

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Obama World Tour Highlights Foreign Policy Differences With McCain, 07/22/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec08/obama_7-22.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 are some of the big issues in this year's presidential race?

2. How do Sen. Barack Obama and Sen. John McCain differ on the issue of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

3. Locate Afghanistan and Iraq on a map. What countries border it?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. Why is Obama in Europe and the Middle East?

ANSWER

Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, is using the week-long trip to improve the perception of his foreign policy skills, meet important world leaders and to visit Iraq and Afghanistan, where Obama says he would make significant changes in U.S. troop levels if elected.

2. How do Obama and McCain differ on the invasion of Iraq, and the surge of troops there last year?

ANSWER

Neither candidate believes the Iraq war was handled well, but Obama opposed the invasion in 2003, while McCain continues to be one of its staunchest defenders.

McCain supported the surge while Obama voiced opposition to it.

3. What does McCain think of Obama's plan to withdraw troops from Iraq?

ANSWER

McCain argues that Obama's plan to withdrawal troops is dangerous and risks destabilizing a fragile country.

McCain argues that American soldiers would not be in a position to leave if the country was not stabilized by an increase in U.S. forces to the country in 2007, known as the surge.

4. What is happening to violence levels in Afghanistan?

ANSWER

Violence in Afghanistan is rising and more coalition soldiers died in Afghanistan than in Iraq in May and June 2008.

5. What is Obama's opinion on what is happening in Afghanistan and what should happen next?

ANSWER

Obama has argued that the U.S. should have less troops in Iraq and more in Afghanistan, where the Taliban, who supported the al-Qaida terrorists who organized the 9/11 attacks, are growing stronger.

"I think one of the biggest mistakes we made strategically after 9/11 was to fail to finish the job here, focus our attention here. We got distracted by Iraq," Obama told CBS news from Afghanistan.

6. What is McCain's opinion on Afghanistan?

ANSWER

McCain said, "Senator Obama will tell you we can't win in Afghanistan without losing in Iraq. In fact, he has it exactly backwards. It is precisely the success of the surge in Iraq that shows us the way to succeed in Afghanistan. With the right strategy and the right forces, we can succeed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. And they are not disconnected. Success breeds success. Failure breeds failure."

7. What other countries will Obama visit on his trip?

ANSWER

Obama will finish his mini-world tour by visiting leaders in Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Germany, France and Britain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Why do you think Obama went on this trip? Where would you choose to go if you were running for president and why?

2. How might Maliki's remarks about Obama's plans for Iraq affect the debate in the 2008 presidential election?

3. Chose either Obama or McCain's approach to Iraq and Afghanistan to critique. What are the pros and cons of that candidate's plan?

4. Do you think Obama's popularity in Europe will help him or hinder him with American voters? Should the opinion of people who aren't Americans be considered by citizens who vote in American elections? Why or why not?

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.