

ELECTING THE PRESIDENT

**Lesson Plan for the Huntsman Seminar
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Objectives

1. Students will explain the process and time line of how the U.S. President is elected.
2. Students will examine the origins of the Electoral College at the Constitutional Convention.
3. Students will be able to explain how the Electoral College system works.
4. Students will analyze recent Electoral College results and plan Electoral College strategies.
5. Students will debate the pros and cons of the Electoral College system and Electoral College reform.

Day One

1. Review the U.S. Presidential election process with students. (see handout one)
2. Students should be able to explain the purpose of each of the following:
 - primary election
 - caucus
 - state conventions
 - national party conventions
 - general election (popular vote)
 - Electoral College (electoral vote)

Day Two

1. Students should read the U.S. Constitution Article II Section I and the Twelfth Amendment and then explain how the Electoral College works. Students should also explain how the Twelfth Amendment changed the Founders original presidential election plan.
2. Students should read in their civics textbook or in the book *Miracle at Philadelphia* by Catherine Drinker Bowen about the creation of the Electoral College at the Constitutional Convention.
3. After reading the Constitutional Convention account students will explain why the Electoral College was a result of compromise.

Day Three

1. Students will complete the Electoral College assignment analyzing presidential electoral strategies and current election trends. (see handout two)

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AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

The President of the United States is chosen in a unique way by an electoral college. Under this system the President is chosen by a group of electors whose number corresponds to the number of each state's representatives and senators. California, for example, which has two Senators and 53 members of the House of Representatives, has 55 votes in the Electoral College. When a presidential candidate wins a plurality of popular votes (the most votes in an election—not necessarily a majority) in a particular state, the votes of all the states' electors go to him, and even though an opponent receives almost as many votes, he receives none of that state's electoral votes. There are 538 electoral votes in the Electoral College (435 Representatives + 100 Senators + 3 electors from the District of Columbia). To be elected President a candidate must receive a majority (50% + 1) of the electoral votes, which is 270 votes. Remember the candidate who receives a plurality of popular votes in a state, receives all the electoral votes of that state.

1. Imagine that it is election day 2012. So far the votes in only three states have been counted. The table below shows the complete votes in these three states.

VOTES	POPULAR VOTES		ELECTORAL
	Republican	Democrat	
Maryland	500,000	700,000	10
North Carolina	600,000	1,100,000	15
Florida	2,400,000	2,200,000	27

Which candidate is ahead in this race for President? Explain why.

The following pages contain a map showing the number of electoral votes for each state and the election results by state for presidential elections from 1968 to 2008. Using this information, complete the following assignment:

A. Democratic States:

1. By using the election chart, color the Democratic states on your map the following colors:
 - a. **Blue** for strong Democratic states — those who have voted Democratic 7 or more times since 1968.
 - b. **Light blue** for states leaning Democratic — those who have voted Democratic 6 times since 1968. (or 5 times in a row since 1992 ie. CA., IL., NJ, VT.)
2. The strongly Democratic states have _____ electoral votes and the states leaning Democratic have _____ electoral votes.
3. If a Democratic candidate for President carried these traditional Democratic states (both strong and leaning Democratic), he would need _____ more votes to be elected President. If he only carried the strongly Democratic states, he would need _____ more electoral votes.
4. In which section of the country are most of the strongly Democratic states located?
 _____ Where are the Democratically leaning states?

B. Republican States

1. Color the Republican states on your map the following colors:
 - a. **Red** for strong Republican states — those who have voted Republican 8 or more times since 1968.
 - b. **Pink or light red** for states leaning Republican — those who have voted Republican 7 times since 1968.
2. The strongly Republican states have _____ electoral votes and the states leaning Republican have _____ electoral votes.
3. If a Republican candidate for President carried these traditional Republican states (both strong and leaning Republican), he would need _____ more votes to be elected President. If he only carried the strongly Republican states he would need _____ votes.
4. In which section of the country are the strongly Republican states located? _____
Where are the states that lean Republican? _____

C. Swing or Independent States

1. There are _____ swing states (those that are not any color).
2. The swing states have _____ electoral votes.

D. Electoral College Strategy

1. List the names of the eight states which have the largest number of electoral votes, the number of votes they have and the party they usually vote for.

STATE	ELECTORAL VOTES	PARTY AFFILIATION
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. There are _____ electoral votes in the eight largest states. The majority of these states usually vote _____.
3. If a candidate carried the traditional Republican states (strong and leaning Republican) and four of the largest states that don't normally vote Republican, he would have _____ electoral votes.
4. If a candidate carried the traditional Democratic states (strong and leaning Democratic) and four of the largest states that don't normally vote Democratic, he would have _____ electoral votes. Which candidate is closer to being elected president, Democrat or Republican? _____
5. In the 2008 Election the Democratic candidate carried _____ traditional Democratic states, _____ traditional Republican states and _____ independent states.
The Republican candidate carried _____ traditional Democratic states, _____ traditional Republican states and _____ independent states.

6. Choosing presidential candidates:

The following is a list of the presidential candidates from 1968 to 2008 and the state they resided in when they ran for office. Candidates listed first are the election winners.

1968	Richard M. Nixon	(R)	California
	Hubert H. Humphrey	(D)	Minnesota
	George Wallace	(I)	Alabama
1972	Richard M. Nixon	(R)	California
	George McGovern	(D)	South Dakota
1976	Jimmy Carter	(D)	Georgia
	Gerald Ford	(R)	Michigan
1980	Ronald Reagan	(R)	California
	Jimmy Carter	(D)	Georgia
1984	Ronald Reagan	(R)	California
	Walter Mondale	(D)	Minnesota
1988	George Bush	(R)	Texas
	Michael Dukakis	(D)	Massachusetts
1992	Bill Clinton	(D)	Arkansas
	George Bush	(R)	Texas
1996	Bill Clinton	(D)	Arkansas
	Bob Dole	(R)	Kansas
2000	George W. Bush	(R)	Texas
	Albert Gore	(D)	Tennessee
2004	George W. Bush	(R)	Texas
	John F. Kerry	(D)	Massachusetts
2008	Barack Obama	(D)	Illinois
	John McCain	(R)	Arizona

For the questions below use the following:

Large state (20 and above electoral votes)

Medium state (10-19 electoral votes)

Small state (3-9 electoral votes)

- a. How many times have candidates from large states been nominated for President? _____
How many times have they won? _____
- b. How many times have candidates from small states been nominated? _____
How many times have they won? _____
- c. How many candidates were from medium states? _____
How many of these won? _____
- d. What conclusions can you make about choosing presidential candidates?

7. Choosing a Vice President: In choosing a vice presidential running mate a candidate tries to balance the ticket both **politically** (selecting a running mate that has experience, ideology or other characteristics that you don't have), **geographically** (choosing a vice president from a state that normally does not vote for your party or from a different area of the country to attract votes that you might not normally receive), **and** at the same time choosing someone you can work well with and is well qualified to take over the presidency in case an emergency happens to you.
- a. If you were a Democratic candidate from the state of Massachusetts, from what state would you choose your Vice Presidential running mate to geographically balance your ticket? _____ Explain why.

 - b. A Democrat from Georgia would be smart to choose his running mate from _____ in order to geographically balance his ticket. In what states would you do most of your campaigning in? Explain why.

 - c. If you were a Republican from California, from what state would you choose your Vice-President from in order to geographically balance your ticket _____? Explain why.

 - d. In your opinion did Bill Clinton (D) Arkansas make a good geographical choice in 1992 by selecting Albert Gore (D) Tennessee? _____ Why do you think that Bill Clinton chose Al Gore as his running mate?

 - e. In your opinion did George W. Bush (R) Texas make a good geographical choice in 2000 choosing Richard Cheney (R) of Wyoming? _____ Why do you think he chose Dick Cheney?

 - f. Did Barack Obama make a good geographical choice in 2008 by choosing Joe Biden from Delaware? _____ Why do you think he chose Joe Biden?

 - g. Looking at the last three Presidents of the United States, what would you conclude about their choice of vice presidential running mates?

RESULTS OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS FROM 1968 TO 2008

STATE	08	04	00	96	92	88	84	80	76	72	68
Alabama	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	I
Alaska	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Arizona	R	R	R	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Arkansas	R	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	I
California	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
Colorado	D	R	R	R	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
Connecticut	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D
Delaware	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	R
Florida	D	R	R	D	R	R	R	R	D	R	R
Georgia	R	R	R	R	D	R	R	D	D	R	I
Hawaii	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	D	R	D
Idaho	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Illinois	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
Indiana	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Iowa	D	R	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R
Kansas	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Kentucky	R	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	R
Louisiana	R	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	I
Maine	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D
Maryland	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	D	R	D
Massachusetts	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	D	D
Michigan	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	D
Minnesota	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D
Mississippi	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	I
Missouri	R	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	R
Montana	R	R	R	R	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
Nebraska	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Nevada	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
New Hampshire	D	D	R	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
New Jersey	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
New Mexico	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
New York	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	D
North Carolina	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	R
North Dakota	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Ohio	D	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	R
Oklahoma	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Oregon	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R
Pennsylvania	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	D
Rhode Island	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	D	R	D
South Carolina	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	R	I
South Dakota	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Tennessee	R	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	D	R	R
Texas	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	D
Utah	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Vermont	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
Virginia	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Washington	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	D
West Virginia	R	R	R	D	D	D	R	D	D	R	D
Wisconsin	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	D	R	R
Wyoming	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Washington, D.C.	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

KEY D = Democrat R = Republican I = Independent (George Wallace)

ELECTORAL COLLEGE NOTES

