

ELECTION EDUCATION GUIDE





Introduction

The upcoming election offers a wonderful opportunity for exciting classroom lessons and discussions. This guide will enable you to help your students learn about the election process by using the material found in the newspaper. Each day the newspaper offers many opportunities for learning about current issues and news that impact on our lives and our choices. These reproducible activity sheets can be distributed to students along with the newspapers. Or, you can simply explain the lessons aloud. Each lesson is completely self-explanatory and requires nothing other than the newspaper. There are discussion questions included on many of the pages.

Here are some suggestions to help you make the best use of the newspaper:

- Whenever possible, allow students to read the newspaper for 10 minutes silently before beginning any lesson. The newspaper generates enthusiasm and interest among students and you will want to capitalize on that interest. The goal of any lesson should always include generating excitement in learning about the world.
- Feel free to skip around this guide and use only those activities that fit the needs of your program.
- Encourage discussion among your students. Allow them opportunity to voice their opinions.
- If possible, let students take the newspapers home and assign homework that involves talking about the issues with parents.
- Students may be even more receptive to the assignments if you allow them to make some choices about which activities they complete. You may want to offer some opportunities for extra credit work.
- Some activities may work best in small groups. Encourage students to work together for optimal results.
- Encourage students to do additional research in the library, in other sources and even on the Internet.
- Read aloud to students. Children of any age can benefit from a good news article read aloud with emphasis. Share with your students what you find interesting.

What is Voting?

When you vote you make a choice, or a decision about something. You do this all the time- in school elections, on your sports teams and even in your family. Voting is a special kind of decision making that is a way for citizens to be a part of the government. We vote for President, State Senators, Governors, Mayors and many other people to work for us. The United States has more than 500,000 elected officials.



Look through today's newspaper to find a story about any person who was elected. Fill in the blanks to tell about the story you found:

The elected person is _____

He/She is in the news because _____

This story is interesting because _____

I would or would not have voted for this person because _____





Who Can Vote



The job of the voter is very important but it's easy to be a voter. There are just a few rules about who can vote. Read each rule and write an explanation for each on the lines:

You must be a citizen of the United States.

You must be at least 18 years old.

You must live in the city and state where you plan to vote.

What other rules do you think there should be about voting? Write them on these lines.

Find someone in today's newspaper who is able to vote and someone who is not able to vote. Write a reason why you chose each person.





Why We Vote

We live in a democracy. That is a country where the people help to make some choices about the way the country works. Voting is the easiest way for us to be part of our government. It's the way we let our leaders know what we think. The newspaper often has many stories about our government. Skim today's news and write the headlines of any stories about government that you can find in today's paper.

Headline

Headline

Headline

Headline

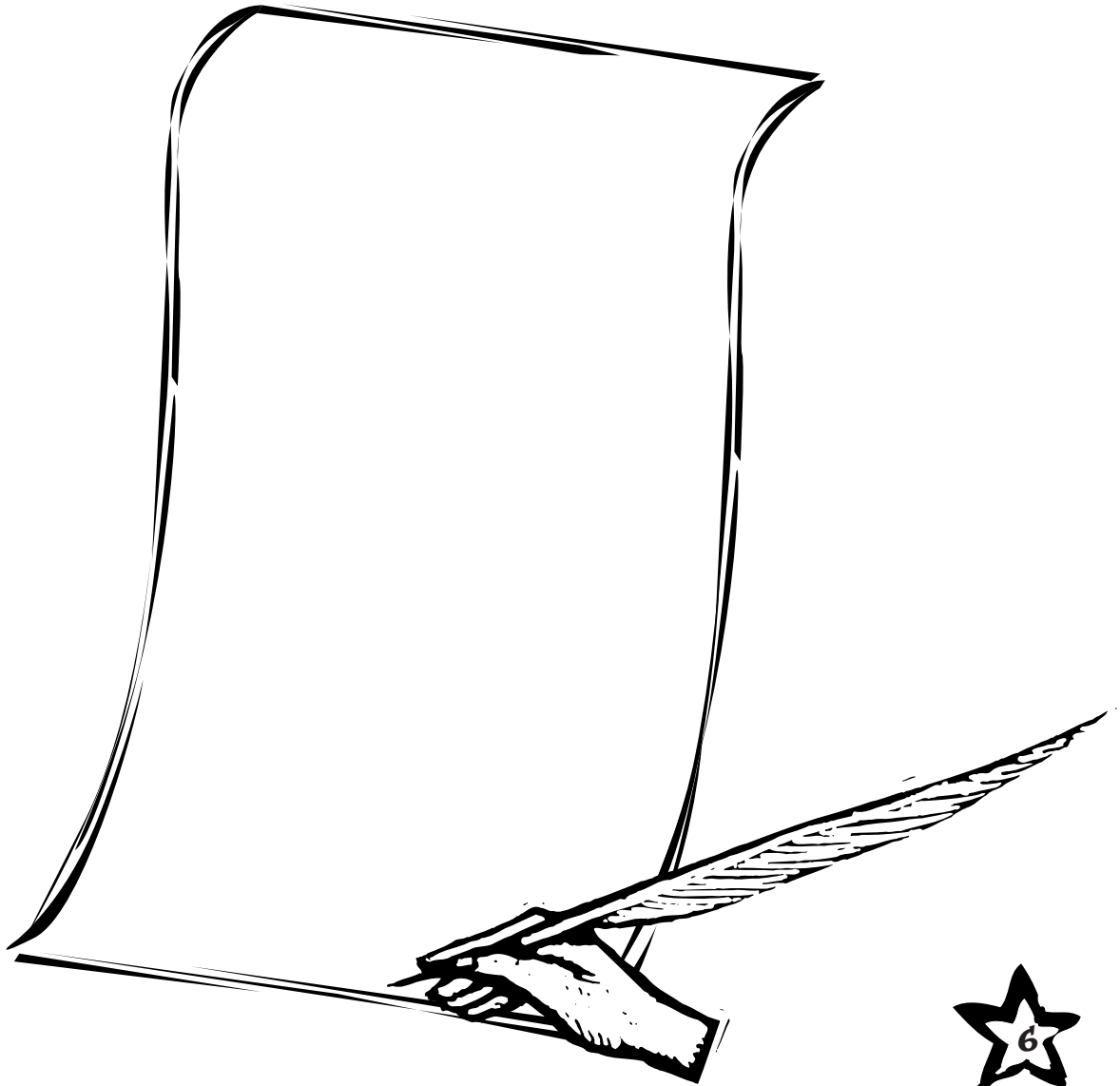


Voting Wasn't Always Easy

When our country was formed in 1776, only white men, 21 years and older, who owned land or were rich, could vote. Later, in the late 1800's, men of other races were also allowed to vote. Women were not allowed to vote until 1920.



Imagine that you lived in the year 1800 and only rich white men were allowed to vote. Read some letters to the editor in today's newspaper so that you can see how they are written. In the space provided, write a letter to the editor telling why everyone should be allowed to vote.



Leaders

People who live together need leaders to help them get things done. We choose new leaders every few years so that we always have the people we want helping us. In the upcoming election this year we are choosing a new leader for our country. What is a good leader? What kind of a person makes a good leader?



Look through the Help Wanted ads to see how they are written. On these lines write an ad for a good leader.



Look for words in the newspaper that tell what a good leader is like. Make a collage of those words by pasting them in this space.





Voting Vocab



Just before an election you might see lots of stories about voting in the newspaper. Skim your paper and circle any of these voting vocabulary words that you find:

Write a sentence for each word.

ballot

party

Republican

Democrat

issue

candidate

politics

register

voter

poll

Get Out The Vote

Voting is one of the special things about living in a free country. Sadly, not everyone who can vote, does. When Abraham Lincoln was president almost everyone voted. Now, in years when there is no election for president, only about one-third of the people may vote.



On these lines write one reason why you think people don't vote.



Look through your newspaper to see how display ads look. In this box design a newspaper ad telling people to vote.





Issues

One reason people vote is because they want their state or country to be a better place. They have problems that they hope the leaders can solve. These problems are sometimes called issues.



What are some of the problems or issues in your state or our country? Use the newspaper to find stories about some issues in the upcoming election. Write each issue on the line and then number them in order of importance to you. (Number one is the most important.) Talk about them with your class.

Issue

Issue

Issue

Issue



Polls

A poll, or survey, is one way to see who might be elected. Polls are like voting before the real election. Poll takers ask people who they plan to vote for and then they make predictions about who will win the real election.



Take a poll in your class about who each person would vote for in the upcoming election. Draw a bar graph here showing the results. Look for stories in the newspaper about any polls being taken and compare the results to those in your class.

Campaign Trail

Candidates for office travel quite a bit to talk to voters. Where are the candidates from the upcoming election today? Look in the newspaper to find out where they are. Choose a crayon color for each candidate. Each day you can skim the newspaper to see where each candidate has gone and mark it on the map.



Election Scavenger Hunt



Have fun finding each of these election items in today's paper:
Write the page number where you found each one on the lines.

A candidate's picture

A political symbol

A political cartoon

A campaign event

A poll

The name of a political party

Something a candidate said

A political advertisement

An editorial about the election

A story about an issue



The Perfect Candidate

It would be easy to choose a leader if we could just take parts of lots of different people until we built the perfect one. You might like the personality of one person, the brain of another and the kindness of someone else.



Talk with your class about all the traits or characteristics that make a good leader. Look through today's paper to find people who have each of these traits and write their names on the lines.

The perfect candidate should have:

The brain of

The sense of humor of

The kind heart of

The looks of

The concerns of



Study The Photo

During an election you will see lots of pictures of the candidates in the newspaper. You will see pictures of them making speeches, shaking hands or meeting with groups.



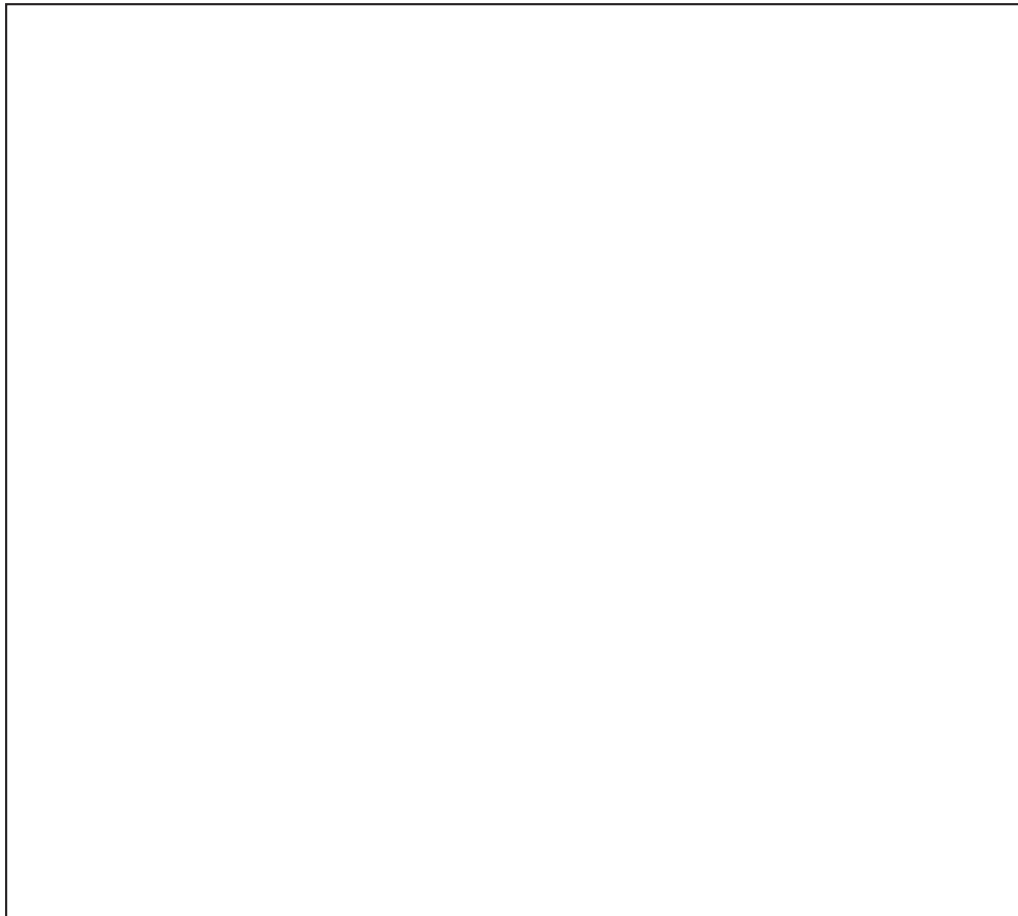
Find a photo of each candidate in the newspaper. Paste the pictures on this paper and, below each picture, write a caption telling what the picture is about. Do you think the candidate would like the picture? Why?

Comic Candidate

One important way that candidates campaign is by running political ads in the newspaper. That's a great way to let people know where they stand on the issues and what they plan to do if elected.



Imagine that your favorite comic strip character from today's paper is running for governor. Clip out a picture of that character and paste it on this sheet. Design an ad poster using that picture.





Taxes

People pay lots of taxes and some of the money should be used to make lives better and solve public problems. Taxes are a big issue during many elections. Candidates often talk about raising or lowering taxes and about how the money should be used.



How do you think tax money should be used? Skim today's paper for stories about problems that could be solved by using tax money. Write a summary of the problem and why you think tax money would help.



Interest Groups

People who feel very strongly about one issue sometimes form an interest group with others who feel the same way. These interest groups may work for or donate money to a candidate with whom they agree. Interest groups may be about health, education, civil rights, environment, animal rights or many other issues.



Choose one issue from today's newspaper that you feel strongly about. Write an outline of a plan to form a group about this



Voting Is Easy

You can practice voting using the information and ads in today's newspaper. Have your class vote for each of these based on today's paper. Tally the results below each item.

You'll see how easy and fun voting can be!

Your favorite TV show _____

The best movie showing in theaters _____

The sport that is most fun to watch _____

The sport that is most fun to play _____

The best place to buy clothes _____

The best store to buy a portable CD player _____
