



Election Project 2008

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Social Studies

Due: October 29, 2008
Election: November 4

Introduction: *The United States of America is the most influential and powerful country in the world. Our economy is vast, our culture is deep, our freedoms are the envy of many countries, our military is powerful, and our democratic government is often a model for countries around the world. The American President has a role of leadership in diplomacy, military power, financial relations, cultural identities, societal issues, and a vast amount of influence over many aspects of life in this country and world. This year is a historical election because our country is seemingly changing, our role in this world seems to be changing, and there are unique candidates running for President. In November, 2008 the country will elect a President and Vice President who will be responsible for leading America through potential growth and guiding this country through some rough times. The Presidential Election of 2008 will be historic!*

Project: *While eighth graders do not have the right to vote, it is our goal to understand this year's election with the depth and insight that potential voters could benefit from. Throughout the next 2 months, our social studies class will be held in the computer lab regularly. We will have approximately 8 weeks to study, research, analyze, and understand who these Presidential candidates are, what they stand for, and what their hopes for our country are. Throughout our project we will begin with a basic review of our political system and our government, work through some voter issues, differentiate between political parties, analyze and assess media and media bias in politics, and explore many more issues of this 2008 Presidential election.*

You will be creating a portfolio containing a number of assignments. This project will be primarily student-centered. This means that you will be responsible for understanding the assignments, keeping your work organized (a folder or a section in your binder may be helpful), managing your time so that you do not leave things for the last minute, ask questions to clarify issues, and work diligently. Class time in the computer lab is allotted for work on this project, but you will not be directed every step of the way. It is strongly recommended that you create a folder in the school network to save your work. Extra time with the computer lab will be available during your lunch period or after school if you sign up with Mrs. Meaney during homeroom that day. (Some of the assignments will not need the use of a computer.) This packet will help you get started, and additional information will be posted on Mr. Redeker's website. By the end of the campaign, you will have a Presidential Portfolio to turn in for a large project grade.

In your Campaign Portfolio, you should include:

1. **Cover Page**
2. **Table of Contents** – make sure to have page numbers on your work when the final project is compiled.
3. **Section 1** Background of US Government and Political Parties
You may write or type your answers to the questions in this section and submit it like a worksheet.
4. **Section 2** Civic Mindedness: Why should I vote?
Only the first part of this section may be a worksheet format. The rest must be submitted on separate sheets.
5. **Section 3** Presidential Campaign
Every part of this section must be completed on it's own.
 - a. Candidate Comparison Chart
 - b. Opinion-Editorial articles
 - c. Political Cartoons
 - d. Campaign Videos – include link and screenshot
6. **Overall analysis** of the project
This final essay as well as all other writing sections must be done to proper ELA style

* Project must be bound with a staple, in a binder, or in a protective presentation folder.



Section 1: Background on US Government and Political Parties

In this section of the project, you will complete some standard “worksheet” activities in order that we all begin with a baseline understanding of some essentials. (This page is available via Mr. Redeker’s website for easier access to the web links. Utilize the “Ben’s Guide” website for help with this section.)

Democracy

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/worldhistory/democracy/>

1. What does Democracy mean?
2. Is the United States a direct democracy or a representative democracy?
3. Why does this system work for countries like Rome and the United States?

Branches of Government:

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/branchesofgovernment/>

In every election year, Congressional elections take place even if there is no Presidential election is taking place.

1. What can the Legislative Branch do?
2. Who makes up the Executive Branch?
3. What are some key roles for the President?
4. How is the checks and balances system applied to power of the President?

Presidential Power

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/presidentialpower/>

1. How do Presidential policies help run the government?
2. What does the cabinet do?
3. Besides making policies, what is the biggest responsibility of the President?

Presidential Election

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/presidentialelection/>

1. What are the qualifications set in order to run for President?
2. What are the two main political parties in this country?
3. What is the role of a primary election?
4. What does it mean to establish a platform?
5. How is election day determined?
6. What is the role of the Electoral College? Explain how it works.

7. What happened in the 2000 Presidential Election?

Political Beliefs

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/politicalbeliefs/>

1. What are some core beliefs that all Americans can agree on?

2. What influences our political ideologies?

http://www.ontheissues.org/AskMe/Dem_rep.htm

3. In general, what are 3 issues that Republicans and Democrats disagree on?

Section 2 – Voting

In this section, you will explore voting. We will once again understand some background to voting and then move into issues like why people don't vote, and what that means in our world.

Voting

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/voting/>

1. Who controls the government?
2. Why should every citizen vote?
3. If an eligible voter does not vote, what do they give up?
4. What are the 3 requirements for voting?

Why don't people vote?

American voting trends have not been good. For all of the benefits of voting, many people just stay home on Election Day. To many people throughout the world, this is a ridiculous phenomenon because we have such a great opportunity. The question of why people don't vote is an interesting issue.

Use a search engine like www.google.com, www.yahoo.com, or a print publication from the library to find at least TWO reasons why people don't vote. Indicate the web address if applicable, author, name and date of publication, and a summary of the issues people have in a complete paragraph.

Seneca Falls, Race, Age

Using your textbook or an internet search, identify the significance of the following Constitutional Amendments according to voting. List the year the policy was passed, the historical context and the modern significance.

Amendment 15

Amendment 19

Amendment 26

Section 3 – On the Campaign Trail

This section of the project is meant to be a voter guide and descriptor of the Presidential candidates and the issues prevalent in the 2008 election. This section will need the greatest amount of time out of all the sections and while it is listed third, it should not be left to the end. Be sure to be working on this project throughout the weeks leading up to the election.

I. ISSUES:

Create a Candidate comparison / contrasting chart on issues including:

1. Picture of each candidate
2. 5 *defining* biographical features of each candidate (important facts... not necessarily birthday, birthplace, etc)
3. Picture and identification of VP running mate
4. 3 newspaper headlines (not necessary to include the article) relevant to each candidate
5. Positions on 5 different issues (use the internet resources):
 - a) War in Iraq
 - b) Healthcare
 - c) Education
 - d) Economy
 - e) Energy and Environment

II. OPINIONS:

Collect, summarize, and analyze

FOUR Opinion / Editorial articles from internet or print publications.

(New York Times, CNN.com, Fox News, Huffington Post, etc.)

1 positive for McCain

1 attacking McCain

1 positive for Obama

1 attacking Obama

For each perspective:

- A. Include a copy of the article (you may copy and paste into a Word Document if convenient)
- B. Heading: Name of Publication, Date, Title of article, Author
- C. Paragraph 1: What is the article about? What is the author's opinion on the subject? Is this a positive or negatively spun article and how do you know?
- D. Paragraph 2: Do you agree with the author? Are there any potential exaggerations? What other information do you wish was included in the article?

III. POLITICAL CARTOONS:

Collect, summarize, and analyze

FOUR Political Cartoons from internet or print publications.

(New York Times, Times Herald Record, links provided, etc.)

1 positive for McCain

1 attacking McCain

1 positive for Obama

1 attacking Obama

For each cartoon:

- A. Include copy of the cartoons.
- B. Heading: Name of Publication, Date, Title of Cartoon, Author
- C. Write an assessment of the political cartoon using your Social Studies Study Skills packet about Political Cartoons
- D. Write ONE paragraph for each: explain the cartoon, what they are poking fun of, who the audience was, why it might be effective

IV. VIDEO:

Collect, summarize, and analyze

TWO campaign videos.

1 from Obama

1 from McCain

For each video either provide an internet link or a video tape. If it is an online video, please provide a screenshot of the video. Take a “screenshot” of the video by: play the video, hit the “print screen” button on the keyboard (it takes a picture of what is on the screen), go to Word and hit “paste.” Adjust for size by dragging the borders so it fits well.

For each video, answer:

SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT ANY MEDIA MESSAGE

1. Who made – and who sponsored – this message, and for what purpose?
2. Who is the target audience and how is the message specifically tailored to that audience?
3. What are the different techniques used to inform, persuade, entertain, and attract attention?
4. What messages are communicated (and/or implied) about certain people, places, events, behaviors, lifestyles, etc.?
5. How current, accurate, and credible is the information in this message?
6. What is left out of this message that might be important to know?

V. POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES:

Take 2 political perspective quizzes online. These sites are good surveys because they will explain the issues if you need help. Explain your results in the final essay.

<http://glassbooth.org/>

<http://www.speakout.com/VoteMatch/pres2008.asp?quiz=2008>

FINAL:

Write a 4 paragraph essay. Each paragraph should be between 5-7 sentences, use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Please explain what you learned about the campaigning process (p1), which issues you felt most important for this year's election (p2), which candidate you seemed to like and why (p3), and a summary of what you learned doing this project (p4).

Helpful Links

Ben's Guide to US Government

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/index.html>

Electoral College

<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/index.html>

Non-biased site On The Issues

<http://www.ontheissues.org>

What do Democrats and Republicans believe?

http://www.ontheissues.org/AskMe/Dem_rep.htm

CNN Election Center

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/candidates/>

Biography site for candidates

<http://www.biography.com/>

Fox News Election Center

<http://elections.foxnews.com/>

British Broadcasting Center US Election Center

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/americas/2008/vote_usa_2008/default.stm

Barack Obama's Website

www.barackobama.com

John McCain's Website

www.johnmccain.com

Political Cartoons

<http://www.politicalcartoons.com/>

Editorial Cartoons

<http://www.comiczone.com/editoons/>

Glassbooth Election Survey

<http://glassbooth.org/>

Speak Out Election Survey

<http://www.speakout.com/VoteMatch/pres2008.asp?quiz=2008>

BrainPOP sites (for use in Section 1 and 2)

Democracy

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/worldhistory/democracy/>

Branches of Government:

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/branchesofgovernment/>

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