

Constitution Day Lesson Plan: Where do the Candidates Stand?

(Total Time: About 1 hour and 20 minutes)

Students will be able to:

- Explain the importance of being an informed voter
- Identify election issues that are most important to them
- Search for a candidate's platform for election online
- Compare candidate platforms to each other
- Devise questions for the candidates that would fill in voids in their campaign platforms

Materials:

- Whiteboard and Markers/Blackboard Chalk
- Projector/Laptop with Internet Connection (Optional)
- Copies of Candidate Platform Packets
- Index Cards
- Ballot Box (Optional)
- Copies of the Exit Tickets

I. Motivating Activity (10-15 minutes)

Write the following each side of the board (or put up a sign): Agree and Disagree as students arrive. Explain to the students that today's topic is the Elections. You will read a list of statements, and the students will have to stand up and walk to the side, Agree or Disagree, that best aligns with their beliefs. Once you finish explaining these directions, have your students stand up. Read the following statements out loud, and if time permits, ask students to explain their decisions after each statement:

- 1.) I believe most Americans will vote in the next election.
- 2.) I believe that the average American is an informed voter.
- 3.) If I could, I would vote in the next election.
- 4.) I know where the candidates stand on key issues.
- 5.) I know which issues I care about the most.
- 6.) I believe that my vote for Congressional Candidates is more important than my vote for President.
- 7.) I believe that national elections are more important than local elections.
- 8.) I believe that you have to cast your vote for all the candidates in the same party, and not vote for anyone in the opposing party.

Have everyone sit down. Then ask students to start naming off key issues (local or national) in the upcoming election, and write these issues on the board as students list them off (i.e. the Economy, Education, the Environment, Immigration).

Part II. Lesson

Now that you have some major election issues listed on the board, ask students if they think candidates for the election have made know their stances on these issues. For the students that say yes, ask the follow up question of where would the student look for candidate stances on these issues? After a brief discussion, tell students that while there is lots of news sources that report what the candidates say, the most concrete and undigested information is on the candidates websites.

You can choose any candidates in any elections for your lesson, but this lesson will use the Presidential Candidates Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump for this lesson.

If you have the possibility of projecting the candidate websites for the complete candidate platforms, project them now.

Hilary Clinton: <https://www.hillaryclinton.com/issues/>

Donald Trump: <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/positions>

Have the students consider whether any of the issue areas they discussed earlier are missing from what they see on each candidate's website. Based on the limits and differences in candidate platforms, few issues can be directly compared. Next, hand each student a packet with the candidate platforms on specific issues. In each packet, the students should have worksheet to fill out, and each candidate's stance on the issue. Students should fill these out individually (20-30 minutes).

Next, give the student 1 minute to find other students with their same issue. In their individual groups, have the students compare their answers and have them do the following:

- 1.) Pick 1 student to write a 1-3 sentence summary of Hilary Clinton's stance on the issue, and 1 student to write Donald Trump's stance.
- 2.) Choose 1 student to present the Candidates' stances, 1 student to present what the group decided was missing from the platform, and 1 student to present what other issue they hope would have been discussed.

(15 minutes)

As a class, let each group present. (15 minutes)

Part III: Evaluation

Without adding, making up, or changing the information on the issue, have students narrow and simplify the Candidates' platforms to and develop 3-4 talking points on the issue. Pass out index cards to students to write down their talking points. Then students will present on their issue before the class (2-3 minutes each) where they will discuss their talking points and field questions from their classmates, as if they were the candidate's spokesperson on the issue. At the end of student presentations, pass out index cards once again, and have students write down which candidate they would vote and list the issues that affected their decision. You can have a "ballot box" in the classroom that allows students to "cast their ballot."

Part IV: Exit Ticket

Pass out the Exit Ticket for students to fill out before they leave, and collect it as students exit the room. (5 minutes)

Extension Activity:

Using the information provided about the candidates, have students recreate the Candidates' platforms in their own words, and create a campaign advertisement (either a brochure, pamphlet, social media post, or acted out video ad).