

How We Elect A President



TEACHER'S GUIDE Grade 3-8

Program Overview and Objective

It is the responsibility of all American citizens to elect its officials. Having knowledge of how the American political process works is very important to the continuation of our democracy. This video program and the activities presented in this guide will help your students have a better understanding of how we elect a president. The activities offered in this guide will provide thought provoking questions and encourage critical thinking.

KEY VOCABULARY TERMS

Campaign

Candidate

Caucus

Democrat

Election

Electoral College

Executive Branch

Inauguration

Nomination

Primary

Political Party

Poll

Republican

Word or Term	Definition
Campaign	A race between candidates for elective office
Candidate	A person running for political office
Caucus	A meeting to select a candidate or promote a policy
Democrat	A member of the Democratic party
Election	A vote to select the winner of a political position
Electoral College	The group of electors who formerly elect the United States president and vice-president
Executive Branch	The branch of government responsible for carrying out the laws
Inauguration	A ceremony to induct the new president
Nomination	The act of officially naming a candidate
Primary	When members of a particular political party vote for a candidate
Political Party	A political organization that support ideas about different issues
Poll	A place where people go to vote
Republican	A member of the Republican party

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the qualifications to become President of the United States?
2. What are leadership qualities people want in a presidential candidate?
3. What are some of the duties and responsibilities of a president?
4. Why is it important for citizens to participate in elections?

ACTIVITIES

1. Mock Election

The best way for children to understand the political process is to hold a mock campaign and election. The objective of this activity is to help students clarify the qualifications to become a presidential candidate and the election process. In this activity students will organize and participate in a mock election for classroom president

Review the qualifications to be a presidential candidate as explained in the video and write them in a column. Then, in a separate column, tell the children to list qualities that make a good leader.

Qualifications to Be President	Leadership Qualities
35 years of age	Honest
Born in the United States	Caring
A resident of the United States for at least 14 years	Strong

Give the children a slip of paper and ask them to write their name and the name of a Super Hero character they think would make a good president. (Batman, Robin, Batgirl, Cat Woman, Superwoman, Superman, Super Girl, Spiderman, Spiderwoman, Captain America, Ironman, Hulk, etc.)

Collect the strips. Count the votes and announce the two top vote getters. The top vote getters are the two candidates that are running for class president.

Next, have children create an election poster for one of the two the Super Hero candidates they plan to vote for. The poster would feature some of the qualifications stated previously.

Have the children present their posters or hang them up in the classroom.

Later that day (or the following day) hold an election. Give each student a ballot. Have the students vote. Announce the winner.

BALLOT

Put a check next to the candidate you want for classroom president.

- Candidate #1. _____
- Candidate #2. _____

2. The purpose of this activity is to have small groups of students demonstrate their understanding of the political process by creating a visual model. They can make a diagram, a chart or Powerpoint using the list of the key vocabulary words .

3. The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate the students' understanding of a political platform. Tell the groups that each is responsible for creating a name and symbol for their "party" just like politicians did many years ago. Next, have them think about changes needed in the classroom, school or country and write a platform.

EXAMPLE

	Define Changes or Needs
Change 1	Improve Cafeteria
Change 2	More exercise in school
Change 3	New activities

Then, have the students write a platform using the platform organizer.

EXAMPLE

Platform Issue	How to Do It
Improve cafeteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add picnic tables outside - No assigned seats
More exercise in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote morning walking club - Stretch time every hour
New Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create knitting club - Create guitar club

After developing their platform, have the students create a platform message, then create a poster that explains to people what the party is all about and what they stand for. Have the students present their platform to the class.

EXAMPLES OF CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

We can do it.

Working for you.

It's about you.

4. Have the students go online and find a recent presidential candidates' websites. Have them pick one candidate, and filling in the chart below, have the student find some personal, background information about the candidate. Learn what the candidate's position is on one issue and identify the candidate's campaign message.

STUDENT NAME _____

Candidates Name	
Where is the candidate from? What are some facts about his family?	
What political positions has the candidate held? (Governor, Senator, none)	
What jobs has he/she had in the past?	
Why does the candidate want to be president?	
Name one issue important to the candidate and the candidate's position on that issue.	
What is the candidate's campaign message? What does the message mean to you?	

ACTIVITY 5.

STUDENT NAME _____

Students will interview a family member to learn more about the family member's involvement in the voting process.

QUESTION	ANSWER
How old were you when you first voted for a president?	
Have you always voted for president? Why or why not?	
Do you belong to a political party? If so, why? If not, why not?	
What qualities do you look in a presidential candidate?	