

# THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008

A Newspaper In  
Education Series

## EVERY FOUR YEARS

### WASHINGTON COMES ALIVE!

It's a brisk January day in 2009 and Washington, D.C., is alive with crowds and excitement. All eyes are on 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. It's inauguration time – meaning that a President of the United States is about to be sworn in. Many people believe the President to be the most powerful person in the world. What we know for sure is that the next president will be the leader of a country of over 300 million people and will have awesome economic capabilities, incredible technology, and a myriad of immense social and political problems. The job is certainly one of the most difficult jobs on earth. Why would anyone want that job? What exactly is the job? What preceded the new president's journey to the inauguration? What are the pressures that will make his life easier or harder? What does it mean to be "President of the United States?"

This special newspaper series will address those questions. We'll look at the role of the president – the president's jobs, responsibilities, and challenges. We'll also look at how one gets to be president, from caucuses and primary elections to national conventions and campaigns. We'll examine what the Constitution says about the presidency, from what the president can and cannot do to exactly how the president gets elected (it's not the way you might think). So, come along. There'll be questions, profiles, quizzes, and interesting trivia.

### WHO CAN BE PRESIDENT, ANYWAY?

#### QUIZ: QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENCY

Every four years, dozens of people decide to run for the presidency. They come from a variety of political parties, philosophies, and parts of the country, and they meet the qualifications for becoming president. But what are those qualifications? What does it take to be eligible to run for the presidency? The Constitution of the United States sets forth those qualifications in Article II.



## PRESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

### THE REASONS FOR THE RULES

There really are only three official qualifications to be President of the United States. A president must be 35 by the time of the inauguration, have lived in the United States for at least 14 years, and be a natural-born citizen of the United States. This may seem strange now, but if you look at the United States in 1787, when the presidency was designed, it makes sense. Constitutional government was a new idea. The founders of the country wanted the head of this new government to be someone old enough and experienced enough to have made difficult decisions and demonstrated responsibility in his life. The natural citizenship requirement came about because the United States was a new country that was born in conflict. The founders wanted to be sure that a president would not have split loyalties between the United States and the country of his birth. That's also the reason why they wanted someone who had lived in the United States for at least 14 years. He would be familiar with the country he was to lead and its issues and needs.

Of course, people consider other qualifications when voting for president. These might be called the "unofficial qualifications" – the things that individual voters think are important. Most of our presidents, for example, have been married. And all of them have been men. Many people think we'll see a woman president soon. Hillary Clinton came close to being the nominee for the Democrats this year, as she ran neck and neck with Obama.



## LEARN

## MORE!

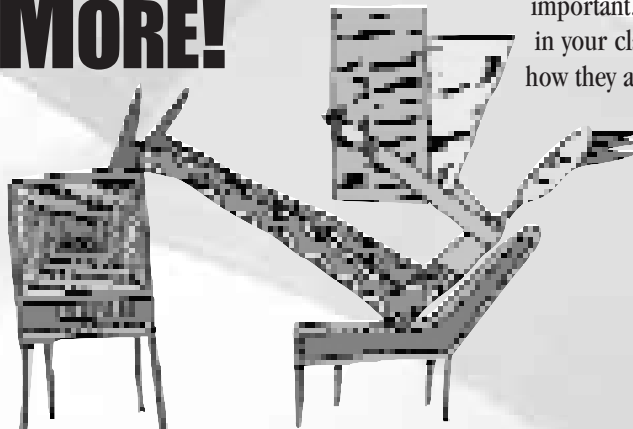
**A. What "unofficial qualifications" do you think are the most important ones for a candidate to possess?** Review the list of qualifications and indicate those that you would consider. If something you think should be there isn't, add it. Then write a paragraph about your three most important "unofficial qualifications," explaining why you think each is important. Compare your responses with the responses of other students in your class. Finally, check the Help Wanted ads in the newspaper to see how they are written. Write one seeking a new president, including the qualifications you think are most important.

**B. Interview an adult over 25.** Write down that person's list of the most important "unofficial qualifications" for president. Ask that person to rank them in order of importance. Compare that list to yours. Is there anyone in today's E-edition or print newspaper that you think would make a good president?

**Learning Standards:** writing for fluency, comparing, portraying positive characteristics

FROM THE LIST BELOW, PUT A CHECK NEXT TO EACH OF THE QUALIFICATIONS THAT YOU BELIEVE ARE IN THE CONSTITUTION.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COLLEGE GRADUATE             | <input type="checkbox"/> BE A NATURALIZED OR U.S.-BORN CITIZEN                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AT LEAST 35 YEARS OF AGE     | <input type="checkbox"/> LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED OR ENGAGED           | <input type="checkbox"/> HAVE LIVED IN THE UNITED STATES FOR AT LEAST 14 YEARS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHRISTIAN                    | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MALE                         |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LAWYER OR BUSINESSMAN        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HELD POLITICAL OFFICE BEFORE |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HAVE NO FELONY CONVICTIONS   |  |



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## THE MOST POWERFUL PERSON IN THE WORLD?

Believing that the president is that powerful implies that the president can do just about anything. But is that really the case? What limits are there on a president's powers? What is the president forbidden to do? Below is a list of powers that are available to the federal government under the Constitution. Indicate which ones you think the president has the constitutional right to do:

### PART I – LEGAL POWERS

Put a check next to all of the following that are legal powers of the President of the United States:

- A . \_\_\_\_ can approve a treaty with a foreign nation
- B . \_\_\_\_ can approve a budget for the United States
- C . \_\_\_\_ can declare war
- D . \_\_\_\_ can declare a national emergency and temporarily suspend (cancel) the Constitution
- E . \_\_\_\_ can approve a judge and appoint him or her to the U.S. Supreme Court
- F . \_\_\_\_ can impose a tax on a product for sale in the United States

### PART II – MISCELLANEOUS

Followings are some miscellaneous questions about the presidency.

- A . All eligible voters who vote in a presidential election elect the president. True or False?
- B . The president and vice president must be from the same political party. True or False?
- C . A person may serve no more than two terms (eight years) as president. True or False?
- D . What is the title of the appointed advisers to the president who head government agencies such as the Justice, Treasury, and Labor Departments?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- E . If the president and vice president are both too ill to serve or both die, the President of the Senate becomes the acting president. True or False?
- F . If Congress passes a law the president doesn't like, there is nothing the president can do about it. True or False?
- G . The president can never commit U.S. military forces to action without the approval of Congress. True or False?
- H . The president can appoint anyone to be a federal judge. True or False.
  - I . Each January, the president must make a State of the Union Address to the American people, explaining the economic condition of the country and the president's goals. True or False?
- J . The president can be removed from office before his term is over. True or False?



#### ANSWERS:

##### PART I

Each item in Part I should be unchecked. The president does not have the sole power to take any of the actions listed.

##### PART II

- A. False. The candidate who gets the votes of the most people in each state wins all the electoral votes from that state with rare exceptions. Nationally, the number of people who vote for a candidate doesn't count.
- B. False. The electors of the Electoral College cast separate ballots for president and vice president, so it is technically possible for them to be of different parties.
- C. False. A person can serve only two terms but with a total of ten years. That is, if someone were to take office in the middle of a previous person's term, he could serve as long as two years and then be elected to two terms.
- D. Cabinet is the term for the appointed advisers, each of whom is called Secretary, as in Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, etc. except for the Attorney General.
- E. False. Congress determines by law who becomes acting president and it is the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- F. False. The president can veto a bill, but if Congress votes by a two-thirds majority to override the veto, the bill becomes law anyway.
- G. False. Under the War Powers Act, the president can commit U.S. forces to action for 90 days without congressional approval. At the end of 90 days, Congress must approve the action, or else it must be halted.
- H. False. The Senate must approve federal judicial nominations but the president can make temporary appointments.
- I. False. The State of the Union Address or report must be made to Congress, even though it is now broadcast to the American people.
- J. True. A president may be impeached, (put on trial) and, if found guilty, removed from office.

## POWER AND PROTECTION

### CHECK YOUR ANSWERS.

Which ones were correct and which were wrong? Are you surprised? The Constitution limits the powers of the president. There are many things that leaders in other nations can do that our president cannot do. Why do you think this is so? Why are the president's powers so defined and so limited?

Think back to 1787. Many Americans were afraid of an executive and a national government with too much power. Remember that they had come from Britain -- a country ruled by a king -- and they didn't want to live under similar rule. They didn't want an all-powerful ruler, so the framers of the Constitution included a number of protections against that. The president's power is defined fairly clearly and it is limited in scope.

Also note that the president, as the head of the executive branch of the government, along with the other two branches, cannot take any one civil action alone. Congress can pass a bill, for example, but the president must sign it into law. The president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but he must ask Congress for a declaration of war. This idea is known as separation of powers -- a system under which each branch of the government has its own separate role in making the government work.

Finally, there are checks and balances, meaning that each branch oversees the actions of the other branches of government. Congress can pass a bill, but the president may veto it. If the president vetoes a bill, Congress, with a two-thirds majority, has the option to override the veto and pass the bill anyway, making it a law. Congress can pass a bill and the president can sign it into law, but the Supreme Court, if asked, can declare that law unconstitutional, rendering it invalid. These checks promise a fairer system by preventing any one branch of the government from exerting too much control over the system. This is a unique feature of the United States system of government.

## LEARN MORE!



The framers of the Constitution didn't want the all-powerful rule of a king. What are some of the differences between countries ruled by elected officials and countries ruled by royals or dictators? Find an example in today's E-edition or print newspaper of an undemocratic country. Find details in that story that would not be found in a story about a democratic country.

**Learning Standards:** locating information, understanding the concept of democracy

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## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE PRESIDENT

The president's powers may be limited under the Constitution, but there still are plenty of things a president can do. Most are important and necessary to the functioning of the country. You may have the impression that all the president does is participate in meetings to solve problems and address crises. While much of the president's job is like that, there are many tasks that may seem downright mundane and boring. Following is a typical day in the life of a modern president. Although the beginning and end are likely to remain the same, most events in between will vary from day to day.

6:30 a.m.: Awakened by guard, the president showers and dresses.

7 a.m.: Watches television news and scans the morning newspapers.

7:30 a.m.: Assistant brings preceding day's Congressional Record, with pages marked for attention. Appointments secretary gives briefing on day's schedule.

7:50 a.m.: Breakfast with spouse.

8:15 a.m.: Arriving at office, the president rapidly reads a 30-page notebook of news clippings and commentary from around the country and makes notes for staff.

8:25 a.m.: Telephones the Budget Director to express concerns about press reports that the proposed budget soon to be unveiled publicly does not provide enough tax relief to married couples with children in school.

8:35 a.m.: Personal secretary brings documents to be signed and a few selected letters. The president signs the documents, reads the letters, and dictates answers.

8:55 a.m.: Meets with four congressional leaders of own party to discuss strategy for passing a particular bill.

9:20 a.m.: Receives award from National Audubon Society for efforts to preserve nesting grounds for wild birds. Photo opportunity.

9:35 a.m.: Phones (1) a Senator recovering from illness to wish her a rapid recovery; (2) a labor leader, whose union is on strike, to express hope for a quick settlement to lessen the economic impact; (3) the Director of the Office of Management and Budget with a specific question about the budget.

10 a.m.: Two defeated Representatives of the president's party come to ask whether there are any jobs for them.

10:20 a.m.: Phones the Secretary of Education to ask about the status of an education bill.

10:30 a.m.: The new American ambassador to Sweden stops in to say goodbye and to ask whether there are any special instructions.

10:45 a.m.: Gives a short speech and presents the Purple Heart award to the families of five soldiers killed in a military action. Photos are taken.

11:15 a.m.: Special Assistant for National Security summarizes the status of four international crises.

11:50 a.m.: Lunch, time for personal affairs, brief nap.

2 p.m.: Signs a new anti-crime law. Cameras record the event.

2:40 p.m.: Meets with the Council of Economic Advisers in the Cabinet room to discuss plans to boost the economy.

3:15 p.m.: Greets a group touring the White House. Photos are taken.

3:25 p.m.: Welcomes White House reporters; announces plans for overseas travels and answers questions for 15 minutes.

3:45 p.m.: Aide rushes in with top-secret CIA report on a foreign-policy crisis area. After reading it, president phones CIA Director to ask for more data.

4:15 p.m.: Receives the Foreign Minister of an Asian country.

4:45 p.m.: A Representative comes to request the reopening of an army base in her district. The president agrees to give it careful thought.

5 p.m.: Secretary brings more mail and documents for the president's signature.

5:15 p.m.: Personal physician checks on the president's progress in recovering from a cold.

5:30 p.m.: Prepares for a Lincoln Day dinner at a Washington hotel. Goes over speech.

6:30 p.m.: Arrives at hotel, eats dinner, and presents speech.

10 p.m.: Returns to White House. Exercises for 45 minutes.

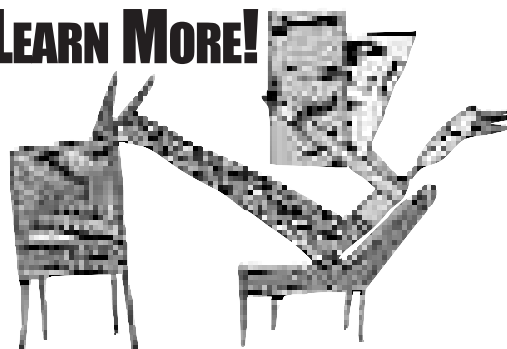
10:45 p.m.: Retires to bedroom with folder of nighttime reading material – memoranda and short reports.

11:45 p.m.: Turns out light and goes to sleep.

*(Updated and adapted from American Political Behavior, Patrick, John J. and Howard D. Meblinger.. Lexington, MA: Ginn, 1980)*



### LEARN MORE!



### IT'S A MULTI-TASKING JOB

Clearly, the president does a number of different things each day. Some, of course, are more important than others, but they are all necessary. The president fulfills a number of "roles" for the country, although on any given day, one or two of those roles may be more significant than the others. Historians generally agree that there are seven roles essential to the president's job:

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.** The president is the chief military officer of the United States and sets the country's general military policy. Although the president cannot declare war (Congress does that), the president may commit U.S. troops to action in emergency situations.

**CHIEF OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.** The president is in charge of seeing that laws and programs are carried out by supervising the government, including federal law enforcement, and appointing Justices to the Supreme Court, judges to other federal courts, and other federal officials. (The Senate must confirm these appointments.)

**HEAD OF STATE.** The president stands as the symbol of the United States, entertaining foreign dignitaries, presenting awards, issuing proclamations, representing the United States at international conferences, standing for American ideals, and more.

**FOREIGN POLICY HEAD.** The president sets out the country's policies and practices in regard to other nations. The president, or the president's representatives, makes treaties with foreign nations with the approval of the Senate. The president also proposes foreign aid and names ambassadors to foreign nations.

**POLITICAL PARTY LEADER.** The president belongs to a political party and speaks for that party, often helping to raise money for congressional candidates, leading fund-raising for the party, and presenting the party's ideas to the American people.

**GUARDIAN OF THE ECONOMY.** The president is often held responsible for the fate of the U.S. economy and so is in frequent consultation with economic advisers as basic economic policy is set. The president may recommend tax changes, propose a budget each year for the nation, and try to set trade policy.

**LEGISLATIVE LEADER.** The president can't pass laws but can influence which bills get passed or rejected by Congress. The president also signs bills into law or vetoes them and may also meet with individual Representatives and Senators to urge support for or opposition to a particular bill.

The president plays many roles, but those seven are the ones that occur most frequently. Sometimes they overlap. Look at the description of a president's typical day. Pick any two activities of the president from that list and indicate which of the seven roles above the president is playing in that activity. Then write a paragraph explaining why you see that activity as representing that specific role. Finally, find a story in the E-edition or print newspaper about the president and determine which of his roles are involved in the story.

**Learning Standards:** reading for information, evaluating the roles of political leaders

### THE CAMPAIGN: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT”?



How does a person get to be the President of the United States? We know the qualifications, and we know what the job entails. But how does someone actually go about running for the office? What needs to be done? What exactly is a “presidential campaign”?

A campaign is the process of trying to convince people to support your candidacy. It involves a constant round of activities – photo opportunities, speeches, meetings with people in the party, debates, television ads, appearances, and more. The campaign starts with an announcement of candidacy and becomes a combination of activities designed to convince people to support the candidate.

The primary elections are among the events near the beginning of a campaign. For some candidates, the primaries also are where it ends. A primary election is when all members of a political party in a given state choose from various people whom they want to be their party’s candidate for president. Not all states have primaries on the same day, so how a candidate fares in the early primaries often influences what happens later. A candidate who has momentum can move up in the race. Otherwise, the candidate may have to drop out of the race because supporters will melt away, press coverage will fade, and, most important, campaign contributions will stop coming in.

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Money is a big factor in elections. Candidates must raise money to pay for television ads, Web sites, posters, and more. The money spent on the 2004 presidential election totaled more than \$1 billion. Many people complain about the money spent on campaigns. These people say that a candidate’s need for money benefits those who have rich friends, forces candidates to make deals with companies and “special-interest groups,” and buries the true issues of the day beneath 30-second ads that reduce complicated problems to slogans and “sound bites.” Congress has tried to regulate the amounts and types of contributions made to campaigns, but money is still a major factor in a candidate’s success. If a candidate can’t raise money, the campaign is not likely to go far.



#### CONVENTIONS GENERATE EXCITEMENT

Once the primaries are over, the national party conventions begin. The convention is where the party formally sets their platform, that is, their positions on important current issues, and nominates candidates to run for president and vice president. A president already serving his first term in office is often automatically granted his party’s endorsement for a second term, but the opposition still may have some arguing, deciding, and wheeling and dealing to do. Often, for example, a party will choose a vice-presidential candidate to “balance the ticket.” If the presidential candidate is young, the vice-presidential candidate may be older. If the presidential candidate is from one part of the country,

the vice-presidential candidate probably will be from another. The idea is to try to make the ticket appeal to the greatest number of voters across the country. The party will also state its platform. It will say how it feels about, for example, taxes, or abortion rights, or other hot topics. The candidate is expected to support the party platform, but many candidates now try to stay away from the most controversial parts of it. They want to attract a wide base of support, and being too controversial may turn off some people. The conventions are covered by national television, and this starts the last lap of the campaign. Candidates travel across the country, supporting candidates for local elections, hosting fund-raising dinners, trying to get their photos into news stories, and keeping their face in front of the public. This is also the start of intense television advertising. Ads for candidates show up all over television, promoting a given person, attacking the other candidate, and discussing the issues. Televised debates also occur, giving the candidates the opportunity to present themselves to a national audience. Although debates are in no way mandated, they have become an expected feature of a campaign, and most candidates view them as a good way to reach millions of people. Debates can be crucial, too. Many people believe that John Kennedy’s defeat of Richard Nixon in 1960 and Jimmy Carter’s victory over Gerald Ford in 1976 were the result of how each candidate performed in the debates. In a campaign, every little thing can matter.

### LEARN MORE!



**A** . Keep a daily log of a given candidate’s activity for a week. Skim the E-edition or print newspaper each day and note where your candidate appears, with whom he has photos taken, to whom the candidate makes speeches, and what the candidate’s messages are. At the end of the week, write a short paragraph describing what you think that candidate’s overall campaign strategy is and how you feel that week’s activities helped meet that strategy. Then do the same thing three weeks later. Is it the same? Has the strategy changed any? If so, how and why?

**B** . You are the campaign strategist for one of the candidates. In a small group, figure out what the candidate’s two or three most important messages should be. Identify the target audiences and ways to most effectively attract those audiences. Design a television ad and a newspaper ad. Think about photo opportunities and where and with whom the candidate should appear. Design a billboard. Then check the candidate’s campaign every day for a week and compare your campaign ideas with those that the candidate actually uses. What are some similarities? Differences? What do you think accounts for them?

**C** . Watch one of the debates for at least 45 minutes. Read about the debate in the E-edition or print newspaper. Then answer the following questions about the debate:

- 1 . Which candidate seemed the calmest or most poised to you? What actions made the candidate come across that way?
- 2 . Which candidate seemed least poised? Why?
- 3 . Did any of the candidates make any obvious errors? If so, what were they? Do you think it was a serious error that would hurt the candidate’s campaign? Why or why not?
- 4 . What issues were discussed? What positions did the different candidates take on each of the issues?
- 5 . Who do you think came across best in the debate, and why? (Judge the candidates only on their performance in the debate. Try to disregard which candidate you personally like or dislike.) Then compare news coverage of the debates with your responses to the above questions. How did your responses compare with the opinions and responses reported? What might account for the similarities and differences?

**Learning Standards:** writing a daily journal, summarizing, designing graphic representations to influence an audience, comparing and contrasting, evaluating political conduct

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## ELECTION NIGHT

All of the campaigning comes down to Election Night. By Election Night, voters have been to the polls, networks are carrying the state-by-state returns, analysts are analyzing, and people are watching. What they are watching, though, even if they don't realize it every moment, is not the actual presidential election. They are watching as the popular vote – that is, the vote of the citizens – is counted, and they are watching how those popular votes translate into electoral votes. But the real vote happens in December, when the Electoral College – the few hundred people who actually elect the president – gathers.

### THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

What is this system? Why does it exist? The Founding Fathers didn't know how much they could trust the people. Yes, they wanted them to have a say in the government, but they also wanted control. So they set up a system under which the people voted for electors who are pledged to a particular candidate. These electors actually select the president. Each state has a number of electors equal to that state's members of Congress, that is, its number of Representatives (which varies from state to state) and Senators (which is 2 for all states). The candidate who receives the majority of the electoral votes, now 270, wins the election. Almost always, the electors vote for the candidate chosen by the voters of their state – but they don't have to.

If no candidate wins the majority of the electoral vote, then the House of Representatives chooses the president. This has happened twice. In 1800, Aaron Burr and Thomas Jefferson tied for electoral votes, and the House chose Jefferson after 36 votes. In 1824, the House chose John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson when neither man had a majority of the electoral votes.



### COUNTS, RECOUNTS AND COURTS: ELECTION 2000

Many people believe that the Electoral College is a relic of the past and should be abolished. The 2000 election is one argument. In 2000, Al Gore and George Bush were running neck and neck. The election came down to Florida and its electoral votes. The candidate who won Florida's votes would be the next president. But there were problems – many of Florida's voting machines had malfunctioned and many other ballots were invalidated for various reasons. As a result, the Florida results were unclear. Bush appeared to have won, but there were charges of improper counting of ballots and of ballots being filled out incorrectly. There were court challenges, recounts, and even a U.S. Supreme Court challenge concerning recounts from two counties. The Florida Supreme Court had ordered a manual recount (that is, a recount conducted by hand, not by machine) of ballots, but the U.S. Supreme Court overturned that decision. George Bush received Florida's electoral votes and became President of the United States, even though he had not won the popular vote in the nation. The 2000 election was not the first one in which a candidate was elected President without receiving the majority of the popular vote. It happened three other times in 1824, 1876, and 1888. The 2000 election result convinced many people that the Electoral College should be abolished or changed.

Other people aren't so sure. They argue that the current system gives small states some say in the electoral process, that candidates might ignore states with small populations if they didn't need the electoral votes from those states. In addition, they argue that eliminating the Electoral College would lead to a rash of small parties. In such a system, it would be much easier to prevent both major candidates from getting more than 50% of the vote, and we could have a president who is supported by only a minority of the voters. The Electoral College reduces the likelihood that this would happen. Therefore, according to this line of thought, it works. There have been other arguments both for and against the Electoral College, but so far the system has survived.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should the United States abolish or change the Electoral College? Keep it? Would popular-vote elections be fairer or less fair? Choose a position on this question and do one of the following:

- A . Write an editorial endorsing your position. Read some E-edition or print newspaper editorials before writing yours to learn the format.
- B . Prepare an oral presentation on the history of the Electoral College and give your opinion as to whether you think it is a good institution.
- C . Research the Bush-Gore 2000 election. Pay particular attention to the arguments for and against extending the deadlines for manual recounts. Then take the role of a Supreme Court Justice. Bush and Gore have presented their arguments. Write and deliver your position, using the facts of the case and your understanding of constitutional law, to support your position.



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## WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRESIDENT?

So far in this series, you have been learning about the legal powers of the president, the qualifications, and how the election process works. This feature will give you a chance to actively think about what makes a good president and to study this year's election a little more closely.

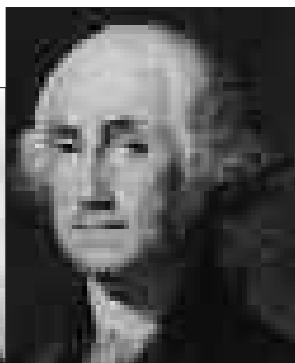
William J. Ridings and Stuart McIver wrote a book entitled *Rating the Presidents: A Ranking of U.S. Leaders, From the Great and Honorable to the Dishonest and Corrupt*. They polled several hundred scholars and historians as they tried to rank the American presidents on such criteria as political skill, integrity, leadership ability, appointments, accomplishments, and crisis management. Below is their list of our top presidents. Read the list and do any of the assignments that follow.



1) ABRAHAM LINCOLN



2) FRANKLIN DELANO  
ROOSEVELT



3) GEORGE WASHINGTON



4) THOMAS JEFFERSON



5) THEODORE ROOSEVELT



6) WOODROW WILSON



7) HARRY S. TRUMAN



8) ANDREW JACKSON



9) DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



10) JAMES MADISON

- A . Choose any two of these presidents and look at what major crises they faced. Read what they did to solve them. Then write a short report, telling what the crisis was, how they responded, what powers and roles of the president they employed, and whether you agree with their ranking on the list.
- B . Compile your own list of what makes a great president. Then research any past president and rank that president according to your criteria. Be prepared to defend your ranking with specific reasons and examples.
- C . Use your list to rank this year's presidential contenders. Scan the newspaper for information about the candidates. Explain your reasoning.

Learning Standards: understanding the duties and responsibilities of the president of the U.S., analyzing information, prioritizing

## EXPLORING DEMOCRACY IN THE NEWSPAPER

- A . Choose a candidate and create a series of political cartoons about him. Before doing the cartoon, study what makes an effective cartoon. Look at caricature, imagery, and more. If you can, create a new political cartoon each week.
- B . Study editorials in the newspaper. See what makes a good editorial. Then write a series of editorials in support of a particular candidate or issue position – or in opposition to a particular candidate or issue position. Do the research necessary to support your editorial with facts.
- C . Polling. Conduct a poll of neighbors and friends. See what makes a good poll by reading about some of the polls that have been covered in the E-edition or print newspaper. Then create a poll of your own and give it to as many people as possible.



These are just a few activities you can do using the E-edition or print newspaper. You may well come up with your own ideas. Try them. Get involved. The presidential elections are important events in our country, and every citizen should be involved.

After all, keep in mind that our government is a democracy where we are all invited to participate. Read the quotes about democracy below. Choose one and react to it in writing by explaining what it means in an editorial column.

Learning Standards: creating political cartoons, analyzing editorials, generating questions

*“The highest measure of democracy is neither the 'extent of freedom' nor the 'extent of equality', but rather the highest measure of participation.”*

*A. D. Benoist*

*“Democracy is not something you believe in or a place to hang your hat, but it's something you do. You participate. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles.”*

*Abbie Hoffman*

