincerely,



Teacher Evaluation

Please complete and return this evaluation to your local NIE program or the foundation that provided the teaching guide: NC Press Foundation, NIE, CB 3365, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3365.

1. How did you use **Vote 2008**? Did you assign selected activities to the entire class? Did you assign different activities to small groups or individuals? Did you create a newspaper-election center?
2. How did you present the activities? Did you copy selected pages? Did you put activities on overheads?
3. How many activities did you use?
4. Which were your favorite activities?
5. What changes would you recommend to improve future election guides? Did you create your own election activities? Describe them.
6. Where did you receive the guide? Which newspaper (or other source) distributed it?
7. Had you used newspapers in your classroom before using the guide? Or was this your first experience using newspapers?
8. How do you rate your experience using newspapers?
9. How do you rate your students' interest in the election?

Name _____

School _____

Subject/Grade Level _____

School Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone/Fax/Email _____



Thank you for using **VOTE 2008** in your classroom
and for taking the time to complete this evaluation.



Introductory Activities

Introductory Activities ask you to locate information throughout the newspaper. Repeat activities such as the “Election Scavenger Hunt” and “Bingo” to test your ability to find specific items from different newspapers. Every day, add election information to the calendars and to the list of election words. Test your knowledge with “Defining Terms” and “How Much Do You Know?”. After using the newspaper during the election, see how well you do by testing yourself again. All **Introductory Activities** encourage the regular reading required to follow candidates as they pursue public offices.



How Much Do You Know?

Before you start studying the election, take five minutes to list all of the candidates that you can. Then, take another ten minutes and write down which political party they represent, whether the candidates are running for local, state, or national office, which offices they are seeking and what positions they have taken for or against measures.

Candidate	Political Party <small>(Democrat, Republican, Other)</small>	Level <small>(Level, State, or National)</small>	Office	Position <small>(For or Against)</small>



Follow-up: To find out how much you learned, on the Monday before Election Day, do this exercise again or add to and correct your original list. Based on this exercise, how would you rate your political awareness? Has it improved over the course of the election period?





Getting the News

Where do you get your news? Write down all of your sources of information about current events. Name the people, newspapers, magazines, programs, Web sites and other sources.

Word of Mouth	People	Newspapers	Magazines	Radio	TV	Online	Other

2008

VOTE

Underline the source you use most often. Why do you choose it?
 Circle the source you consider most reliable. Why do you consider it most reliable?
 Interview ten friends to find out where they get their news. Reproduce the chart above and ask them to tell which source they use most and which they consider most reliable.
 Create a chart showing the results and analyze your findings:

1. Where do you and your friends get most of your news?
2. What source(s) do you and they find most reliable?
3. Do the sources deal in news and/or entertainment? Explain.
4. Do any of the news sources deal more in opinion than in fact and interpretation?
5. Is the commentary in each source separate from the presentation of news?
6. Do the news sources allow for reader, listener or viewer comments?
7. What could you do to be better informed? How might you change your daily routine and/or choices?



Election Scavenger Hunt

How much information about the election can you find in today's newspaper? Collect what you can find and supply page numbers in the blanks. To the list, add other items that you find in the newspaper.

- _____ 1. A photo of a candidate
- _____ 2. A political symbol
- _____ 3. A political advertisement
- _____ 4. A quote from a candidate for the U.S. Senate
- _____ 5. An election word or "jargon"
- _____ 6. A poll
- _____ 7. A reference to a special interest group
- _____ 8. The names of both major political parties
- _____ 9. An editorial about an issue or a candidate
- _____ 10. A local campaign event
- _____ 11. An opinion expressed by someone in your community about a local candidate or issue
- _____ 12. A political cartoon
- _____ 13. Other: _____
- _____ 14. Other: _____
- _____ 15. Other: _____



VOTE

2008

Election Bingo

Take the day's newspaper and try to win at bingo by being the first person to fill in a line.

B I N G O

A photo of a candidate	Campaign contributor	Letter to the editor in support of a local candidate	Criticism by an opposing candidate	Two words that describe a capable leader
A political activist	Poll	A graphic that refers to an election	Political ad	Photo of campaign worker
An editorial about an election	TV program other than news that deals with the election	Free	Local election issue	Political symbol
A candidate's position you agree with	An election word	Political cartoon about an election	Reporter covering an election story	Names of two major political parties
Political Action Committee	Endorsement	Quote from a gubernatorial candidate	Incumbent running for re-election	Caricature of a candidate



Follow-up: Try another approach. Circulate in the classroom, asking different students for the answers. In each space, write the name of the student who supplies an answer. Do not get more than one answer per person. The winning student is the first to complete a line of bingo. Discuss what you learned from each other.



VOTE

2008

Learning Every Day

You will learn something new about the election each time you pick up a newspaper. Use calendars to write down what you learn each day that you read. See how many days you can fill in during the election period.

September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 Presidential Debate at University of Mississippi in Oxford	27
28	29	30				



Follow-up: At the end of the month, discuss with your classmates what you have learned so far.

www.debates.org



VOTE

2008

Learning Every Day

You will learn something new about the election each time you pick up a newspaper. Use calendars to write down what you learn each day that you read. See how many days you can fill in during the election period.

October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Vice-presidential Debate at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri	3	4
5	6	7 Presidential Debate at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



Follow-up: At the end of the month, discuss with your classmates what you have learned so far.

www.debates.org



VOTE

2008

Learning Every Day

You will learn something new about the election each time you pick up a newspaper. Use calendars to write down what you learn each day that you read. See how many days you can fill in during the election period.

November

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 General Election	5	6	7	8



Follow-up: Now that the election is over, briefly discuss the things you have learned over the course of this exercise that will affect you in the future.



Follow Along on the Road to the White House

With your local newspaper and the chart below, follow and analyze every important step leading to the White House. Clip or print out stories that illustrate each step. Display them on bulletin boards or in scrapbooks.

1. Filing for office

A candidate files for office, appoints a campaign treasurer, announces his or her intentions at a press conference and starts down the road to the White House.

2. Primaries

In a series of state elections, voters choose from several candidates. Those candidates continue on the campaign trail toward Election Day.

3. Conventions

Every four years each party holds a national convention. Usually, the candidate who was most successful in the primaries receives the nomination for president.

4. Campaign

Labor Day is traditionally a time when the campaign for president heats up. Each candidate will travel many miles across the United States.

5. Elections

On November 4, 2008, millions of Americans will cast their votes for the President of the United States. In January 2009, the Electoral College will cast their votes.

6. Inauguration

On January 20, 2009, the president-elect will take the Oath of Office and deliver his Inaugural Address. At the end of the four-year term, candidates start over on the road to the White House.



Note: If starting your election study in September, use newspaper archives available in Web and/or electronic editions to find stories that illustrate the first three steps.



Defining Terms

Match the words and definitions.

___ 1. at large

___ 6. petition

___ 2. incumbent

___ 7. referendum

___ 3. independent

___ 8. split ticket

___ 4. congressional

___ 9. poll

___ 5. plurality

___ 10. precinct

A. a vote by all of the people on a proposed law, mandated by the legislature

B. a vote for candidates from different parties

C. gathering signatures to request change or place a candidate or party on a ballot

D. someone who belongs to no political party

E. survey to gather information or opinions

F. having to do with the U.S. Congress

G. smallest political unit that defines where people vote

H. representing all people in a geographic area

I. a candidate who already holds the office

J. greatest number of votes cast but not a majority



Follow-up: Find additional election terms in the newspaper. Use context clues to guess at the meaning. Then ask other students if they know the meanings. Check your answers using print and online dictionaries. Use seven to 10 terms to create your own test. Exchange with your classmates.



Election Words

Highlight election words and symbols that appear in your newspaper. Use your glossary or dictionary to define the words and explain the symbols. See how many you can find over the course of the election.

Word or Symbol	Definition	Date Found



Follow-up: Did certain words, such as "superdelegate," stand out as important to understanding this election?



The Home Front

The **Home Front** encourages you to judge the impact of candidates and issues on your local community. The section asks you to describe the places and people nearest to you and consider the views of the people with whom you live. As its name suggests, the **Home Front** is a local section.



Speaking Out About Local Concerns

What do people in your community talk about? Read letters to the editor and stories that deal with issues in your community. Read the newspaper's blogs that focus on community issues. Identify and write in the space below the problems that concern the writers.

Topics	Dates
Economy/Jobs	
Education	
Health care / Mental health	
Growth/Development	
Environment (recycling, garbage collection)	
Other	



Follow-up: Choose a problem that concerns you. Read to learn as much as you can about it. Write a letter to the editor expressing your opinion.



Advice to a Local Candidate

Pretend that you are serving as an adviser to a candidate for statewide or national office who will be campaigning in your community. After learning about issues from reading your newspaper and other research, on separate paper, write a business letter to the candidate explaining which issues he or she should address. Use the correct format (shown below).

Your name
Your street
Your state and zip code
Date

Candidate's name
Candidate's street
Candidate's state and zip code

Dear (Candidate's Name):

BODY OF LETTER

Sincerely,
(Your Name)



People and Places in Your Community

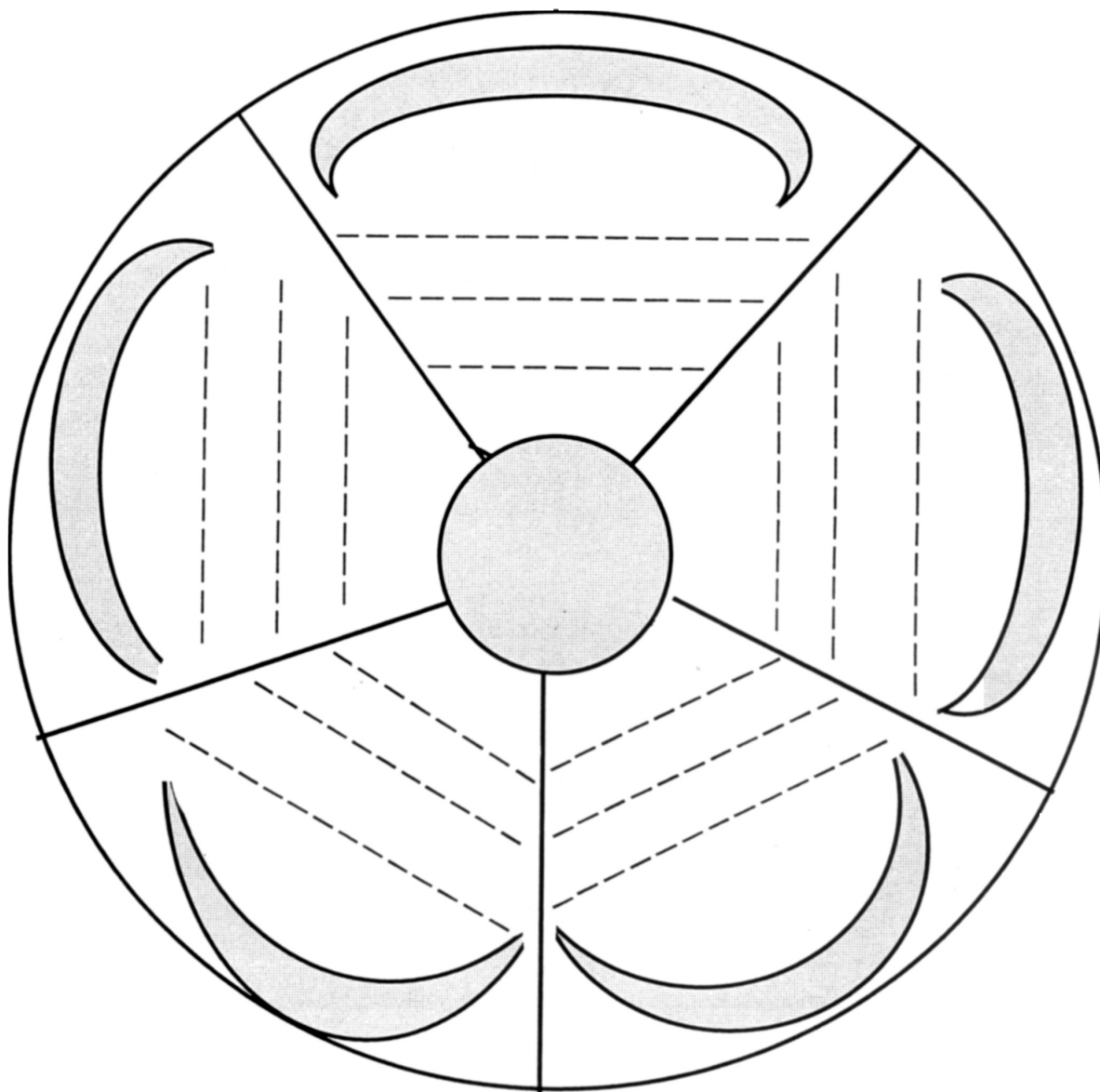
If a candidate wanted to spend a day walking the streets of your community, where would you take him? Using the newspaper, identify places where people gather, including businesses. List your choices, or cut and tape the places to create a poster that could serve as a map. Mark the beginning and end and number each step along the way.

On his or her trip around your town and county, who will the candidate meet? With newspaper photos, create a collage that paints a true picture of your community.



A Community at Work

Place the name of your community in the center of the circle. Inside, identify people working to solve the problems. Or, if no work has yet been done, list ideas for solving each problem that you discover through reading newspapers.



Follow-up: Use the information you gained to write a speech for a politician addressing citizens in your community.



A Speech to Win Support

If you were a candidate and held a rally, you would deliver a speech. Using what you've learned from the newspaper about problems and concerns shared by citizens in your community, write a short speech that you think would win support from citizens in your community.



Follow-up: On what issue is there the most disagreement? Did you choose to address this issue in your speech? Do candidates need to take positions on issues that divide the community?



Appealing to Voters

To win support in a community or region, candidates target their audiences by talking about the issues that directly affect that area. Can you find an example of that happening in the newspaper? Briefly discuss it here.



Follow-up: Use newspaper archives available in Web and electronic editions to locate speeches made by the candidate about an issue currently in the news. Is the candidate consistent in what he or she says? Does he or she make the same points regardless of the places where he or she speaks?



Identifying Local Political Leaders and Their Parties

Based on coverage of local elections, list candidates, their office and their political party in partisan races.

Candidates

Office

Political Party

Candidates	Office	Political Party

In non-partisan races, identify the candidates and offices. Cut out and attach to this paper or write down statements made by the candidates that indicate their political leanings and party affiliations.

Candidates	Office	Statements



Follow-up: Why are some political races non-partisan? Do you support having non-partisan elections for local offices? Conduct research and support your opinions.



Addressing Important Issues

Choose a state or national candidate. If he or she has held public office, gather information about his or her record. Read any comments or speeches reported in newspapers. Search newspaper archives available through Web and electronic editions and other media for summaries of the candidate's record in office. What has he/she voted for and against?

Candidate: _____

Office: _____

Voted:	
For	Against



Follow-up: Has the candidate shown concern for problems that affect your community? What positions do you expect him/her to take in the future?



The Candidates

This section asks you to identify the candidates who seek local, state and national offices and analyze:

- How they look
- How they act
- Where they serve
- How they serve
- What they say
- How they seem
- And who serves alongside them

Activities stress writing by asking for letters, poems, editorials, cartoons and ads.



What is a Leader?

From the newspaper select words and pictures that include the letters in the word "leader" and also describe a leader or the qualities of a leader.

l

e

a

d

e

r



Follow-up: Write a paragraph about a leader or leadership in which you use the words and pictures you chose.



Marks of Leadership

Leadership shapes our world. Evaluate a leader or leaders who are described in newspaper stories. When you see one of the following traits exhibited in a leader, write his or her name beside the description and the specific action that demonstrated the quality.

QUALITY	LEADER'S NAME	SPECIFIC ACTION
✓ They serve others.		
✓ They develop leadership in others.		
✓ They are good planners and decision makers.		
✓ They inspire others.		
✓ They learn and grow.		
✓ They have positive attitudes.		
✓ They have integrity.		
✓ They accept responsibility.		
✓ They take risks.		
✓ They take good care of themselves.		
✓ They are good followers.*		



Are there other ways to describe a leader? Add to this list. Where & how can you show leadership?

(*Source: "What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character")

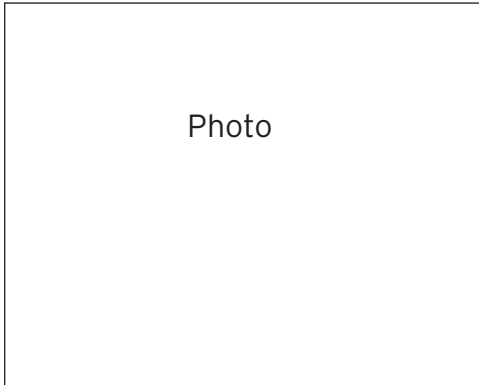
Variation: Select a leader whom you admire. Over time, follow coverage of this person and record examples of his or her exhibiting the marks of leadership.



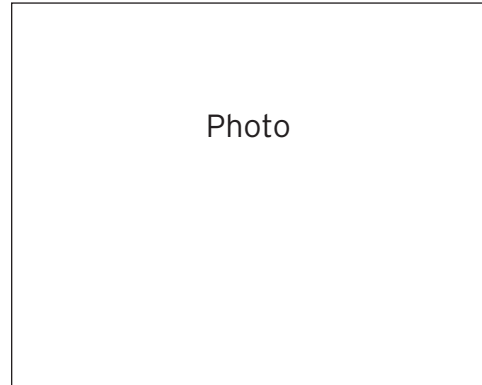
What Photos Say

Look for photos of candidates in your newspaper. How do they look? Do they look sad, worried, joyful, tired, confident, serious...? Paste two photos of opposing candidates on this paper and make a list of words that apply under each photo.

Candidate: _____



Candidate: _____



Do the photos leave you with a positive impression of the candidates? Why or why not?

Would the candidates' supporters prefer different photographs? If so, how would they change them?



Follow-up: Search photos, slideshows and multimedia presentations on newspaper's Web sites and electronic editions for images of candidates. In your opinion, do the images help or harm the candidates?



Words That Fit

Select and read about one candidate, and choose words to describe the person. Which five words best describe the candidate? Which five words are least descriptive? How do you rate the candidate? Add to the list of words:

Candidate: _____

Not Very

1

2

3

4

Very

5

honest
 outgoing
 energetic
 proud
 courageous
 demanding
 intelligent
 ambitious
 hostile
 shy
 angry
 cheerful
 loyal
 flexible
 sympathetic
 committed
 knowledgeable
 hard working
 visionary
 principled



Follow-up: Use the words to write a paper in which you describe the candidate. Be sure to support everything you say with examples drawn from your research. Learn about the opposing candidate and use the words and a Venn diagram to compare the two.



Assessing Character

Choose five character traits that you think are essential in a leader. Then choose five candidates from the newspaper and list their names on the dotted lines. Evaluate each person on one of the traits, attaching news stories with statements and other information on which you base your assessment. You may also save stories in an electronic file. If you cannot find reasons for your chosen trait, make another selection that can be supported with facts from news stories.

Character Trait Evaluated:

1

2

3

4

5

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓



Note! You may want to consider terms adopted and promoted by your school system as part of its character education initiative.



Give Some Advice

Newspapers have columns that give advice to people who have problems. Those columns answer questions submitted by readers about issues such as health, friends or work.

Find a candidate for public office who has a problem. Paste his or her photo below and describe the problem.

Now, imagine you work as a political consultant. Write a letter to the candidate telling him or her how to solve the problem.

Dear:

Sincerely,



Follow-up: Pretend you are a candidate with a problem. Write a letter asking for advice. Exchange with another student and respond to each other's letter.



Campaign Advertising

Suppose you wanted to run for county commissioner, governor or president of the United States. How would you let people know you wanted them to vote for you?

Running a campaign ad in your local newspaper is one way to get your message to the voters. Other popular ways to reach voters are campaign buttons, bumper stickers, road signs and Web sites.

Have some fun practicing your campaign skills. Imagine that your favorite comic strip character wants to run for the U.S. President, U.S. Senator, governor of your state or other office. The character wants you to help reach voters. Your job is to design a campaign ad to run in your newspaper. You can also create a campaign button, a bumper sticker, a road sign and/or a Web site.

Design and draw your newspaper campaign ad below:



Variations: Design a campaign ad for characters drawn from the newspaper, such as a sports celebrity or other well-known person outside of politics. Or, design a campaign ad for a real candidate.



Candidates' Web sites

Candidates offer official Web sites. Identify a candidate who interests you. Before looking at the candidate's Web site, answer the questions: What do you think a candidate should include on his or her Web site? What questions should the Web site answer? Should the candidate provide links to any stories in today's newspaper or in your newspaper's archive, located on the newspaper's Web site or electronic edition?

Answer the questions below, then compare your expectations with what appears on the candidate's official Web site. Did you find what you expected and wanted to learn about the candidate?

Name of candidate

What should the candidate include on the Web site?

What questions should be answered on the site?

What stories from today's newspaper or the newspaper's archive should the candidate link to?



Follow-up: Did you find quotes in the newspaper that a candidate could use as testimonials on Web sites and in other promotions?



The Ideal Candidate

Consider all of the attributes that make up a successful public official. Look in the newspaper for people who exhibit the necessary qualities and experience. Do not limit your choices to public officials. Cut out or write down what you chose.

My ideal candidate would have the background of:

My candidate would have the experiences of:

My candidate's leadership qualities would resemble:

My candidate would look like:

My candidate would speak like:

My candidate would have the concerns of:



Variation: Decide whom you would choose if you restricted your search to the comics, sports or business sections.



A Poem to Describe a Candidate

Select and study an article and/or photograph about a candidate who interests you. Circle or list adjectives, verbs, adverbs and other key words about the person. Identify typical behaviors.

Then use this formula for poetry writing as a model for a poem you write about a candidate:

Formula:

Line 1-Tell whom you are talking about.

Line 2-Describe the person with two adjectives connected by "and" or "but."

Line 3-Use a verb and an adverb to show this person in a typical action.

Line 4-Think up a comparison to show this person in a typical action.

Line 5-Use an "if only" phrase which expresses something you wish for regarding this person.

Example:

Commissioner

Thoughtful and decisive

Listening intently

As concerned as a parent

If only everyone agreed

...NCPF, Sandra Cook

Your poem:

Line 1 _____

Line 2 _____ and _____

Line 3 _____

Line 4 As _____ as a _____

Line 5 If only _____

By _____



Follow-up: Did you choose complimentary or critical terms to describe the candidate? Write a second poem that represents a different perspective. Also, write a biopoem or other type of poem about the candidate.



Inside and Out

Choose a candidate whom you would like to study. Working alone or with a friend cover the outside of a brown grocery bag or smaller paper bag with words and photos from newspapers that tell about the candidate's image or the way he or she is seen. Fill the inside of the bag with words and photos that show his or her thoughts and feelings or personality. Be sure to include information that tells something about the candidate's character.

Share what you find with other groups. Discuss or write about what you discover.



Follow-up: Choose a political party and create a bag that tells about that political party. Place its candidates and symbols on the outside and its proposals, ideas and philosophies on the inside. Use what you collect to discuss and write about the political party.



Running for Office

Running for office holds candidates' lives open to close scrutiny. It requires a lot of energy and commitment, and victory is never guaranteed. Why do you think people choose to run for political office?

In newspapers, find candidates who lost in the primaries or the general election. How do they respond to defeat? What are their plans for the future? Do they plan to stay involved in politics?

If you wanted to serve in a public office at any level, what could you do now to prepare yourself?



Follow-up: If possible, interview someone who is seeking office and ask how he or she prepared for public service.



Getting to Know A Local Candidate

Identify a candidate who is running for local office, such as the school board member, sheriff or county commissioner or alderman .

Candidate's name: _____ Office: _____

Write what you know about the candidate.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Tell what you expect to learn about the candidate from reading the newspaper during the election campaign.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Keep track of what you learn about the candidate from the newspapers you read.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



Follow-up: Do you know enough to decide whether you'd vote for this candidate? What more do you want to know? How can you find out more about the candidate?



Getting the Facts on Candidates for National Office

Gather information from newspapers and other election material to complete profiles on candidates for national office (President, U.S. Senator or U.S. House member). Create additional sheets for each candidate you choose to profile.

Candidate's name: _____

Office: _____

Political party: _____

Residence: _____

Age: _____

Religion: _____

Spouse's name: _____

No. of children: _____

Educational background:

Professional experience:

Political offices held:

Political viewpoints on foreign affairs:

Political viewpoints on domestic affairs:



Follow-up: What do you consider to be the candidate's strengths and weaknesses?



Getting the Facts on Local and State Candidates

Gather information from newspapers and other election material to complete profiles on candidates for local and state office. Create additional sheets for each candidate you choose to profile.

Candidate's name: _____

Office: _____

Political party: _____

Residence: _____

Age: _____

Religion: _____

Spouse's name: _____

No. of children: _____

Educational background:

Professional experience:

Political offices held:

Political viewpoints on issues affecting your region or state:

Political viewpoints on issues affecting your local community:

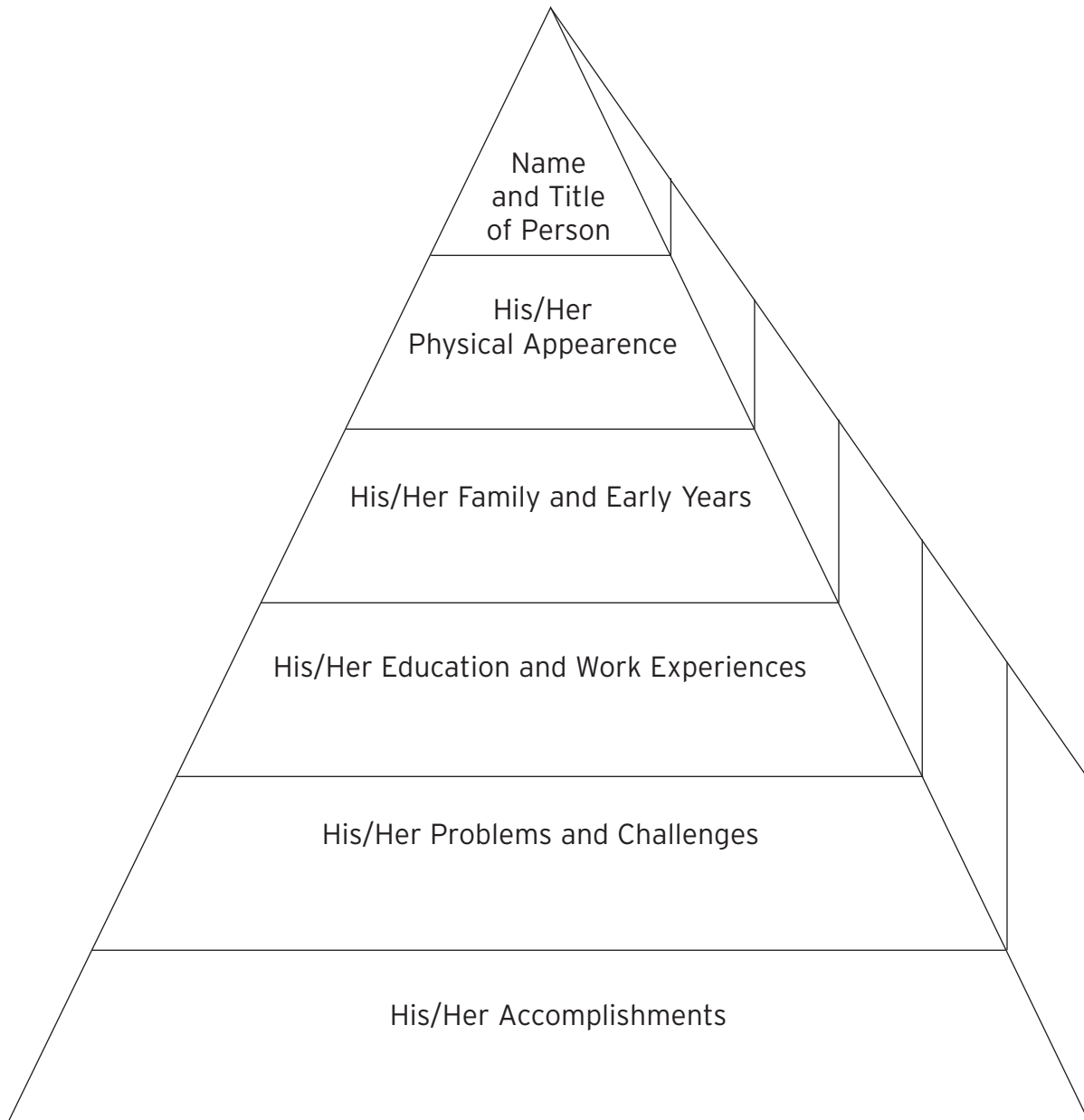


Follow-up: What do you consider to be the candidate's strengths and weaknesses?



A Pyramid of Facts

Fill in the pyramid with background information collected about one or more selected candidates. Use newspapers and other media. Note the sources of information outside the pyramid. If citing newspapers, include the headlines, names of the newspapers, dates and page numbers or clip and save the stories and attach them to your completed pyramid.



Follow-up: What sources did you use? Which do you consider to be most reliable and why? Did you verify any information by checking other sources?



Challenges and Achievements

Identify a candidate and track his/her campaign's ups and downs. Rate each event covered in the newspaper as a (+) or a (-) and describe it briefly. Over a week, add up the pluses and minuses and summarize how successful the candidate has been.

Candidates Name: _____

Dates:

Problems and Challenges (-)

Accomplishments (+)



Follow-up: Go into greater detail by following the candidate's opponent. Compare the opposing candidates' successes and the problems that they face over the weeks leading up to the election.



On the Campaign Trail

Using the newspaper and a map of the United States, track candidates on the campaign trail.



Answer these questions:

1. How many miles were traveled?
2. Which states have they crossed?
3. What sections of the country did they visit?
4. Were different issues covered at different stops? Why?
5. What else did you learn?
 - a. The forms of transportation the candidates used
 - b. The weather in the different cities
 - c. The clothes the candidates wore
 - d. The regional or ethnic foods they sampled
 - e. Specific places and events the candidates visited or attended



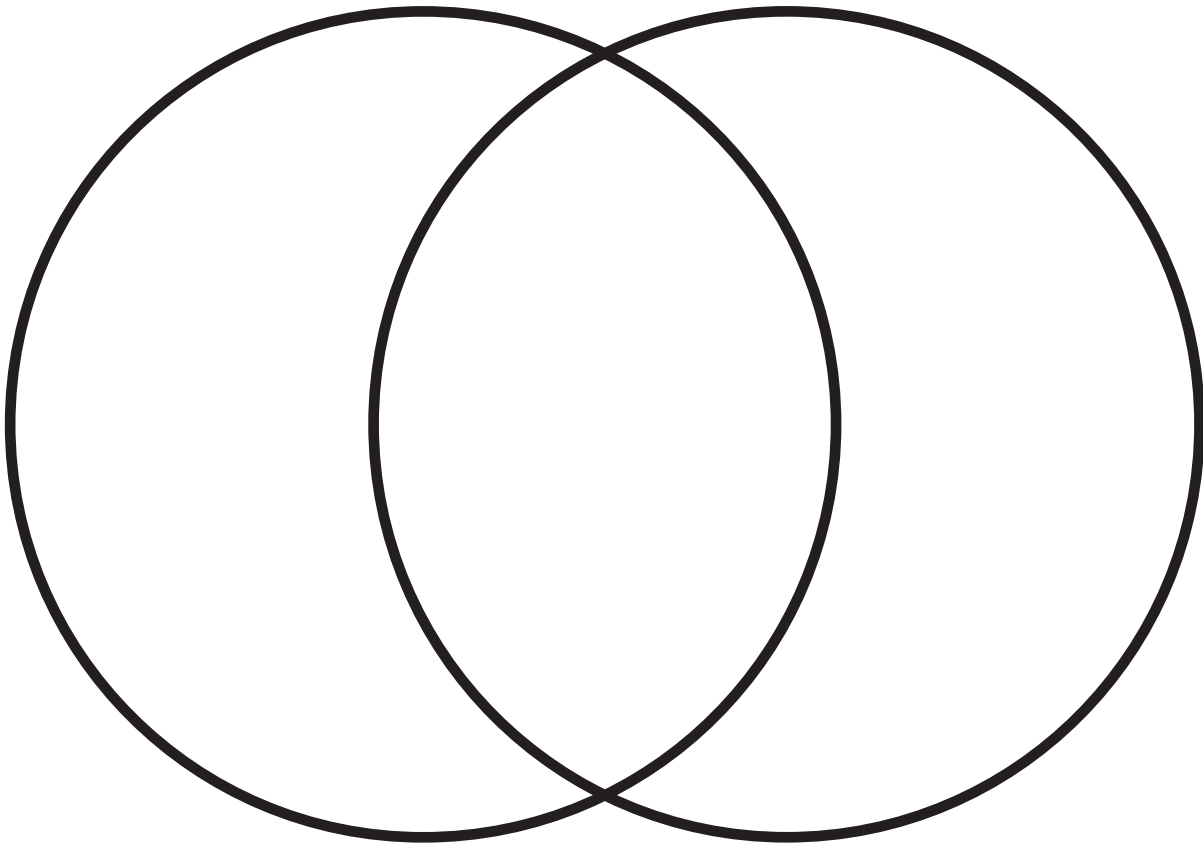
Comparing Candidates

During the primaries and the fall campaigns (local, state and national), use classroom sets of your local newspaper to compare candidates and issues. Then use the Venn diagram to help illustrate and define the differences and similarities.

Differences

Similarities

Differences



Follow-up: Use completed Venn diagrams to write comparison papers that describe similarities and differences.

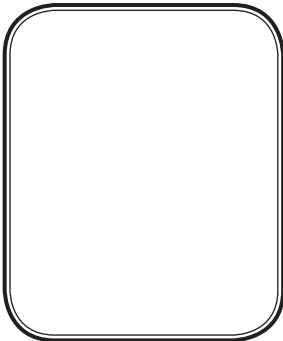


Compare and Contrast

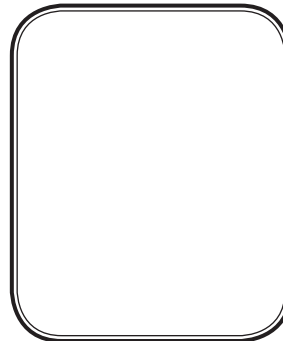
Compare a candidate who is successful at the local or state level with a candidate at the national level.

Using the comparison, explain what makes it possible for candidates to compete for public office outside the community and state where they live. How does someone achieve national recognition? Do family ties help? Are candidates for national office more wealthy? Do personal achievements make a difference? How does a successful candidate for national office get started?

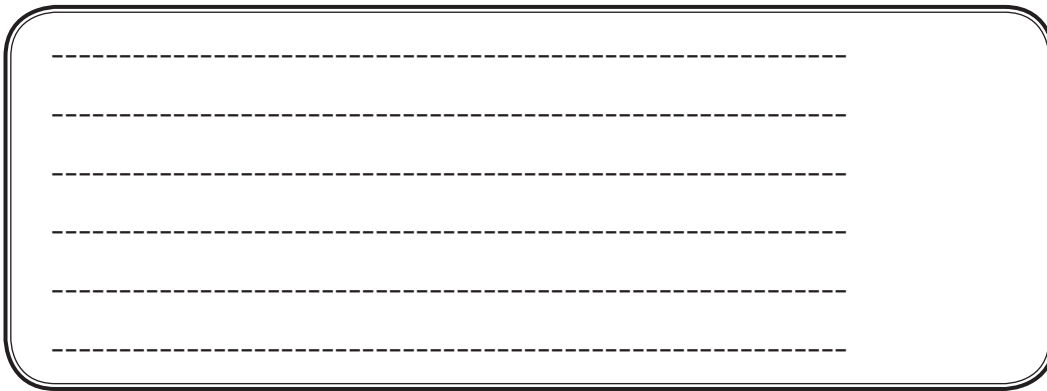
Candidate #1



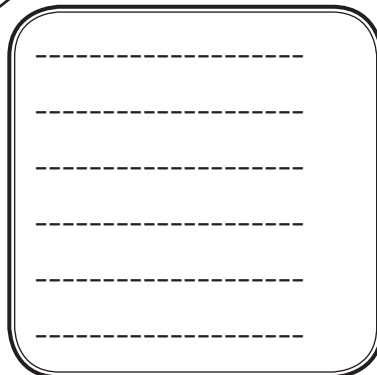
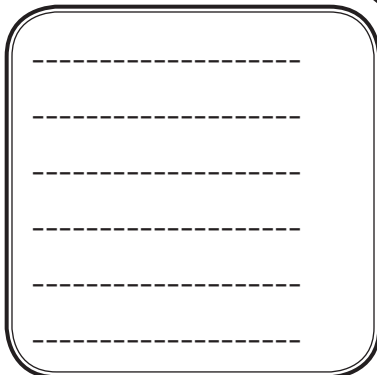
Candidate #2



How are they alike?



How are they different?



Legislative Branch of State Government

Search your newspaper for references to your state's legislative body.
What is it called?

Write below any members' names you find:

Record below any issues that they are considering:

Circle the names of any members of the legislature who represent your district(s).
Underline any issues that affect or concern you.



Follow-up: Find out the names and other information about candidates who are running for the legislature from your district(s). Check your newspaper and the Web sites for your legislature.



Your State's Congressional Delegation

All members of the United States House of Representatives stand for election every two years. Population determines the number of districts each state sends to the U.S. House of Representatives. How many members serve your state in the House?

Using newspapers and other sources, identify the candidates for seats in the U.S. House of Representatives from North Carolina's 13 districts. Circle your own district.

District

Democrat

Republican

Other parties



Follow-up: Keep a paper or electronic file of stories, ads and articles from opinion pages about your current representative to the U.S. House of Representatives and candidates running for that seat.



U. S. Senators

United States Senators serve six-year terms. Is your state electing a U.S. Senator in 2008? If so, who are the candidates who represent the two major political parties? List them below.

Collect news stories, photos, editorials, editorial cartoons, letters to the editor, columns and ads on the U.S. Senate race. Highlight information that explains why voters support or choose not to support each candidate. Then, list what you consider the top five reasons for voting for each candidate.

Top Five Reasons to Support

Candidate: _____

Candidate: _____

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.



Follow-up: Use the information about the two candidates (and any third party candidate) in role plays, debates and other classroom activities.



Help Wanted-What Does It Take to Be a U.S. Senator?

Discuss the qualifications for U.S. Senator and the job itself:

Qualifications for U.S. Senator:

Must be a citizen of the U.S. for at least 9 years by the time she/he takes the oath of office.

At least 30 years of age

A resident of his/her state

Terms: 6 years, no term limits

Constituency: a resident of your state

Salary: Salary: \$169, 300 as of 2008 (<http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa031200a.htm>)

Duties:

Article I of the Constitution lays out powers assigned to Congress, both the House and Senate. Most are enumerated in Section 8 and can be summarized as follows:

- Declares war
- Maintains armed forces
- Assesses taxes
- Makes all laws necessary for operation of the government
- Borrows money
- Mints currency
- Regulates commerce

Look for examples in newspapers of your state's incumbent U.S. Senators carrying out their duties. The duties assigned specifically to the U.S. Senate include the following:

- Approves or rejects presidential appointees to the executive and judicial branches
- Approves treaties made by the executive branch
- Conducts trial of government official impeached by House

Much of the work carried out in the Senate is done in committees. There are sixteen committees, ranging from Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry to Veteran's Affairs. Each senator must serve on two committees.

Review the Help Wanted ads in the Classified section of the newspaper. Write a Help Wanted ad for the office of U.S. Senator.



Follow-up: Write want ads for positions in state government.



Help Wanted - What Does It Take to Be President?

Discuss the qualifications for president and the responsibilities that go along with the job.

Qualifications for President:

A natural-born citizen

At least 35 years of age

A resident of the United States for fourteen years or more

Terms: Four years, limited to two

Constituency: the entire nation, voting by states for 538 presidential electors

Salary: Effective January 1, 2004, \$400,000 including \$50,000 expense allowance (<http://usgovinfo.about.com>)

Duties:

Chief of State - Speaks for the nation at ceremonial functions

Chief Executive - Heads the executive branch

Chief Diplomat - Handles relations with other countries

Commander-in-Chief - Leads armed forces

Chief Legislator - Recommends legislation to Congress; has veto power

Party Leader - Leads the political party he represents

Voice of the People - Voices values of people

Protector of the Peace - Appoints judges; issues pardons; executes laws

Manager of Prosperity - Manages the economy

World Leader - Strives to lead the democratic, developed, industrialized world

Look for examples in newspapers of the incumbent president carrying out his duties. Create a scrapbook, poster or bulletin board to display the articles.

Then, review the Help Wanted ads in the Classifieds section of the newspaper. Write a Help Wanted ad for the office of President of the United States.

Follow-up: If the president is unable to carry out his duties, the laws governing presidential succession establish the following order: Vice-President, Speaker of the House, President Pro Tempore of the Senate and then the president's cabinet. Conduct research to find out what situations have led to the vice-president assuming the office of president.



The President's Company

When considering a presidential candidate, what do voters consider? They look at his background, record, position on issues, image and political party, but they also consider his choice in a running mate.

Identify the running mate for each presidential candidate. Look for information in the newspaper that explains the strengths that each candidate brings to the ticket. List the strengths. Note that in 2008, the vice-president earned \$221,100 according to <http://usgovinfor.about.com>.

	Vice-presidential Candidate (Democrat)	Vice-presidential Candidate (Republican)
Name		
Education		
Home state		
Work Experience/ Experience in Government		
Record		
Image		
Other		



Follow-up: Do you think the the vice-presidential candidate is well prepared for leadership?



The First Lady

What is expected of the First Lady or the president's spouse? Read letters to the editor, columns and editorials about the wives of current candidates. List what writers think a First Lady should and should not do.

Should

Should Not

Read stories involving the current First Lady and identify activities carried out by Laura Bush. If voters chose a woman as their president, would the activities change? Would the role of the spouse change? How? Why? What title do you think the husband of a woman president should assume?

Discuss: Should the First Lady support political causes? To what extent? Should she serve as an official or unofficial adviser? Should the First Lady be free to choose how involved she becomes? Is her role changing as women in general become more active in politics or does the role depend on what she prefers?

Pretend that you are a reporter interviewing the wives of the presidential candidates. What would you want to know? List questions that you'd ask them.

Follow-up:

Read about politically-active First Ladies such as Abigail Adams and Eleanor Roosevelt and about others who chose not to be.



VOTE

2008

Incumbency

Public officials are able to use their positions to get attention. Circle all of the stories and editorials in today's newspaper concerning the activities of incumbents. How many stories deal with incumbents in their present roles?

Discuss: Do you think incumbents have any advantages over other candidates during an election? Why or why not?



Recognizing Candidates for Public Office

Name the people in the photos you find in your newspaper and the offices they seek. Classify them as:

National (President, U.S. Senator, Member of the House of Representatives)

State (Governor, Member of NC Senate or NC House, Judicial races)

Local (Member of the Board of Commissioners or School Board, District Attorney)

Follow-up: Over the weeks during the election campaign, collect photos of candidates running for local, state and national office. Compare yours with other students' and check your recognition of each other's photos. See how many different candidates and poses your class can find and talk about overall impressions that the photos create of individual candidates.



Examining What Candidates Say

In an effort to win support, candidates take positions on issues that concern voters. Identify news stories that include statements made by candidates. Circle any quotes.

Choose two quotes and agree or disagree with the positions. Explain your answers:

Candidate Quoted: _____

Quote:

_____ agree

_____ disagree

Candidate Quoted: _____

Quote:

_____ agree

_____ disagree



Follow-up: Do you always agree with the candidates you support? Do voters vote for candidates with whom they agree on all issues? Explain.



Keeping Track of What Candidates Say

Search newspapers for statements made by candidates for office. Circle the quotes that you find. In writing, analyze one important quote:

1. What is the quote?
2. Who said it? (candidate, office and political party)

Candidate

Office

Political Party
3. Where was the candidate when he made the statement?
4. When did the candidate make the statement?
5. Identify the audience and explain why the candidate is addressing this individual or group.



Follow-up: Recording the quotes on index cards will enable you to contribute to a group or class file that can be developed for each candidate. Using the files, assume the roles of different candidates, make speeches, write ads and develop slogans, drawing from the candidates' own statements.

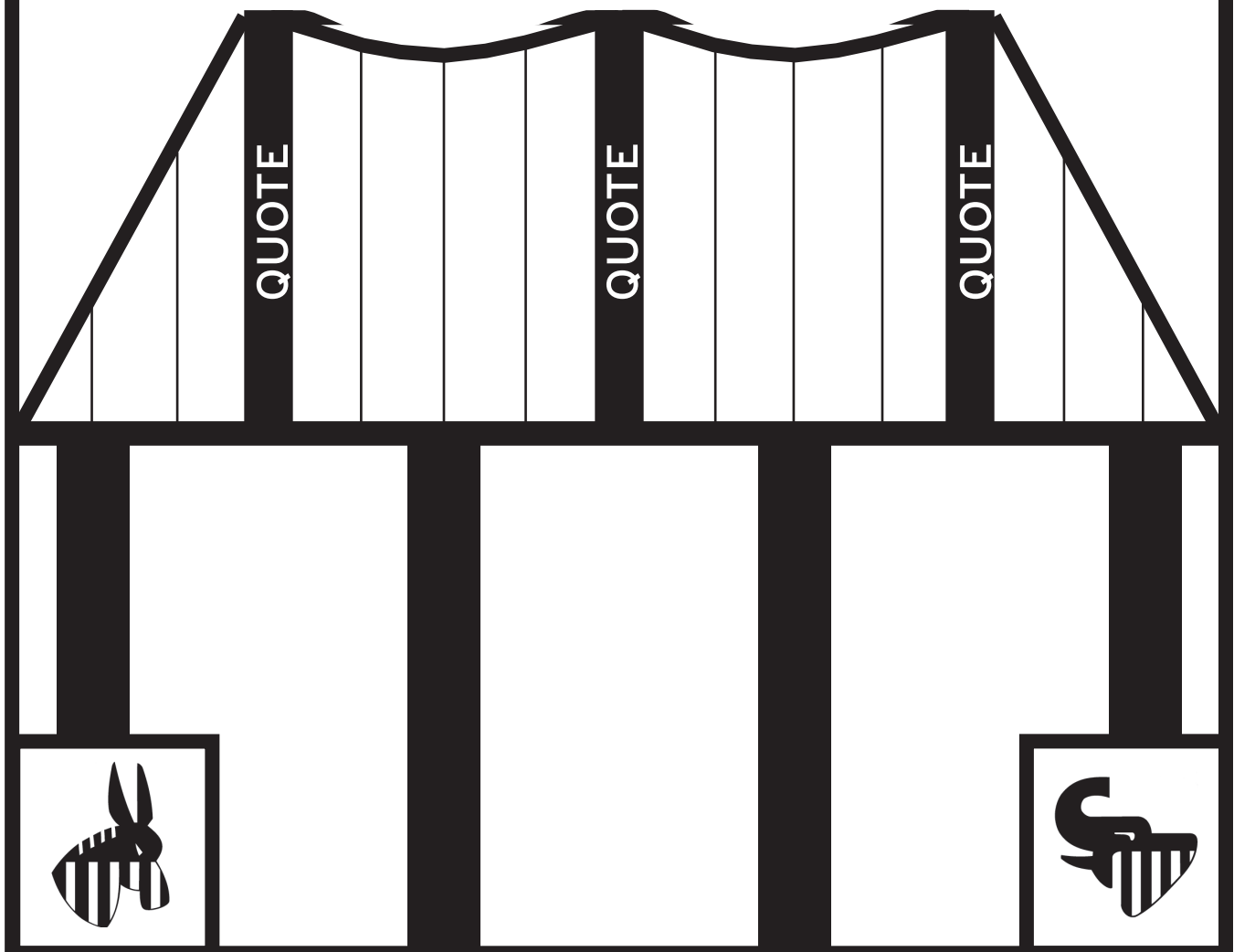


Building with Quotes

Reporters build stories around quotes. Choose a candidate and look for newspaper stories in which your chosen candidate is quoted. Record each quote on an index card. On another index card, answer key questions such as where the candidate was and when he or she said it. Save the original story.

Exchange index cards with another classmate. Then put the quotes in a logical order, writing transition sentences that lead from one quote to the next. Complete your story with an interesting opening paragraph. Then compare your story with the original.

Discuss: Compare writing a story to building a bridge. The quotes are the supports for the bridge; the wires or ropes are the transition statements that connect the quotes.



Interviewing Candidates

Reporters ask questions. Look in today's newspaper for election stories. Choose one story of particular interest.

What do you think the reporter asked the candidate?

Take the role of the reporter. What would you ask if you had a chance to interview candidates? Select a candidate running on each level and list one or more questions that you would ask.

National candidate: _____

I'd ask:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

State candidate: _____

I'd ask:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Local candidate: _____

I'd ask:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Follow-up: Stage a press conference. Ask a student who knows a lot about a candidate to become that candidate and answer the questions.



Taking a Thorough Look at Candidates

During the weeks prior to the election, locate newspaper articles that answer fundamental questions about the candidate's qualifications.

Select two candidates who oppose each other and select at least one article for each candidate that tells about each of the following areas:

1. Position on issues
2. Leadership ability
3. Background and experience
4. Honesty and integrity
5. Responsiveness to constituents

Write the headline of each article, its date, page, and the name of the newspaper below the candidate's name on the following chart:

Candidate _____	Candidate _____
Article 1 (positions)	
Article 2 (leadership)	
Article 3 (background/experience)	
Article 4 (honesty/integrity)	
Article 5 (responsiveness)	



Use separate paper to record information from the articles.

What conclusions can you draw?



Image

The image of a candidate plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of an election. Voters are often influenced by intangibles such as candidates' perceived trustworthiness, their personal appearance or even their presumed devotion to their families. For races you choose, evaluate each candidate's image.

Candidate _____

	Poor		Excellent		
	1	2	3	4	5
Physical appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Sincerity and integrity	1	2	3	4	5
Charisma	1	2	3	4	5
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5
Compassion	1	2	3	4	5
Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Caring	1	2	3	4	5
Sense of humor	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Devotion to family	1	2	3	4	5
Devotion to country	1	2	3	4	5



Follow-up: In newspapers and other media, find evidence that supports or runs counter to your perceived image of each candidate. Did your research change your view of the candidate?



Issues

The activities in **Issues** focus not only on candidates' viewpoints but also on the opinions you hold and the opinions held by your classmates, neighbors and friends. Campaign tactics and spending often emerge as issues, and activities require that you examine those.



Statements on a Key Issue

Pay close attention to remarks made by candidates for local and state offices. Record the quotes that deal with an issue of great concern to you. Then offer your reactions. Is a candidate's stand on this issue enough to persuade you to vote for him or her? Are there other issues that matter as much to you?

Issue: _____

Quote	Reactions



Follow-up: Develop charts for other candidates, such as candidates for national offices.



Challenging Questions

For two or more candidates, write a question posed to them in a debate, press conference or on the campaign trail. Indicate whether the candidate answered yes or no and if the candidate talked about an action that he or she has taken on the matter with an explanation of the action's effectiveness. In the space for "response," write how others (reporters, other candidates, people in the crowd or audience) responded to the candidate's statements. Or write your own response.

Candidate #1

Question

Yes or No

Action

Explanation

Response

Candidate #2

Question

Yes or No

Action

Explanation

Response



Writing in Support of Candidates

Read newspapers to identify reasons for voting for and against two or more opposing candidates. Look in particular for opinions expressed in letters to the editors, editorials, editorial columns and political ads. Write what you consider the best three reasons for supporting each candidate on individual slips of paper and collect them in files, bags or boxes. You may also save stories in electronic files. Compile all ideas.

Using the most powerful arguments, write editorials in support of these candidates, or prepare a debate.



Follow-up: How do you verify claims made about a candidate's words or actions?



Your Tax Dollars

Conduct a survey among county taxpayers YOU know, such as teachers, your friends' parents, and members of your family. Learn what they think about the way their county tax dollars are spent. What areas do they believe deserve more money? Which deserve less?

Names	Areas that deserve more money	Areas that deserve less money
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Look through newspapers to find out if candidates for county offices address any of the needs mentioned by the people surveyed. What did you find?



Local Issues

Candidates for county commissioners should discuss concerns that they will be able to address if elected. By reading newspapers keep track of statements made by candidates for county commissioner. Determine which of the following areas receive most of their attention. Ask yourself if they are answering these critical questions.

- Schools:**
- Should teachers receive more local money?
 - Is the school budget adequate?
 - Are the school facilities in good condition?
 - Are there enough schools and enough classrooms?
 - Are the schools safe?
 - When should the school year begin and end?
 - How do testing programs affect the school?
- Crime:**
- What measures have been taken to reduce crime?
 - Is law enforcement adequate?
 - Are there enough deputies?
- Economy:**
- Does the county actively recruit business and industry?
 - Should the county offer financial incentives to businesses to promote their setting up in the county?
 - Are local community colleges working with businesses?
 - Are there plant layoffs? Is there a high rate of unemployment?
 - Are water and sewer extended to residential areas?
 - Are water and sewer provided to businesses moving in?
- Environment:**
- Is the local water supply protected?
 - Where are the landfills?
 - Are effective recycling programs in place?
 - Are zoning requirements in place that will protect the environment?
 - How is trash collection handled?
- Social Programs:**
- Are the federal programs run by the county handled effectively and efficiently?
 - Who and what organizations offer services to the mentally ill?

Add to the list as you read the paper. Record each time one of the issues is raised by a candidate. Create a bar graph to show the frequency.



Rating the Issues

Working in groups, read newspaper articles about one of these issues. Highlight key parts of the articles, or use index cards to take notes, including the name of the newspaper, the date and page where you find the information.

Discuss what you learn within your group, and prepare a brief oral presentation to share with your class. After hearing all of the presentations, rank the issues from 1, 2, 3, 4... to 10 in order of importance.

___ Economy and jobs

___ Global conflicts

___ Foreign affairs

___ Immigration

___ Energy

___ Environment

___ Education

___ Health care

___ Social programs

___ Crime and drugs

Interview five of your classmates. How do their rankings differ from yours?



Interpreting Cartoons

Collect political cartoons that deal with the election. Match them with stories in the newspaper about the same subject and use them to help you answer the following questions.

1. What did the cartoonists think about the candidate and/or issue?
2. Does the cartoonist use symbols? If so, what do they mean?
3. What recent election news prompted the cartoon?
4. Do you agree with the cartoonist? Why or why not?
5. Can you find information in the newspaper to support your own point of view?
The cartoonist's point of view?



Follow-up: Create a poster displaying the cartoons and related articles. Place the cartoon in the center and the articles on the outside.



Watching With a Critical Eye

Read newspapers and watch and listen to other media with a critical eye and ear. As you study the election, look for instances when candidates are guilty of distortion. Name the candidate and explain what his or her campaign organization did that you find objectionable. Use as a guide the following list drawn from the brochure "Pick a Candidate" available through the national League of Women Voters:

Name-calling - Calling names such as "wishy-washy" when the candidate is more accurately described as flexible and responsive.

Rumor-mongering - Making unsubstantiated claims or insinuating that an opponent is guilty of wrongdoing.

Loaded statements - Issuing statements that don't say much, such as "I will reduce taxes." Which taxes?

Guilt by association - Criticizing candidates for the financial support and endorsements they receive from individuals and groups when all candidates seek support from a wide range of people and groups.

Catchwords - Using phrases such as "law and order" and "family values" that trigger emotional response without saying much. Look into what the candidates are really trying to say.

Baiting - Harassing a candidate in hopes that he or she flies off the handle or does something rash and looks weak. Persistent attacks on members of a candidate's family might cause a damaging, negative response.

Spot when candidates use issues that do not seem important and divert attention from critical issues by (1) misinterpreting the voting record of opponents, (2) overstating their own abilities and efforts to solve problems, or (3) blaming others for failures.

Name the candidate and explain what he has done that you think diverted attention from critical issues.



Follow-up: Refer to newspaper stories that critique campaigns and Web sites that evaluate political ads and information www.factcheck.org and www.politicfact.com/truth-o-meter/.



Campaign Spending

Candidates must keep track of where they receive financial support and how they spend the funds. Candidates for national offices must file reports with the Federal Election Commission (www.fec.gov). Newspapers publish campaign funding reports, informing the public of the donors, the amount of the donation and the total money spent on candidates' campaigns. Look for published newspaper reports on campaign spending. What do you learn?



Follow-up: Explore state government Web sites and news reports for rules governing campaign financing in your state.



Political Parties and Activism

Activities in **Political Parties and Activism** ask you to determine what defines and divides political parties and what motivates others to become involved in the political process. One activity asks that you examine the role of special interest groups.



Learning About Political Parties

Most candidates for local, state and national office belong either to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. At local, state and national levels, each party raises money and organizes events to benefit its candidates.

Circle or highlight references to political parties throughout your newspaper. Include abbreviations.

Count what you find.

1. How many references to Republicans did you find?
2. How many references to Democrats?
3. Did you find other parties mentioned?

Underline the names of the candidates, public officials or party representatives who appear with each reference.

1. Which are familiar to you?
2. Which are not?

Write down information you learn about the candidates, public officials or party representatives who are unfamiliar.



What Platforms Say

Political parties hold conventions during the summer before the election. They prepare platforms that explain what the party and the candidate for president stand for. Look in the newspaper for references to the platforms of different political parties. Write down what you find. Note that you may have to search online in newspaper archives to find the stories, since the conventions take place during the summer., or visit the Web sites for the different political parties.

Democratic

Republican

Other



Follow-up: If you were responsible for the platform, what four issues would you give highest priority? What positions would you take on the issues?



Party Connections

In newspapers, look for positions taken by different candidates and their supporters and critics. Write "R" for Republican and "D" For Democrat beside positions that represent those of the two parties. Do the same for other political parties, using "L" for Libertarian, for example.

List what you find below and add it to a class or group chart. Discuss the differences.



Differences Within Parties

Differences exist within political parties. Candidates seeking the two parties' nominations for state and national office argue their positions and criticize other candidates from their own party during primaries and caucuses. During the parties' conventions, leaders try to get their views on their parties' platforms. See if you can find evidence in newspapers of divisions within the two parties.

1. What are the issues that divide the Democratic Party?

2. What are the issues that divide the Republican Party?



Follow-up: Do the two major political parties serve as umbrellas for numerous political factions? Explain your answer.

Examine stories about elections in other countries. Do they have more than two major political parties?



Choosing A Political Party

If you were 18 years old and registering to vote, how would you register?

Republican

Democrat

Libertarian

Unaffiliated

Other

Why? What influenced your choice? Circle all that apply:

parents

friends

news reports

meeting
with candidates

hearing political

social networks

blogs

teachers

speeches

other _____

Briefly discuss how each of those you circled influenced your decision.

What can you do now to prepare to vote when you turn 18?



Single Issue

Citizens with intense feelings about a single issue often form interest groups and concentrate their efforts on that issue. They may donate time and money to the candidates they support. They may conduct campaigns to convince voters that a candidate's stance on the issue should decide their voting. Groups form in support of health, education and welfare reform, women's rights, and environmental or development concerns and involve farmers, businessmen, labor, lawyers, physicians, ethnic and religious groups and many others.

Look in your newspaper for groups who feel intensely about a single issue.

What groups did you find?

What issues concern them?

What are they doing to affect the outcome of the election?

Do you believe that most voters choose a candidate or party based on a single issue or do voters consider many issues and factors?



Follow-up: Have students conduct historical research to find out about single-issue political parties and their impact on elections. Examples are the: Free Soil party that sought to prevent the spread of slavery (1848-1852); the American or "Know Nothing" party that opposed immigration and Catholics (1856); and the Women's party that sought the right to vote for women (1913-1920).



Special Interests

Lobbyists work at the state and national level, supporting or opposing bills before the state legislature and/or U.S. Congress that affect an industry or segment of society. They are paid by the industry and/or the interest group they serve.

Lobbyists solicit sponsors for bills, seek support for legislation their group supports and work to influence law makers to vote against legislation their group opposes. They meet with representatives and explain the issues that concern their group, offering information on the impact of proposed legislation and promoting the group's point of view. They testify before legislative committees and ask legislators to commit to vote a certain way.

Opinions differ on the proper role of lobbyists during elections. While acknowledging that lobbyists and special interest groups often perform a valuable information and research function, some individuals and organizations believe that lobbyists have too much power and influence over lawmakers and support full disclosure of all efforts lobbyists undertake to assist candidates with fundraising to support their campaigns. Other argue that lobbyists are citizens with rights to free speech that should include the right to offer assistance with fundraising.

Conduct research to find out how your state regulates lobbyists' ability to donate and raise funds for candidates.

1. Find stories in newspapers about special interest groups and their lobbyists.

Special Interest Groups	Lobbyists

2. Choose legislation that affects one special interest group. Name the group, its lobbyist and the position the group takes on the legislation. Research and discuss: Do the interests of any other groups conflict with those of the special interest group? Identify all stakeholders and the positions they are likely to take.

Special Interest Group _____ Lobbyist _____

Legislation and position taken by the group

Stakeholders:



Follow-up: Do you have an interest in or support a cause that you'd want to promote in the legislature? What do you think legislators should know about your issue? If you were a lobbyist for the cause, what facts would you present and what arguments would you make to persuade members of your state's legislature??




Kane, Dan, "Politicians ask lobbyists to help find cash, They are seen as conduits for PACs," *The News & Observer*, April 4, 2008.

Organizing

Political parties organize to raise funds and offer support for candidates within their parties. Candidates set up organizations to manage their campaigns, with names such as, the Committee to Reelect John Doe. Each organization must have a treasurer to keep track of finances and complete reports for the N.C. Board of Elections.

Search newspaper ads and stories for organizations working on behalf of candidates or political parties, and discuss what you find.



The Media

In **The Media** activities ask you to judge the impact of newspapers and other media on the election. Practice your analytic skills as you write effective letters to the editor, evaluate photos and cartoons and develop thoughtful opinion. The most difficult activities ask you to compare media coverage, deciding which ads are “negative” and which candidates win the debates.



Sending Your Message

Is there an issue that concerns you more than any other? What is it?

To gauge concerns of citizens, candidates, elected officials, their staffs and other influential readers examine the letters to the editor every day. Use letters to effectively communicate views in your own words. Here's how:

- Find out the newspaper's requirements for length (usually published on the editorial page).
- Write as a concerned, informed citizen, not an employee of a company.
- Add something to the debate; don't repeat what others have said.
- Make your own case, rather than simply refuting someone else's.
- Get to the point quickly.
- Support your assertions with facts.
- Outline concisely the action that you believe should be taken.
- Explain how the public will benefit.
- Sign your letter.

What message would you like to send to voters and candidates?
Write a letter to the editor.

Dear Editor:



Follow-up: On newspaper Web sites, visit blogs that deal with elections and compare comments on blogs with letters to the editor.



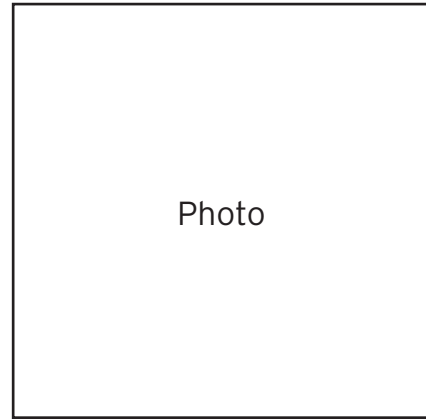
A Close Look at Photos

Clip photographs of two candidates competing for the same public office. Look for a photograph of each candidate on the campaign trail making speeches, kissing babies, shaking hands or meeting with special groups. Also compare two videos.

Use the following questions to judge the impact of the photos:

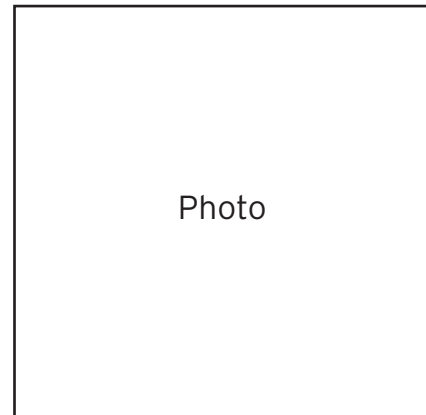
Candidate One _____

1. Who is the candidate?
2. What is happening in the photo?
3. Where was the photo taken?
4. When was it taken?
5. Was the event planned or spontaneous?
6. Would the candidate like this photo?
7. Could the photo be used against the candidate by the opposition? If so, how?



Candidate Two _____

1. Who is the candidate?
2. What is happening in the photo?
3. Where was the photo taken?
4. When was it taken?
5. Was the event planned or spontaneous?
6. Would the candidate like this photo?
7. Could the photo be used against the candidate by the opposition? If so, how?



Follow-up: How much do you think photos affect the election? How do videos affect the election?



Judging Newspaper Coverage

Over a two or more week period, keep track of the stories that run in the newspaper about opposing candidates. In the top four squares, list two national candidates and two state candidates. Or, if using local newspapers, choose candidates for local offices. Below the names, list the headlines and page numbers where articles appear. Use additional paper as needed.

Candidate Names

--	--	--	--

Headlines and Page Numbers

Follow-up: At the end of the study period, determine which candidate received the most coverage and which candidate received the most visible coverage, on the front page and other well-read pages. If one candidate seemed to get more coverage, explain why you think that happened. Was his or her campaign more effective? Was he or she campaigning in your community, state or region?



Cartoons and Funny Faces

Look for political cartoons about the election on the editorial page of your newspaper. Compare caricatures drawn by cartoonists with photographs of the candidates. What do the cartoonists do to make the candidates look funny? Which features do they exaggerate?

Based on photos that you select, draw a caricature of one of the candidates or explain how a caricature might be done.



Follow-up: Use your caricature in a political cartoon that you design. Save news stories or editorials that contain facts or opinions that shaped your viewpoint.



Endorsements

Look for endorsements of candidates on your local newspaper's editorial page. Who received endorsements?

Does the newspaper endorse more Republican or Democratic candidates?

Do you think that a newspaper endorsement helps a candidate? Explain your answer.



Follow-up: Do you find endorsements from newspapers in advertisements for the candidates or on the candidates' official Web sites?



Opinions Are Not Equal

Media critics warn against over reliance on polls as the source for election stories. They think that many polls oversimplify issues and measure whim and mood and do not represent informed opinions. Rather critics think newspapers and other media should focus more on issues and offer more in-depth coverage.

Select an election poll published in your newspaper and answer the following questions:

1. Who paid for the poll?
2. When was the poll taken?
3. How were the interviews obtained?
4. How were questions worded?
5. Who were the people interviewed?
6. How many people were in the group contacted? How many responded? What is the margin of error in projecting the results to a larger group?
7. Did the poll deal with issues or simply report which candidate is ahead at a particular time (the "horse race")?
8. How do you rate this poll? Does it deal with issues? Are those responding likely to change their minds?
9. If you wanted to find out which of the candidates appeal to students in your school, what would you ask them?
10. If you wanted to know which issues concern them most, what would you ask them?
11. How would you conduct the survey?
12. How many students would you ask before drawing any conclusions?



Follow-up: Conduct research to identify differences between a scientific and an unscientific poll.



Political Advertising: Who is Targeted?

Study ads that candidates run in newspapers, on television and in other media. Who do the ads target?

Find an example of an ad that you believe targets each of the following and explain why. Consider the content of the ad and the place and time it appears.

Voters	What does the ad say? When and where did it run?
Ages 18 to 25	
African-American	
Hispanic	
Women	
Ages 65 and over	
No specific group	



Follow-up: If you served as an adviser to a favorite candidate and had responsibility for helping the candidate reach young voters, where and how would you advertise?



Analyzing Ads

The content of ads is often debated, as is the public's reaction to them. Some ads attack the opponents rather than support the issues and concerns of the candidate placing the ad. Often the fairness and accuracy of ads are challenged.

Analyze the political ads in newspapers.

1. Do the ads deal with the issues?
2. Do they appeal strictly to your emotions?
3. Do they gain your sympathy?
4. Do they make you doubt their opponents' character or abilities?
5. Do they arouse anger?
6. Do they feature endorsements?
7. What is your reaction to the ads? Which ones influence your evaluation of the candidates?
8. Do you question the accuracy of any of the ads? How do you determine if they are true?
9. Using the questions, compare ads that appear in the newspaper and on television.



Follow-up: Election laws require that any ad must state clearly whether it supports or opposes a candidate, who paid for the ad and whether the candidate authorized the ad.



Negative Advertising

The topic of negative advertising has been much discussed. Use the following criteria to evaluate political ads:

Truth: Is the information true? Does the ad present the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Relevance: Does the ad focus on topics relevant to the campaign at hand? Does it deal with a candidate's record in office or public service?

Values: Does the ad stir up fears, greed, jealousies or bigotry? Does it appeal to the worst of human traits? Or does it inspire concern for society and efforts to improve it?

Did you find ads that you considered negative? Why?

To help voters, some newspapers critique ads in editorials and special columns. Readers will also explain their views in letters to the editor. Find examples and respond to them.



Political Ads

Most political ads that run in a newspaper and other media must include the statement (called a legend): Paid for by or sponsored by (Name of the candidate, political action or referendum committee, or individual). If placed independently by an individual, that person's name appears in the statement.

Select three political ads from your newspaper and answer the questions.

Ad One

Ad Two

Ad Three

1. Whose name appears on the legend?

2. Who or what does it support?

	Ad One	Ad Two	Ad Three
3. What position does it take?			



VOTE

2008

Designing Ads

Take photos and/or text that you collect from a newspaper and use them to create an advertisement, either for a candidate or the opponent. Get ideas from stories to use as slogans on which to base your ad.



Rate the Debate

Before watching a televised debate, get ready by following newspaper reports on the candidates. Knowing the campaign positions of the candidates ahead of time and knowing something about the issues will help you understand the questions and answers and evaluate the candidates' performance. Working with a few classmates, poll the class before the debate, including questions about leadership qualities of the candidates, their stands on key issues and their choices if the election were held that day. After the debate, conduct the same poll to judge its effects.

While watching the debate, consider the following questions:

Format

1. Does it give candidates equal opportunity to speak and respond to opponents?
2. Does it hold your interest?
3. Does it make it easy for the candidates to talk about the issues?
4. Does it give you insight into the candidates' leadership qualities?

Moderator/Panelists

1. Is the moderator in control?
2. Are questions fair?
3. Are the questions clear?
4. Do the questions cover the important issues?
5. Does the moderator talk too much? Does he allow each candidate equal time to talk?

Substance

1. Do candidates answer or evade questions?
2. Do candidates tell you their stands on issues or make emotional appeals?
3. Do they state their positions or attack their opponents?
4. Are answers consistent with positions that they've taken before?
5. Are the proposals realistic or just campaign promises?

Impact of the Debate

1. How did your newspaper cover the debate?
2. Are your ratings similar?
3. Did the newspaper cover the issues raised?
4. Does campaign strategy change as a result of the debate? (League of Women Voters)

Note: On separate sheets of paper, record information you gain while watching presidential and vice-presidential debates. The Commission on Presidential Debates has sponsored presidential debates since it was established in 1987. See the commission's Web site, www.debates.org, for details. This fall, debates are scheduled for September 26 at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, October 7 at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee and October 15 at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. Vice-presidential candidates will debate on October 2 at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.



Comparing Coverage

Compare the coverage of one candidate in television newscasts and in editions of your classroom newspaper from three different days. Put check marks next to the content each medium covers.

Who is the candidate? _____

	DAY 1 Newspaper / TV	DAY 2 Newspaper / TV	DAY 3 Newspaper / TV
Personality Supporters Experience Campaign funds Endorsements Positions on Issues			

What topics were covered by both newspaper and television on the same day?

Put a check mark next to the descriptions that apply to the coverage each medium gave the candidate over the three days.

	DAY 1 Newspaper / TV	DAY 2 Newspaper / TV	DAY 3 Newspaper / TV
Favorable Entertaining Informative Lengthy Brief Factual Unfavorable			



Analyze the coverage the candidate received from the media. How did the focus differ between television and newspaper coverage? Where else do you obtain news about elections? Do you read blogs that focus on politics? Do you listen to radio or podcasts?



Persuasive Speech in Politics

Politics and Public Causes

- Key words, themes, ideas
 - Images, pictures, symbols
 - Rituals, customs, traditions
 - Frequent airplay on television and radio; frequent placement in print media
 - Multifaceted campaign-bumper stickers, direct mail, public appearances, electronic and print media
- Intensify the "Good"**
- Positive associations with patriotic themes:
 - flag-waving, war heroes, Uncle Sam, God-is-on-our-side
 - Association with "common people"- "just one of us"
 - Companions/endorsers; friends, celebrities, spouse, family members
 - Locales; historic sites, shrines, beautiful scenery
 - References to literary, historical or religious figures
- Positive claims about self
 - Negative claims about others
 - Presentation of only one side of issue
 - Generalities-broad statements about goals, no specifics provided
 - Figures of speech-overstatement, understatement, puns, irony
 - Nonverbal cues-smiles, frowns, tone of voice
- Relevant omissions about people involved; unworthiness, incompetence, secret alliances with others
 - Concealed conflicts of interest, favoritism, bias
 - Ulterior motives, secret agreements, bribes hidden
 - Use of half-truths, distortions
- Ad hominem attacks-against the person, not the position
 - Ad populum appeals to emotional feelings, not issues
 - Appeals for pity or sympathy
 - Style over substance, cosmetic superficialities
 - Hairsplitting and nitpicking about minor details
 - Humor, jokes instead of answering questions
- Technical words (jargon)
 - Vague generalities or inappropriate euphemisms
 - Non sequiturs-invalid linking of ideas
 - Frequent changes, variations
 - Unclear or misleading statistics, charts and graphs
 - Easy solutions to complex problems*
- Intensify the "Bad"**

Techniques

Repetition

People are comfortable with the known and the familiar. Repetition of slogans makes people remember the product or person.

Association

Persuaders link a product or idea with something that is already loved or desired, or hated or feared, by the audience. Associations are determined by surveys and polls.

Composition

Patterns and arrangements use design, sequence and proportion to add to the force of words and images.

Omission

Information presented may be true but incomplete. Omissions should not conceal actual dangers.

Diversion

Time, effort or money is spent on unimportant issues or trivial things. Focus on side issues of main issues.

Confusion

Accidental error or deliberate deception can hide or obscure disadvantages, problems, or potentially harmful items.

Techniques



In campaigns, candidates and their supporters emphasize the benefits they provide voters and downplay any negative aspects about themselves and their political parties. Using this guide, analyze the political messages that appear in newspapers and other media.

*NAA Foundation



Predictions and Results

Activities in **Predictions and Results** ask that you judge your preparedness to vote and make predictions early and late in your election study. You deal too with the fundamentals of voting-the where and how. Using maps, you must chart results in North Carolina and the nation. Data will enable you to compare results in key races with those in past elections.

The **Predictions and Results** section pays special attention to low voter turnout. The **Appendix** offers more about election reforms aimed at encouraging voters to go to the polls in 2008.



Predicting the Outcome

Make predictions in September about the outcome of the election. Date and save your choices. In November, prior to the election, check the predictions you made in September and record any changes.

Who will win at each level?	(September)	(November)
<p>National</p> <p>President</p> <p>U.S. Senator</p> <p>Member of the House of Representatives</p>		
<p>State</p> <p>Governor</p> <p>N.C. Senate</p> <p>N.C. House</p>		
<p>Local</p> <p>Board of Commissioners</p> <p>School Board</p> <p>Other</p>		



Follow-up: Did you change your mind? How accurate were your predictions? Did studying the newspaper help you judge the outcome of the elections?



VOTE

2008

Looking Ahead to Election Day Coverage

Pretend you are looking into a crystal ball to see election results. Using predictions you make before the election, write the headlines that you think will appear in the newspaper on the day after the election.



Follow-up: Compare your headlines with the ones that actually run in the newspaper the day after the election.



The Ballot

Look in your newspaper as Election Day approaches and find a sample ballot, obtained from the county board of elections. Clip it out or pull the ballot directly from the local board of election's Web site and use it to answer the questions below.

1. Which political office is listed first on the ballot?
2. In what order are the candidates for each office listed? Alphabetically?
By party? Randomly?
3. Which offices are uncontested (only one candidate is running)?
4. Can you tell by reading the ballot which political party a candidate represents?
5. Are incumbents identified on the ballot?
6. Can you vote a "straight ticket"? (A straight ticket is a vote for all the candidates of a single party.) If so, how?
7. Can you cast a write-in vote? If so, how?

Mark the ballot for candidates whom you have good reason to support.



The Polling Place

If you were really voting, you would have to know much of the following information. Look in your newspaper for answers to the questions about precincts and polling places. Use other materials as needed.

1. What is your precinct?
2. Where is your polling place?
3. What time do the polling places open and close?
4. Are candidates and their supporters allowed to be present at the polls to talk to voters or pass out literature? Are limits set?
5. Who supervises the voting in the polling places and how did they get their jobs?
6. Who counts the ballots cast on Election Day? How?
7. When, how and to whom do election officials report the number of votes cast on Election Day? Who certifies the vote?



Follow-up: For help in determining your precinct and polling place, check the Web site for your county board of elections or check links through your state Board of Elections.



Voter Turnout

Using newspapers published after the election, analyze voter turnout:
Who won in your state?

Who won in your county, city or town?

Which groups supported the candidate who won? Which groups supported his or her opponent? The following chart gives some segments of the voting population. Voters are categorized by age, racial background, sex, occupation and educational level. Which presidential candidate was the favorite of 18- to 24-year olds, women and so forth? Fill in the candidates' names along the top, and check off the candidates who received the most votes from each group.

	Republican Nominee	Democratic Nominee
18 to 24 25 to 44 45 to 64 65 and over		
Whites Blacks Latinos		
Women Men		
Labor Management College educated		

Discuss: Which issues made the difference to each group?

If writing for the history books, what would you say determined the outcome of the 2008 election?

Follow-up: Visit <http://www.eac.gov/clearinghouse/additional-elections-research> for voter registration and turnout statistics from 1960 until the formation of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission in 2002 and elsewhere on the Web site for data and analysis from the 2004 and 2006 elections.

For rankings of states on voter turnout and other data, visit <http://www.democracy-nc.org/improving/voterturnout.pdf> and http://elections.gmu.edu/Voter_Turnout_2004.htm.



Analyzing Voter Turnout

Comparing voter turnout in the United States from year to year and with other countries, particularly democracies, raises questions about why citizens choose to vote or not.

A geocities Web site cites research on voter turnout based on parliamentary and presidential contests held in democratic countries from 1996 to 2002 and lists the United States 22nd of 23 countries in voter turnout. (www.geocities.com/caesaigh3/Political_Participation.doc.)

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance ranks voter turnout in the United States as 139th among all countries in all elections since 1945. (www.idea.int/vt/survey/voter_turnout_pop2.cfm)

In a comparison of democracies, according to the latter report, 48.3% of the voting-age population voted in the United States compared with Italy's 92.5%, Belgium's 84.9%, Spain's 77%, the United Kingdom's 74.9%, Japan's 69%, Canada's 68.4% and France's 67.3%.

Some nations enforce laws that require citizens to vote. For example, Australians face fines for their failure to vote. (www.pbs.org/now/politics/votestats.htm)

Using newspapers and other sources after the election, fill in the figures for 2008:
Voter Turnout for US Presidential Elections

Year	Number Who Votes	% of Voting Age Population
2008		
2004	122,294,978	55.3%
2000	105,586,274	51.3
1996	96,277,634	49.1
1992	104,419,127	55.1
1988	91,594,691	50.1
1984	92,652,680	53.1
1980	86,515,221	52.6
1976	81,555,789	53.6
1972	77,718,554	55.2
1968	73,213,371	60.8
1964	70,644,592	61.9
1960	68,838,204	63.1*

*Figures drawn from www.infoplease.com.

How does 2008 voter turnout in the country and state compare with turnout in 2004 and other years? How do news analysts and other experts explain the turnout? What accounts for the increase or decline in voting?



Follow-up: Follow newspaper coverage of elections in other countries, particularly in democratic countries. Determine whether the turnout for their elections is higher than in the U.S and why.



The Votes Are Counted

Using election results reported in your area newspapers, indicate how the electoral vote went, state by state, coloring in the map of the United States. Color the states Red that vote for John McCain. Color the states Blue that vote for Barack Obama. To be elected, a candidate needs 270 of the 538 electoral votes. The leading vote-getter in a state takes all of the electoral votes.



Follow-up: Look at the two or three states with the most electoral votes. If these states had voted for the other candidate, would the outcome of the election have been different? Did your state's vote make a difference? Are there other states that affected the outcome? What might the losing candidate have done differently in order to win?



Comparing 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008

Use the newspapers that you receive during the days following the election to compare this year's national results with results from presidential elections held from 1992 through 2004.

1992 Presidential Vote

Clinton (D)...44,908,233 (43%)
 Bush (R).....39,102,282 (37%)
 Perot (I).....19,741,048 (19%)

1996 Presidential Vote

Clinton (D)...47,401,185 (49%)
 Dole (R).....39,197,469 (41%)
 Others.....8,085,294 (8%)

2000 Presidential Vote (Popular Vote)

Gore (D)...50,996,116 (48.4%)
 Bush (R)...50,456,169 (47.8%)
 Nader.....2,831,066 (2.7%)
 Bush won the majority of electoral votes.

2004 Presidential Vote

Kerry (D)...59,028,109 (48.3%)
 Bush (R)...62,038,285 (50.7%)

2008 Presidential Vote

Obama (D)...
 McCain (R)...

Use the newspapers and Web sites to compare results in your state.

Data obtained from www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0922901

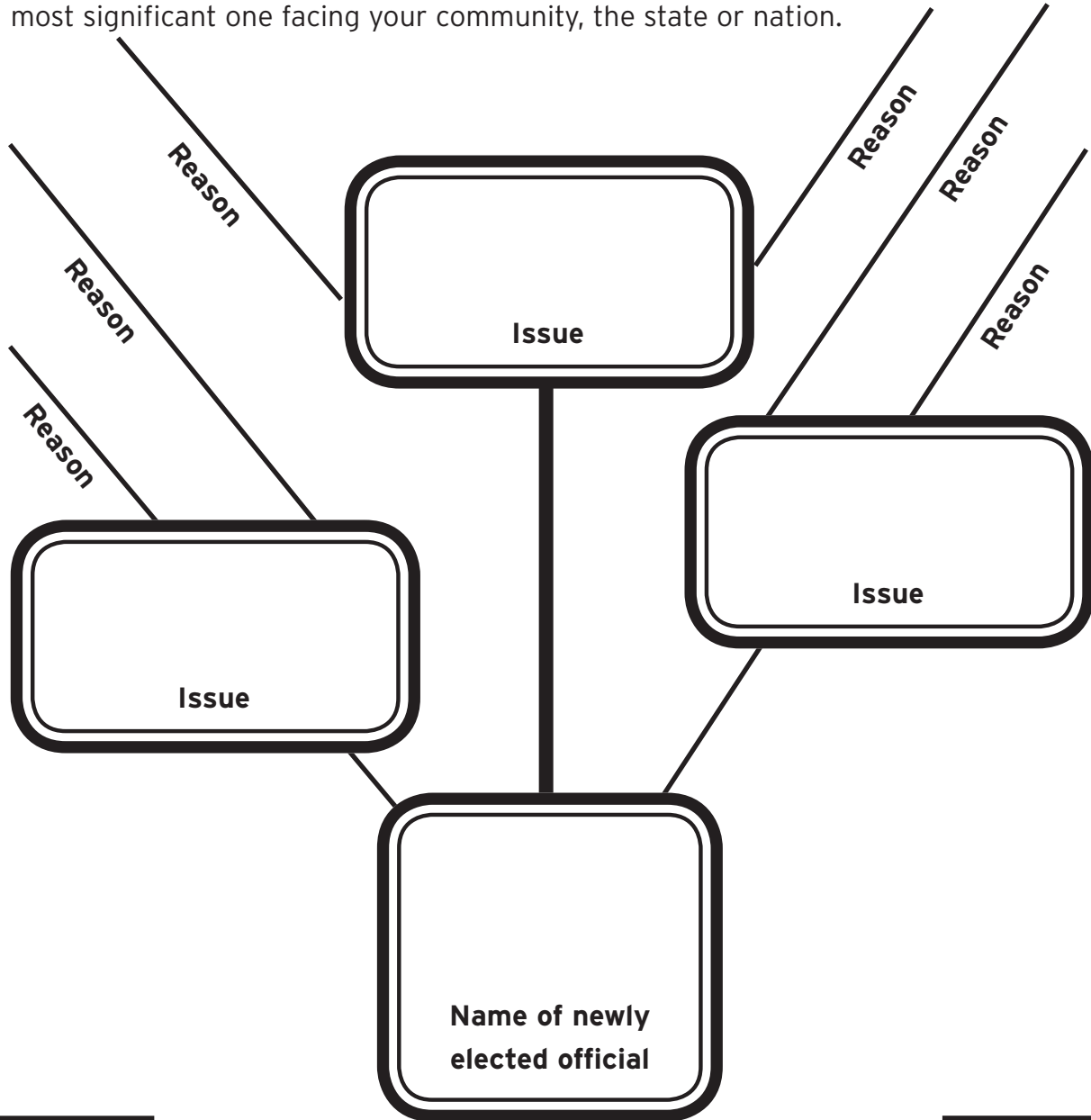


Follow-up: How does popular voting compare with results of voting by the Electoral College? Conduct research to identify arguments for and against having the popular vote rather than voting in the Electoral College determine the outcome of presidential elections. Consider all of the arguments, and explain what you think.



Beyond the Election

After the election, predict the issues that the newly-elected president, governor or local official will address. Identify the office holder in the bottom square and your predictions in the remaining boxes. Indicate why you chose the issue on the lines. For example: The candidate may have emphasized the issue during the campaign. His or her party's platform may support his or her action. The problem may be the most significant one facing your community, the state or nation.



Follow-up: Continue reading newspapers. Pay particular attention to the President's Inaugural Address on January 20, and other significant speeches made by public officials. Were you right? Did your chosen candidate address the issues that you predicted?



Appendix

The **Appendix** focuses on measures taken in different states to increase voter turnout and includes a glossary of election terms.

The Bibliography credits the sources that were used in developing **Vote 2008**.



Case Studies - Election Reform

The PBS Web site www.pbs.org/now/politics/votestats.html explains different approaches to increasing voter turnout and citizen participation in elections. The site lists voting by mail, voting early, Internet voting, Election Day registration and new voting legislation passed after the 2000 elections. The site also identifies countries that enforce compulsory voting by penalizing citizens who don't vote. Individual states take different approaches to voting in an effort to increase citizen participation.

Case Study-North Carolina

North Carolina offers absentee voting by mail and one-stop absentee registration and voting. One-stop absentee voting begins the third Thursday before the election and ends the Saturday before the election. One-stop absentee voting must be available at county board of elections but may also take place at other locations designated by the county board of elections and approved by the N.C. State Board of Elections. Voters can register and vote on the same day during the period of time designated for one-stop absentee voting but not on Election Day. Mail-in absentee voting starts 50 days before election day. www.sboe.state.nc.us/content.aspx?id=16

Case Study-Washington

In 2008, the court ruled in favor of Initiative 872 which established a primary system that allows voters to identify their preferred political party and that advances the top two vote-getters to the general election, regardless of their party affiliation. Both nominees could belong to the same political party. The case Washington State Grange v. Washington State Republican Party raised the question: Does Initiative 872 violate political parties' rights to associate with the candidates of their choice?

In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that California's 2000 blanket primary in which voters choose among all parties for each office on a ballot was unconstitutional, in violation of the First Amendment right of political parties to free association.

<http://docket.medill.northwestern.edu/archives/004331.php>

Case Study-Oregon

Oregon conducts its voting by mail. Ballots are mailed to registered voters from 21 to 14 days prior to Election Day. Marked ballots must be received by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day either through the mail or at drop sites.

Oregon's Secretary of State Bill Bradbury outlined what he considered the benefits of voting by mail in an article published on January 1, 2005 in the Washington Post, "Vote-by-Mail: The Real Winner Is Democracy." He argues with those who say voting by mail eliminates the communal experience of voting on Election Day. He says the new shared experience involves parents showing their children the ballot and talking to them about the significance of voting. He characterizes voting by mail as follows:

- Is voter friendly, allowing time to research issues, review and mark ballot and eliminating standing in lines at the polling booth
- Fits into voters busy schedules
- Provides an automatic paper trail
- Eliminates recruitment and training of poll workers
- Maintains a statewide, uniform system that complies with the law



Case Studies-Election Reform (cont.)

Case Study-Texas

Texas voters may choose between two kinds of early voting:
(1) early voting by personal appearance and (2) early voting by mail

Early voting must be conducted for all elections. Early voting by personal appearance generally starts 17 days before each election and ends four days before each election. Curbside voting is available to any voter who has difficulty walking or standing for long periods. Any qualified voter may vote early by personal appearance. No reason must be given. Voting sites are set up in convenient locations.

To vote early by mail, a person must be absent from the county on Election Day and during early voting, sick or disabled, 65 years of age or older on Election Day or confined in jail but eligible to vote. www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/pamphlets/earlyvote.shtml

Case Study-Arizona

In March 2000, Arizona Democrats went online to cast votes in the state's primary. Studies based on that experience focused on whether certain groups are left out of voting and whether age, education and income determine who votes if elections are carried out on the Internet. The 2008 rules for the Democratic Party include a provision on Internet voting. "Internet voting can only apply to State Party-run primaries and must be accompanied by in-person voting locations and vote by mail. Additionally, Internet voting must include a comprehensive outreach and education program to reach those who lack access as well as certain security and technical safeguards." www.democrat.org/a/2006/08/highlights_of_t.php.

Discussion: Do you think unaffiliated voters should be able to vote for the party of their choice in primary elections? Do you think unaffiliated voters are likely to make a difference in the results of a primary election? What do you feel about Washington state's system of allowing voters to declare a "preferred" party and having the two top vote-getters advance to the general election? How do you feel about voting by mail and voting early? Do you think that voters should be able to vote absentee without having to explain why? What do you think about online voting? Do you think it's important to maintain voting on Election Day as an experience, shared by all citizens?



Election Terms

Types of Elections:

Primary - a primary election is an election held by a political party to decide which of its candidates will represent the party in the general election.

General - general elections are held to elect national, state, county, and municipal officers who will serve a regular term. Proposed constitutional amendments are also voted on at this time.

Special - special elections are held to fill a vacancy when someone has died or resigned or to vote on referenda.

Glossary of Terms:

Absentee ballot - a ballot mailed in before an election by a person unable to vote Election Day at his or her local polling places; newer laws allow absentee voting without cause, in NC at the county board of elections.

Alderman - a member of the city legislative body; a councilman

Amendment - a formal change, modification or addition to a document.

Apportionment - the distribution of districts based on equal population.

At large - one who represents all of the people within a geographical area as opposed to only a section of that area.

Balanced ticket - Presidential and vice presidential nominees chosen to appeal to as many voter groups as possible; factors considered in balancing a ticket include the candidates' race, religion, sex, geographical origin, position on certain issues and experience.

Ballot - a ticket, paper or voting machine listing the names of the candidates running for office; the method by which a vote is registered and then counted.

Bandwagon effect - the rapid increase of support for a candidate based on a good level of initial positive publicity or success for the candidate.

Barnstorming - political slang for appearing in many communities and before many groups.

Bipartisanship - different political parties working together, creating a united front.

Cabinet - a group of government department heads who advise and execute laws on a state or national level. Appointed by the president on the national level. In North Carolina, some cabinet level positions are appointed and Council of State offices are elected.

Campaign - a series of organized, planned actions for the purpose of electing a candidate.

Canvassing - gathering information on voter's attitudes and preferences.

Caricature - a sketch used most often in political cartoons that exaggerate certain features of candidates and other public figures.

Caucus - a meeting of members of the same political party to choose candidates or decide on policies.

Coattails - when a candidate wins and draws votes to others in his/her party.

Commissioner - a member of the county legislative body.

Constituents - the citizens an official serves and those who elect an individual to represent them in office.

Conservative - political view that generally seeks to limit the role of government.

Convention - a meeting of the delegates of a political party for the purpose of formulating a platform and selecting candidates for office.

Councilman - a member of the city legislative body; an alderman.

Dark horse - a political candidate unexpectedly elected or nominated, usually as a compromise between factions.

Debate - a discussion by two or more persons; in politics, an organized discussion of issues by candidates.

Delegate - a representative to a convention or conference.

Democracy - a system of government in which the people rule either directly or through elected representatives.



The presidential and vice-presidential candidates winning the most popular votes in the state usually receives all of the electoral votes. The winners take all of the votes. Electors are chosen to represent their political parties and are selected by districts, by statewide votes or by state legislatures.

Democrat - a member of the Democratic party of the US.

Democratic party - of or relating to one of the two major political parties in the US evolving in the early 19th century from the Anti-Federalists and Democratic-Republican party and associated in modern times with policies of broad social reform and internationalism.

District - the area a representative serves.

Elector - one qualified to vote in the elections; the electors who vote represent the political party of the president and vice-president who received the most votes by the people.

Electoral College - a unique, indirect method of electing a president and vice-president. Each state is allotted electoral votes equal in number to its congressional delegation. North Carolina has fifteen electoral votes, thirteen for the number of representatives the state has, and two for the state's two senators.

Electorate - the voting population.

Endorsement - a statement from an individual, organization, newspaper, radio or TV station in support of a candidate.

Exit polls - conducted at voting precincts after people have voted to determine whom they voted for and why; criticized because they are broadcast before everyone has had a chance to vote.

Favorite son - one favored by the delegates of his state as a presidential candidate at a national political convention.

Front runner - a candidate who is running ahead of his opponents, often determined by polls.

General election - voting held on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in which candidates representing all parties and independents appear on ballots, determining who wins the public offices.

GOP - "Grand Old Party"; refers to the Republican Party.

Grassroots - society at the local level, especially in rural areas as distinguished from the centers of political leadership.

Gubernatorial - of or relating to the governor.

Horse race - in an election, refers to polls or reporting about which candidate is ahead at a given time rather than about issues.

Incumbent - a person who currently holds the office for which he is a candidate.

Independent - a person who is not affiliated with any political party; also called unaffiliated.

Issues - topics of debate or controversy during a campaign.

Landslide - an election won by a large majority.

Liberal - a political view that holds government responsible for social and economic problems.

Lobby - to act to change public opinion or policy.

Lobbyist - one who represents a special interest group.

Majority - more than half the total number of votes cast in an election.

Media - forms of communication, such as newspapers, radio and TV that are designed to reach masses of people.

Moderate - a political view that holds neither extreme; neither strongly liberal or conservative.

Mudslinging - negative campaigning that involves not telling the truth and/or appealing to the prejudices or selfish interests of voters, often dealing in personal attacks.

Nominate - offering the name of a person as candidate.

Nonpartisan - an election in which candidates are NOT identified by their political party preference.

Office - a special duty, charge, or position conferred by governmental authority and or public purpose; to hold office or be elected to a position.

Partisan - representing a party, cause, faction, person or idea. In partisan elections, candidates declare their



Petition - a written request for change, often signed by many people and sent to government representatives. Also, a method for placing a candidate's name on a primary or general election ballot by submitting a specified number of signatures or registered voters to officials for certification.

Plank - an article in a political party's stand or platform.

Platform - a candidate's or party's stand on important public issues.

Plurality - the greatest number of votes cast but less than a majority; a substantial plurality is 40% plus one.

Political action committee (PAC)- committee organized to support an idea or candidate, receives and spends money that must be reported to the State Board of Elections.

Politicians - people who seek and hold public office.

Polls - surveys taken to assess opinions; particularly, during an election, a survey to assess a candidate's popularity; involves random questioning of people to gather information or opinions for study.

Popular vote - direct vote by the people in elections.

Precinct - a division of votes by neighborhoods, part of a county, town, city or ward for election purposes; the smallest political unit in the United States.

Primary - a preliminary election to nominate candidates for the major political parties and to choose delegates to national conventions. A classic primary allows only registered party members to vote in its party's primary. An "open" primary allows voters of any political affiliation to choose the party's primary in which they vote. A "semi-closed" primary allows independent voters to choose a party primary.

Reapportionment - the process of redrawing legislative districts on the basis of population.

Referendum - the submission of a proposed public measure or a law, which has been passed upon by a legislature or convention, to a vote by the people for ratification or rejection.

Register - to sign up to vote; a requirement before voting.

Republican - of, relating to or constituting one of the two major political parties evolving in the US in the mid-19th century that is usually primarily associated with business, financial and some agricultural interests and is held to favor a restricted governmental role in social and economic life.

Returns - a report of the results of balloting; the official declaration of the election of a candidate.

Running mate - a candidate running for a subordinate place on a ticket, especially the candidate for vice-president.

Soft Money - donations, usually large amounts, given by corporations, unions and wealthy individuals to finance work conducted by political parties such as voter registration and turnout efforts; statutes limit donations to federal candidates by individuals, acting on their own or through PAC's but don't limit soft money; debate over soft money centers on whether too much soft money is diverted to ads that advocate for candidates and not party building. Public financing is an alternative method.

Special interest groups - people who share common interests, for example, business interests, farmers or educators.

Split ticket - voting for candidates from different political parties

Straight ticket - voting for all of a party's candidates on the ballot.

Straw vote - an unofficial vote taken to indicate the relative strength of opposing candidates or issues, also called a straw poll.

Superdelegate - a party leader or elected public official chosen as an uncommitted delegate to a national political convention. www.dictionary.com

Suffrage - the right to vote.

Survey - to question someone in order to collect data for the analysis of a group or area, appraise.

Third party - any one of many parties that exist in addition to the two major parties. The Libertarian and Reform parties are "third parties".

Ticket - a list of candidates for nomination or election; slate.

Unaffiliated - not belonging to any political party; independent of political parties.



Bibliography

"About Campaign Reporting in North Carolina." Raleigh, North Carolina: State Board of Elections.

Barone, Michael and Richard E. Cohen. Almanac of American Politics, 2004. Washington, D.C.: National Journal Group, 2003.

Barone, Michael and Grant Ujifusa. The Almanac of American Politics 1996. Washington, D.C.: National Journal Inc. 1996.

"California Ballot Pamphlet, Primary Election." Sacramento, California: Office of Secretary of State, 1996, 32-35.

Census Data. NC State Library.

Cook Sandra. Student Newsguide to Election 1982. Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1984.

The Constitution of North Carolina. Raleigh, North Carolina: Office of Secretary of State.

"Early Voting in Texas." Austin, Texas: Office of Secretary of State.

Election Laws of North Carolina. Charlottesville, Virginia: Michie Company, 1995.

"Every Newspapers Want to Know about Political Ads...But Are Afraid to Ask." Raleigh, NC: State Board of Elections.

Fleer, Jack D. North Carolina Government and Politics. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press. 1994.

"Focus on the Voter: Lessons from the 1992 Election." Washington, DC: League of Women Voters, 1993.

The Forum Report. April 2000, Volume 14, No. 3, 3.

Garrett, Sherry Dee, Susan McCallus, Myron Yoder and Renee Hobbs. Mastering the Message. Reston, Virginia: Newspaper Association of America Foundation, International Reading Association, and National Council for the Social Studies, 1996.

"How to Judge a Candidate." Washington, DC: League of Women Voters, 1986.

"How to Watch a Debate." Washington, DC: League of Women Voters, 1986.

Lambert, Debbie and Ann Lynn Woods. Using the Newspaper to Examine the 1988 Election. West Palm Beach, Florida: The Palm Beach Post, 1988.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993. Raleigh, NC: State Board of Elections, 1995.

Noles, Nancy. "Election Scavenger Hunt." Handout. Monroe, NC: The Enquirer-Journal.

North Carolina Newspaper in Education Teacher's Guide. Raleigh, NC: NC Press Foundation, 1994.

North Carolina Newspaper in Education Teacher's Guide for Social Studies. Raleigh, NC : NC Press Foundation, 1994.

Pego, David. NAA's NIE Listserve. Austin-American Statesman.

"Pick a Candidate." Washington, DC: League of Women Voters, 1984.



VOTE

2008

"Pocket Action Guide." Washington, DC: Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, 1993.

"Precinct Officials, Policies and Procedures." Raleigh, NC: State Board of Elections, 1996.

"You and Your National Government." Washington, DC: League of Women Voters, 1985.

Broder, David. "Fueled by soft money, parties let fly the ads." News & Observer. May 29, 2000, 17A.



Web sites: Resources and Recommendations

Government

Commission on Presidential Debates-www.debates.org
 Federal Elections Commission-www.fec.gov
 North Carolina Board of Elections-www.sboe.state.nc.us
 NC Center for Voter Education, Voting guide of judicial elections-www.ncjudges.org/voter_guide/index.html
 North Carolina's courts-www.nccourts.org
 North Carolina's governor-www.governor.state.nc.us
 North Carolina legislature- www.ncleg.net
 North Carolina Secretary of State, on lobbyists-www.secretary.state.nc.us/lobbyists/
 US Fish and Wildlife Service, Map of NC's congressional districts-www.fws.gov/southeast/pubs/maps/nc.pdf
 US Government Information-<http://usgovinfo.about.com>; <http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa031200a.htm>(salaries)
<http://usgovinfo.about.com/culture/usgovinfo/library/weekly/blgovup.htm> (races for governor in 2008)

Media

www.ncpress.com (NC newspapers)
www.naa.org (Newspaper Association of America)
www.naafoundation.org (Newspaper Association of America Foundation)
www.factcheck.org
<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/>
www.stateline.org-Stateline, "Govs' salaries range from \$1 to \$106,500", May 15, 2007-

Civic organizations

www.civics.org -NC Civic Education Consortium
www.yli.org -Youth Leadership Initiative
www.kidsvotingusa.org and www.kidsvotingnc.org -Kidsvoting
www.rtpnet.org/~lwvnc/ --NC League of Women Voters
www.votesmart.org -Project Vote Smart

Political Parties

www.ncdp.org
www.ncgop.org
www.lpnc.org
www.ncgreenparty.org

www.osbm.state.nc.us/ncosbm/facts_and_figures/socioeconomic_data/population_estimates/demog/prov07pa.html (NC population estimates, 2007)

Other

Voter registration and voter turnout

www.talkleft.com/story/2008/4/27/15489/6693
www.eac.gov/clearinghouse/additional-elections-research
www.democracy-nc.org/improving/voterturnout.pdf
http://elections.gmu.edu/Voter_Turnout_2004.htm (George Mason University, US Election Project)
www.geocities.com/caesaigh3/Political_Participation.doc
www.idea.int/vt/ (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance)

www.pbs.org/now/politics/votestats.html

www.infoplease.com

www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0922901

www.uselectionatlas.org

www.dictionary.com

Polling

www.capitalcentury.com/1935.html (George Gallup)
www.gallup.com



Web sites: Resources and Recommendations continued

Other

Case studies

<http://docket.medill.northwestern.edu/archives/004331.php> (Washington State, crossing party lines to select candidates)

www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/pamphlets/earlyvote.shtml (Texas, early voting)

www.democrats.org/a/2006/08/highlights_of_t.php (Internet voting, Arizona Democratic primary)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A40032-2004Dec31.html> (Oregon, vote by mail)

