

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Vice Presidential Candidates Hold Their Own in Closely Watched Debate

10/03/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec08/vpdebate_10-03.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. Who is Sarah Palin? Who is Joe Biden?

2. What is the roll of the vice president?

3. How many former vice presidents can you name? Can you name the president they served with?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – **Student Worksheet**

1. What did Senator Joe Biden say was the cause of the massive Wall Street rescue bill?

ANSWER

Senator Biden, who voted for the bill in the Senate, declared that the bill was a necessary evil because of the failed policies of the last eight years under the Bush administration.

2. What are the main disagreements between the two candidates' positions about Iraq and Afghanistan?

ANSWER

Biden and Palin disagree whether or not there should indeed be a timeline for withdrawal from Iraq, and whether Iraq or Afghanistan is the frontline in the War on Terror.

3. Which candidates thinks that there should be no timeline for the withdrawal of the troops from Iraq?

ANSWER

The Republicans maintain that there can not be a timeline for withdrawal of the troops in Iraq stating that the end of the war and the winning of the war will come when Iraq has a stable and secure government.

4. What are the candidates' beliefs about No Child Left Behind?

ANSWER

Biden called for more direct funding to early education and to No Child Left Behind. Palin urged more

flexibility for No Child Left Behind.

5. Name at least two of the three issues that the candidates did agree on.

ANSWER

- a) Biden and Palin agreed that same-sex couples deserve equal rights under the law but neither ticket would support same-sex marriage amendments to the Constitution.
- b) Biden and Palin agreed over support for Israel with Palin calling Israel the “strongest and best ally” in the Middle East and Biden calling himself a personal friend to Israel.
- c) Biden and Palin said they both fully support imposing a no-fly zone over southern Sudan in an effort to end the genocide in Darfur.

6. What did each candidate have to prove to the audience?

ANSWER

Palin had to appear knowledgeable and not like her halting performance in recent network television interviews. Biden had to avoid wordiness and his often awkward verbal gaffs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Who do you think won the debate? Why?

2. Imagine you are the moderator, Gwen Ifill. What questions would you ask the candidates? Why?

3. In your opinion what qualifies someone for the office of vice president? How does that differ from what qualifies someone for president?

4. There are three presidential debates and only one vice presidential debate, why do you think that is? Should there be more vice presidential debates? 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.