

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Democrats Hope to Increase Obama's Support at Convention, 08/25/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec08/dnc_8-25.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. **What is a political convention?**

2. **Who are the major party candidates in the 2008 presidential election?**

3. **Who were the major players in the Democratic primary race during the winter and spring of 2008?**

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. **Who did Obama pick to be his running mate and when did he choose this person?**

ANSWER

Barack Obama revealed his choices of vice president, Delaware Senator Joseph Biden, in a text message during the early morning hours of Saturday, Aug.23.

2. **What is the official purpose of the convention?**

ANSWER

Obama is the star of the four-day convention, which officially exists so that state delegates -- die-hard Democrats who help decide the party's presidential nominee -- can vote to make Obama the party's official presidential candidate.

3. **How many people will attend the convention?**

ANSWER

This year, the Democratic convention will host 50,000 people, including 15,000 journalists, USA Today reported.

4. What is the main purpose of modern conventions?

ANSWER

Once a weighty event where party members arrived without a candidate and then debated and made deals until there was a unified choice, the Democratic convention, as well as the Republican version the following week in Minneapolis, Minn., is primarily a chance to advertise the presidential and vice presidential nominees to the nation.

5. Why are this year's conventions particularly important?

ANSWER

Many political and media analysts agree that this year's conventions are important because voters have lingering doubts about both candidates. The Democratic convention is also important to unify the party after a hard-fought primary between Sens. Hillary Clinton and Obama.

6. Where does the race stand now?

ANSWER

While Obama enjoyed a lead in the polls over the Republican candidate, Arizona Senator John McCain, for several months, the race is now much tighter, according to national and state polls. The media are now focusing on how the Biden pick and Obama's performance at the convention will shape the race.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

- 1. Why did Obama pick Biden as the vice presidential candidate? Why not Hillary Clinton?**
- 2. Why do the media cover political conventions if the delegate voting is a foregone conclusion?**
- 3. How much attention do you think the average person pays to these conventions? Is all the planning and coverage worth it?**
- 4. What do you think will happen after the conventions? Do you think there will be a convention bounce for Obama? How did past convention performances compare with how the candidate performed in the November election?**

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.