

the.Vote

“Conventions 2008”
Social Studies and Language Arts
Curriculum

the.Vote
is a feature of

the.News

**A daily news broadcast for High School and Middle School students
now under development by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions**



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Spring 2008

Dear Educator,

the.Vote is the newest feature of *the.News*. These online video reports will provide middle and high school students with a valuable exercise in democracy. Starting with this nine minute, thirty second segment about the 2008 summer conventions, the series will continue with 10 more video reports, most in the four to five minute range, about issues in the 2008 race for the presidency. After Election Day, leading up to the inauguration, the series will evolve from *the.Vote* to *the.Gov* and look at the process of forming a new government, identifying key issues for the new administration and new Congress.

Each video report is supported by a social studies and language arts curriculum. All videos and curricula have been informed by *the.News* instructional design that can be found on the website www.macneil-lehrer.com/thenews. *the.Vote* will be open-captioned.

The curriculum includes content-based standards, discussion questions, student activities, vocabulary and primary reference sources. A complete transcript of each video report includes time codes to assist in isolating specific segments of the video. This material is presented as options to fit teachers' instructional needs.

Two interactive features will accompany *the.Vote* and *the.Gov*. In one called *YOU.edit*, students will be given the tool online to remix the content of *the.Vote* reports, so they can create their own multimedia presentations. This editing tool will reside on our website so that it will be available to all students with an internet connection. It will be password protected so that it can serve as a viable educational asset that allows classroom teachers to assign multimedia projects within the security and content safety of *the.News* website.

A companion multimedia feature, *YOU.report* will provide an online home for student-generated content produced in response to a prompt that *the.News* team is developing with NCSS. The *YOU.report* feature will include a student competition. While we are hoping students will create their own video content, we will also facilitate written *YOU.report* feature stories. We will be posting details over the summer months as they are developed and hope that you and your students will check this website over the summer months as more details become available.

Funding for *the.Vote* has been provided by Adobe through the PBS Foundation.

For more information and questions about this material contact Lisa Denny at ldenny@newshour.org.

Sincerely,

Karen W. Jaffe
Manager, Education Projects, *the.News*
MacNeil/Lehrer Productions
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Arlington, VA 22206



“Conventions 2008” Social Studies Curriculum

This lesson has been designed to support *the.News* video “Conventions 2008.” The video can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/thevote/story.php?id=3054&package_id=634.

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Content Areas: Civics, social studies, and U.S. political history

Key Concept: Students will understand how the political party nominating conventions make their selection of candidates for President and Vice President.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Brokered convention**
- **Caucus**
- **Delegates**
- **Moderate conservative**
- **Party platform**
- **Pledged delegates**
- **Primary election**
- **Religious-based conservative**
- **Super delegates**
- **Traditional conservative**

McRel Learning Objectives - Civics: Standard 10: Understands the roles of voluntarism and organized groups in American social and political life - Level IV
(Grades 9-12)

Background:

The 2008 presidential election promises to be historic for a number of reasons. It is the first time for either a woman or an African American to be considered as viable candidates

for the presidency. It is also the first time since 1928 that an incumbent President or Vice President isn't running. It has been probably one of the longest campaigns in modern history, beginning back in December 2006 when several individuals announced their intention to run. It will also probably be one of the most expensive campaigns and one where voter turnout is expected to be very high.

McRel Learning Objectives - Civics: Standard 7: Understands alternative forms of representation and how they serve the purposes of constitutional government - Level IV
(Grades 9-12)

McRel Learning Objectives - Civics: Standard 20: Understands the roles of political parties, campaigns, elections and associations and groups in American politics - Level IV
(Grades 9-12)

In this lesson, students will learn about the national nominating conventions, the *primary* and the *caucus* process to elect delegates to the conventions. They will



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develop campaign materials for a nominating convention where they examine key issues in their state and will compare those issues with national *party platforms* and the leading candidates. They will then prepare campaign materials for a national nominating convention to promote their candidate and describe issues they care about.

Materials:

- Internet access to computers
- Segment of *the.News* titled *the.Vote*
- Graphic organizer: “Conventions 2008” (p.7)
- Student handout #1: “Introduction to the Nominating Conventions” (p.9)
- Student handout #2: “Primer on the National Campaign Process” (p.11)
- Student handout #3: “National Convention Activity” (p.15)
- Student Handout #4: “Issues Check List” (p.20)
- Rubric (p.21)
- News story from the NewsHour “Super Delegates’ Role Thrust into Public Eye”
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house/jan-june08/superdelegates_02-19.html

Procedure:

(Time frame: 2–3 class periods)

This quick activity gives students a background on the nominating conventions and helps them think about some of the key questions surrounding the process in this election. You can structure this activity to meet the needs and level of your students.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Exercising sound reasoning in understanding.
- Making complex choices and decisions.
- Understanding the interconnections among systems.
- Identifying and asking significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.
- Framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions.

1. Organize students into small discussion groups.

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy

K-12 (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Using digital technology, communication tools and/or networks appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information in order to function in a knowledge economy.
- Using technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information, and the possession of a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information.

2. Pass out the student handout “Introduction to the Nominating Conventions” (p.9). Give students time to read the introduction.
3. Have each group review the discussion questions below the reading. To help students organize their learning, have each student make a three-column chart with these headings: “What do I know or think I know?” “What do I want or need to know?” “What have I learned?”



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4. In their discussion, they should be able to write responses for the first two columns. This set of responses will give you and them an idea of how much previous learning they have on this subject. As they work through the other activities, encourage them to make notes in the third column documenting what they've learned.

News Story Activity:

1. Distribute the graphic organizer “National Nominating Conventions” (p.7) news story. This tool is organized for discussion and for written answers so students have a record on what they viewed in the news segment.
2. Have students work in pairs and review the news story, taking notes on their graphic organizer. You may also download the transcript for easy review.
3. After the pairs have watched the video and taken their notes, assign each pair a segment of the news story. Select random student pairs to share their findings with the class. The other pairs can add to the discussion.

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy K-12 (Literacy for the 21st Century www.21stcenturyskills.org)

- Accessing information efficiently and effectively, evaluating information critically and competently, and using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.
- Possessing a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information.

The National Convention Activity:

Before conducting the National Nominating Convention activity, provide students with some background on the presidential campaign process and the issues surrounding the national conventions.

1. Organize students into small groups of three.
2. Distribute the handout titled “Primer on the National Campaign Process” (p.11); then have students review the reading content and discuss the questions that follow.
3. Lead a discussion on what the students discussed.

McRel Learning Objectives - Civics: Standard 19: Understands what is meant by “the public agenda,” how it is set and how it is influenced by public opinion and the media - Level IV (Grades 9-12)

McRel Learning Objectives - Thinking and Reasoning: Standard 2: Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning - Level III (Grades 6-8), Level IV (Grades 9-12)

In the main activity, students will play the role of delegates from their states who are attending either the Republican or Democratic National Conventions. They will work in groups to develop campaign materials to present at the convention.



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1. Divide students into groups of four.
2. Have half the groups represent Republican delegates and half Democratic. If there are still two Democratic candidates when you conduct this activity, split the Democratic groups in half again to represent Senator Clinton and Senator Obama.
3. Distribute the student handout titled “National Convention Activity” (p.15), and review the instructions with students.



4. Encourage students to divide up the work within their groups but to also frequently check with one another to coordinate their efforts.
5. Have students present their materials to the class according to the instructions in the handout.



Assessment: Assess student performance using the “Rubric” worksheet (p.21) or use your own assessment method.

Resources:

To further help students with this lesson activity and other research on the upcoming election, refer students to any of these sites:

- 2008 Democratic National Convention, <http://www.demconvention.com> - This site has information on the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Denver.
- 2008 Republican National Convention, <http://www.gopconvention.com/> - This site has information on the upcoming Republican National Convention in Minneapolis–St. Paul.
- Constitution Party, <http://www.constitution-party.net>
- Democratic Party, <http://www.democrats.org>
- Green Party, <http://www.gp.org/index.php>
- Libertarian Party, <http://www.lp.org/>
- Politics1.com, <http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm> - This is a solid, nonpartisan online guide to American Politics. The site contains a directory of the major political parties, up-to-date information on the 2008 race, state and federal candidates, news links, and more.
- Project Vote Smart, http://www.votesmart.org/election_president.php - This is a great website for election information for each state. The site contains information on party politics, candidates’ voting records, and public statements.



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- Republican Party, <http://rnc.org>
- Student Guide to Voting, <http://www.gocollege.com/students-guide-to-voting.html> - Though intended for college students and first-time voters, this site provides good information on young voters, the voting process, and the importance of voting and issues facing young voters.
- Vote 2008 NewsHour Online, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/> - NewsHour's website follows the primary and the general election with news articles from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* including audio/video links and transcripts. The site also contains interactive election map, information on the candidates, reporters' blog, and links to lesson plans.
- VoteGopher.com, <http://www.votegopher.com>

Activity Designer:

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Greg Timmons is a former social studies teacher now freelance writer and educational consultant.



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GRAPHIC ORGANIZER Conventions 2008

Names: _____

Directions: Working in pairs, review *the.Vote* story on the “Conventions 2008” either online or from a printed transcript. Answer the questions on this graphic organizer to prepare for a general class discussion and additional activities in this lesson.

1. What are the main goals of the national conventions?

2. How have the primaries changed the way national conventions select their party’s nominee for the presidency?

3. Why did this change come about?

4. What are the benefits of this change for the voting public?

5. If the Democratic nomination isn’t decided during the primaries and neither candidate withdraws from the race, the nominee will be chosen at the national convention. What are the costs and benefits for the Democrats of deciding the party’s nominee at the convention rather than earlier during the primaries?



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6. Describe the role of delegates to the national conventions and how they are chosen.

7. Describe the role of super delegates and why the Democratic Party created this type of delegate.

8. Examine the different wings of the Republican Party. What are some of the challenges that John McCain might face in unifying the Republican Party around his candidacy?



STUDENT HANDOUT #1 Introduction to the Nominating Conventions

The national nominating conventions have a long and colorful history dating back to 1831. They have been described as having the fascination of a hanging and the vulgarity of a barroom brawl.¹ For a long time in both political parties, presidential nominees were selected in “smoke-filled backroom deals” made by high-ranking members whose main motivation was to ensure that their own political and economic interests were being met. Films such as *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The State of the Union*, and *The Candidate* have portrayed those **brokered conventions** with dramatic flair, but also with factual accuracy.

Since the 1968 Democratic Convention, both parties have restructured their primary process to be more democratic. Now, instead of presidential nominees being chosen by party insiders they are elected by the **delegates** who were selected by the voters during state primaries and caucuses to represent those voters at the national convention.



This year the Democratic and Republican National Conventions will be held in August and September, respectively. This year the Democrats have two front-runners vying for the nomination: New York Senator Hillary Clinton and Illinois Senator Barack Obama, who have campaigned for more than a year. Arizona Senator John McCain is the presumptive nominee for the Republican Party, having been the “last man standing” after all other candidates dropped out of the race.

All three candidates are presenting themselves as “agents of change” promising to correct the mistakes of the past, turn the country around or “not do business as usual in Washington.” The Democrats face an interesting dilemma with two highly popular and well-qualified candidates. Only one can receive the nomination for President and although there has been relentless speculation on whether either would offer the vice presidency to the other, such a decision will probably not occur before the convention. Because neither candidate has enough pledged delegates to give him or her the needed 2,025 delegates to clinch the nomination, it is likely the decision will be made by the **super delegates** who were chosen by the party and are not obligated to vote the way of the public vote in their states.

The process might be no less momentous at the Republican Convention. Although it is expected that John McCain will be the Republican nominee, he will need to bring together divergent factions within the Republican Party: **moderates**, **traditional conservatives** and **religious-based**

¹ Mencken, H.L., *On Politics: A Carnival of Buncombe*, “A Carnival of Buncombe,” February 9, 1920. The Johns Hopkins Press: New York, 1956.



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conservatives. McCain has his work cut out for him. For most of his career, he has characterized himself as a maverick who is reluctant to fully embrace the more conservative ideals of the Republican Party. Yet, he will need support from all the factions if he is to be successful in the general election. During the campaign, he has aligned himself in many ways with the Bush administration, advocating for the continuation of an unpopular war and embracing many of the administration's economic policies.

A few other political parties, referred to as "third parties," will also hold conventions to prepare for the general election, though they aren't expected to have much influence on this election. There are several continually operating third-party organizations, among them are the Constitution Party, the Green Party and the Libertarian Party. (See Resources, p.17). In most cases, the candidate for those parties has already been determined and the purpose of holding a convention is to rally the faithful and to seek media coverage.

All this discussion brings up some interesting questions as the campaigns gear up for the national conventions. Many questions have been covered in the national news, although most potential answers are speculative, as events haven't transpired yet to accurately answer them. After forming your small groups, review the following questions. From your discussion, create a list under these three headings:

- What do I know or think I know?
- What do I want or need to know?
- What have I learned?

Initially, you should be able answer the first two columns to some degree. As you work through the activities, you will be able to answer the third column. Keep a record in the third column of what you've learned as you work through the activities.

Discussion Questions:

1. What role will the super delegates play in deciding the Democratic nominee? What do you think might happen if the Democrats feel their nominee was selected by party insiders instead of the people?
2. Will the Democrats produce a "dream team" for President and Vice President between the two leading candidates? Explain your reasoning.
3. With the length and negativity of the Democratic campaign, do you feel the losing candidate's supporters will join with the winner in the general election against the Republican candidate?
4. Will McCain be able to create a strong coalition between the different party factions? What do you think will happen if he doesn't?
5. How will his choice for Vice President help bring the different Republican factions together?
6. How important, if at all, is it for McCain to distance himself from any negative perceptions of the Bush administration? Will he be able to do this and still maintain the support of the conservative base that supported George Bush in the past two elections?



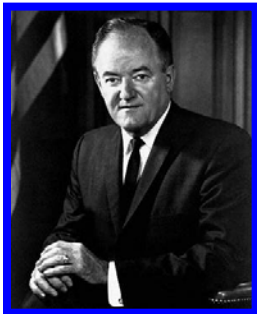
STUDENT HANDOUT #2 Primer on the National Campaign Process

The following activity will provide you with background on the presidential campaign process and the issues surrounding the national conventions.

1. Form small groups of three.
2. Review the Primer on the National Campaign Process Background Information.
3. Discuss the questions at the end of the primer with the members of your group.
4. Discuss your findings with the class.

Primer on the National Campaign Process Background Information

Primaries and Caucuses History: In the early 19th century, members of Congress met within their party to nominate their choice for President. As the West became more populated, members from western states demanded a greater voice in selecting presidential nominees. In 1831, the Anti-Masonic Party held a convention in Baltimore, Maryland, to select a presidential candidate that the entire party could agree on. Soon the Democratic and Republican parties held similar conventions. For the most part, those conventions were scenes of intrigue and were hardly transparent because big city and state political bosses wheeled control over the *delegates* and determined who was nominated for President.



1968 Dem.
Candidate, Hubert
Humphrey

It wasn't until the aftermath of the chaotic 1968 Democratic National Convention that both parties moved to using statewide *primaries* to select delegates for their national conventions who would, in turn, determine the nominee. (For more information on the 1968 Democratic

Convention and how it forced the Democratic Party to change how convention delegates

were selected go to Encarta online at

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761589795/Chicago_Convention_of_1968.html and the Democratic National Committee at <http://www.demconvention.com/history/>.)



1968 Rep. Candidate and
President, Richard Nixon

Primaries and Caucuses Today: *Presidential primaries* are statewide elections in which voters select candidates for the next general election to elect the President. Every state and all U.S. territories conduct *primary elections* in conjunction with regularly scheduled statewide elections. *Caucuses* serve a similar function, but instead of individual citizens casting secret ballots for their choice, groups of citizens meet in set locations where they discuss and debate their choice for President. Some primaries are “closed,” which means voters can vote only within their party; others are considered “open,” which means that voters can vote for either party’s candidate.



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For years, there has been some dissatisfaction with the primary and caucus systems because they seem to place undue weight on a few states with early primaries. Often times, either party's nominee was determined before other states could hold their primaries or caucuses. This year, the Democratic Party attempted to address this concern by laying out a schedule permitting several states to hold their primaries in January. This change created some controversy when two states, Florida and Michigan, moved their primaries earlier in the year. As of May 2008, the Democratic Party has threatened to not seat those states' *delegates* at the national convention. (See for background:

<http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/primaries/democraticprimaries/index.html> or [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/interactives/campaign08/primaries/.](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/interactives/campaign08/primaries/))

Goals of the National Convention: Generally, there are four major goals on nominating conventions:

- Nominate a candidate for President and Vice President to guarantee that their candidates' names appear on the ballots in all states.
- Adopt a national *party platform* to articulate the policies of the party.
- Govern the party by announcing policies and procedures to guide the party.
- Rally party members to present a united front for their candidate in the general election.

Super Delegates: The term *super delegates* pertain only to the Democratic Party. These individuals are not selected by the public during the *primaries* but are selected by the party officials according to their status as current or former party leaders or because they are elected officials. Under the revised system of delegate selection after the 1968 Convention, many party leaders were not able to attend the convention unless they pledged to a candidate. But many felt they had an obligation to remain neutral because of their influential position in the party. So the super delegate position was created to give elected officials and party leaders the option to withhold their support until the convention. It also provides for some party leadership during the convention.

The Republican Party does select additional delegates in addition to the ones who were selected in the primary and caucuses. The delegates are members of each state's Republican National Committee and the party chairs of each state and territory and they are seated automatically (and are sometimes referred to as "automatic delegates"). The delegates are officially uncommitted to any candidate (as opposed to the regularly elected delegates who are) but may publically endorse a candidate. Approximately 20–25 percent of the delegates at the Republican convention fall into this category.

The tag line "super delegates" seems to be exclusive to the Democratic Party, though the Democratic Party rules don't use that term. Their "superiority" comes from the fact that they are big heavyweights in the party—high-ranking party officials and state and nationally elected officials—and that in the Democratic Party they make up nearly 40 percent of the party's delegates.



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It seems that the main differences are that the Democratic Party includes elected officials in its automatic delegates where as the Republican Party keeps this position open only to state and national party officials, and that there are more of these uncommitted delegates in the Democratic Party.

Florida and Michigan: Traditionally, Iowa and New Hampshire hold the first *caucus* and *primary* in the country. The Iowa caucus is on January 3, and New Hampshire's primary is held on January 8. All the other states scheduled their primaries in the months following. But by Super Tuesday, the first Tuesday in February (so called because many states hold their primaries then), the nominees of both parties were usually decided. States that held their primaries after then usually had no effect on who would be the nominee; as a result, most candidates didn't campaign in those states until the general election.

This year, a number of states decided to move up the dates of their primaries to have a greater say in the process. Both parties set rules to prevent states from pre-empting Iowa's and New Hampshire's favored status of being first. However, Florida moved its primary to January 29th, and Michigan moved its primary date to January 15th, earlier than the national parties wanted. Both national parties retaliated. The Republicans stripped Michigan and Florida of half their *delegates* and the Democratic Party stripped all of them. This move meant that most or all delegates from either state would not be seated at the parties' national conventions. This action became further complicated for the Democrats because Barack Obama removed his name from the ballot in Michigan but Hillary Clinton didn't. Both candidates kept their names on the Florida ballot.

Now with the Democratic nomination race so close, the question arises as to what to do about those states' delegates? Clinton won the primaries in both states and now wants those delegates to be seated and counted at the National Convention. Because it was those two states' legislatures that changed the dates, many feel the voters shouldn't be penalized and their voice should be heard. The other side of the argument is that rules are rules and that no state should be able to get away with breaking them. As of yet, it hasn't been clearly determined how this matter will be resolved. All sides of the Democratic controversy feel the delegates from Florida and Michigan should be seated at the conventions but how they will be allocated among the two Democratic candidates has yet to be determined.

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain how the method for selecting nominees for President changed after the 1968 Democratic Convention? Explain whether you feel this change was for the better.
2. How has the primary and caucus system made for a more democratic method for choosing delegates to the national convention?
3. Why were some states dissatisfied with the primary schedule running from January to June? Why isn't that dissatisfaction apparent in this primary season at least for states of the Democratic Party who have yet to vote?



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4. Describe the four goals of the National Convention. Which do you think is most important and why?
5. What are super delegates and why was this position created?

From information in the news story “Super Delegates’ Role Thrust into Public Eye” discuss the following questions:

6. What is the dispute about super delegates and the role they are to play at the convention?
7. Do you feel the super delegates should reflect the will of the voters or remain independent and vote according to their best judgment? Explain your answer.
8. What might be the problem if a majority of the super delegates vote at the convention in a manner different from the elected state delegates and if their vote changes the outcome of the nomination?
9. How would you solve the issue of seating delegates from Florida and Michigan at the national convention?



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STUDENT HANDOUT #3 National Convention Activity

Delegate Group Instructions:

Your group will be creating convention materials for the upcoming National Nominating Convention of your party. All members of the committee are responsible for getting the tasks completed. To organize your committee, you should review the tasks in your group and should divide the work among members. However, it is important that all the tasks are completed, so you should frequently check with each other to see if anyone needs help on what they're doing.

TASK 1

Analyzing State and National Political Party Positions on Key Issues

1. Brainstorm with your group some of the key issues facing your state. These issues could be the state of the economy, education, jobs, national defense, war on terror, energy, immigration, civil rights, etc. List these issues on a piece of paper.
2. Go to your assigned political party's website for your state and look up the state party platform. On some states' websites, links are provided; on others, it might be a little harder to find. You can use any search engine and can type in the name of the state, the name of the party, and the word "platform." Example: Montana Democratic Party Platform. Depending on when your state's political party held its last statewide convention, you might find the 2008 or the 2006 party platform. If you have difficulty locating your state's political party platform, call their local office and ask for assistance.
3. Review the state party's platform to see what issues it presents and compare those to your brainstorm list of key issues. Identify the position of the state party on those issues and record them. In most cases, the platform presents broad statements of belief or outcomes desired. In some cases, they will describe the method or process to attain the outcomes. You can also refer to your county or city government websites for issues on a more local level to find issues that are of concern.
4. Next, go to the national party's website and look for a link to the issues. The national party platform will be written at the summer convention, but you can get an idea of the major issues concerning the national party from the "issues" links. You might also want to check on the 2004 national party platform for ideas. You can also check out www.VoteGopher.com for comparisons of the candidates on the issues.
5. Look to see what issues discussed at the national level are also discussed in your state. Make comparisons between the two and note similarities and differences. Also make a note of one or two items mentioned in your state that weren't part of the national party's top issues.
6. With all group members, discuss the areas that are and are not addressed by the national party and your state party. Develop policy statements that blend together the national and state positions on issues that are addressed and develop policy statements on state issues that are not included by the national party.
7. With these policy statements, you move on to the next tasks.



TASK 2

Comparing the Candidate to the Interests of Your State

Next, your group will look at the candidates to see how close their positions are to the national party and to your state party.



1. Visit the campaign website of the candidate you were assigned. Look at the candidate's stand on the issues and compare the positions with the issues you identified in *TASK 1*.
2. Make a note of where the candidate's position is similar and where it might be different. In most cases, the differences will be slight but you should look at what policies or procedures the candidate is calling for and should see how it agrees with your state's position.
3. Use the "Issues Check List" (p.20) of the issues included in this handout to check off and make notes on where your state, the national party and the candidate generally agree, disagree or perhaps both on the issues.
4. From this analysis, develop brief policy statements that summarize what your state's position is on the issues,



how the national party and the candidate align with your state and, if necessary, what else the national party or the candidate will need to do to better address the issues for the citizens of your state.

Use the policy statements to create bumper stickers, campaign buttons and banners out of construction paper or on the computer to bring to the convention. Include slogans, images or statements from the candidate that reflect the main points of the candidates' campaign on the issues. Be sure to include the name of your choice for Vice President.

Also create a large vertical banner with the name of your state that can be placed on a yardstick or large pole. These banners can be made on construction paper or on the computer. Museums or historical societies in your area might have examples they can share with you, or you might be able to locate collectors of campaign memorabilia. You can also check out Duke University's "America Votes" website at <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/americavotes/#othersites>.

TASK 3

Nominating a Vice Presidential Candidate

It is said that the job of the Vice President is one of the most unrewarding jobs in government. The first Vice President, John Adams, was quoted as saying, "My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his



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imagination conceived.” Twentieth-century social commentator Will Rogers once said, “The man with the best job in the country is the Vice President. All he has to do is get up every morning and say, ‘How is the President?’”

There is some truth in both of those statements, for the only constitutional duties prescribed for the Vice President is to preside over the Senate and be the tie-breaking vote if necessary and to fill the office of the President should he or she become incapacitated. This “fill-in” has happened eight times in our history. But many Vice Presidents have taken it upon themselves to play a greater role in the office during their tenure. Both Al Gore and Dick Cheney served as important advisors to their Presidents.

Another major function of the Vice President nominee is to help the presidential candidate win the general election. In considering the selection of a candidate for Vice President, the presidential nominee will look at the potential VP’s popularity in areas of the country where he or she doesn’t have strong support. The President candidate will also look at how the Vice President candidate “balances the ticket,” meaning provides a different political perspective to help increase the candidate’s chances and to help build a broad coalition of voters.

Your next task is to make your recommendation on who should be the vice presidential candidate:

1. Go to the Boston Globe website at http://www.boston.com/news/politics/gallery/032508_repub_veep/ for Republicans and http://www.boston.com/news/politics/gallery/0320_veep/ for Democrats.
2. Go through the possible vice presidential contenders for your assigned party and discuss the merits of each. Look at the costs and benefits of each.
3. Make a recommendation on who you believe would be the best running mate for your presidential candidate.
4. Create a small biography on the VP candidate with the following information:
 - Candidate’s name and picture
 - Home state
 - Education
 - Military record (if any)
 - Past professional and political experiences
 - Current occupation

Resources:

To further help you with this lesson activity and other research on the upcoming election, refer to any of these sites:

- 2008 Democratic National Convention, <http://www.demconvention.com> - The site has information on the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Denver.



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- 2008 Republican National Convention, <http://www.gopconvention.com/> - The site has information on the upcoming Republican National Convention in Minneapolis–St. Paul.
- Constitution Party, <http://www.constitution-party.net>.
- Democratic Party, <http://www.democrats.org>.
- Green Party, <http://www.gp.org/index.php>.
- Libertarian Party, <http://www.lp.org/>.
- Politics1.com, <http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm> - This is a solid, nonpartisan, online guide to American Politics. The site contains a directory of the major political parties, up-to-date information on the 2008 race, state and federal candidates, news links and more.
- Project Vote Smart, http://www.votesmart.org/election_president.php - This is a great website for election information for each state. The site contains information on party politics, candidates' voting records and public statements.
- Republican Party, <http://rnc.org>.
- Student Guide to Voting, <http://www.gocollege.com/students-guide-to-voting.html> - Though intended for college students and first time voters, this site provides good information on young voters, the voting process and the importance of voting and issues facing young voters.
- Vote 2008 NewsHour Online, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2008/>—NewsHour's website follows the primary and the general election with news articles from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* including audio/video links and transcripts. The site also contains an interactive election map, information on the candidates, reporters' blogs and links to lesson plans.

Presentations:

Once all groups have finished their tasks, each should present its materials to the class. If possible, create any handouts or visual aids on your assessment of the candidate to share with the other state delegations. On the day of the presentation, sit with your small groups and have the banner of the state you represent prominently near you. Also display the posters of your presidential and vice presidential candidate, as well as any other materials, including the bumper stickers and campaign buttons, you developed.



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Elect a spokesperson from your group to introduce your state and the other individuals who will speak. Each member of the group should present something. Feel free to cheer and applaud at appropriate times when your state, the candidate or the individuals in your group are mentioned. When your turn comes, present the following information in order:

- **Main Spokesperson:** Introduce yourself, and announce the name of your state. Then introduce in order the names and topics of the following speakers.
- **Committee Member #1:** Summarize your state's main issues, and describe how they align with the national party. Also mention other issues that your state would like to have addressed that were not mentioned in the national party's platform or major issue areas.
- **Committee Member #2:** Announce the name of the presidential candidate. State how this candidate's position on the issues best aligns with the issues in your state. Also mention other issues that your state would like the candidate to address when he or she becomes President.
- **Committee Member #3:** Announce your state's choice for vice presidential candidate. Provide a brief background on the nominee and that person's experiences; then state why your delegation feels this person is the best nominee for Vice President.



STUDENT HANDOUT #4 Issues Check List

In *TASK 2*, you are to identify how the national party and the candidate best align to the issues that concern your state. List the major issues of concern in your state in the left-hand column. Then place a check mark in the small box as to whether the national party or the candidate or both hold similar concerns on the issues, along with a brief note on their position. In the “Comments” section, list areas where you see strengths or weaknesses in the way either the national party or the candidate will address the issues you’ve identified.

<i>Issue from Your State</i>	<i>National Party</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Comments</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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Rubric:

<i>Category</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
Cooperative Learning	You consistently and actively helped your team achieve its goals by communicating well with other team members, by encouraging the team to work together and by willingly accepting and completing all of the necessary work of your role.	You usually helped your team achieve its goals by communicating with team members, by encouraging your team to work together and by accepting and completing most of the necessary work of your role.	You sometimes helped your team achieve its goals, communicated with team members, encouraged team members to work together and accepted and completed some of the necessary work of your role.	You did very little to help your team achieve its goals. You communicated with team members and encouraged team members work together infrequently and accepted and completed only a small portion of the necessary work of your role.
Campaign Materials	Your campaign material demonstrates a thorough, well-developed presentation that addresses all the requirements. Your campaign material is well organized and contains few, if any, errors in grammar or spelling.	Your campaign material demonstrates a general, adequately developed presentation that addresses most of the requirements. Your campaign material is organized and contains a few errors in grammar or spelling.	Your campaign material demonstrates a limited, partially developed presentation that addresses some of the requirements. Your campaign material is somewhat organized but contains several errors in grammar or spelling.	Your campaign material demonstrates a minimal, undeveloped presentation that addresses few of the requirements. Your campaign material is disorganized and contains many errors in grammar or spelling.



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<p>Delegate Committee Presentation</p>	<p>Your presentation demonstrates a thorough, well-developed understanding of the relationship between your state's issues and those of the national party and the candidate. You use ample details and examples to clearly support your statements. Your presentation is well organized.</p>	<p>Your presentation demonstrates a general, adequately developed understanding of the relationship between your state's issues and those of the national party and the candidate. You use some details and examples to support your statements. Your presentation is organized with only a few errors.</p>	<p>Your presentation demonstrates a limited, partially developed understanding of the relationship between your state's issues and those of the national party and the candidate. You use a few details and examples to support your statements but more is needed. Your presentation is somewhat organized but contains several errors.</p>	<p>Your presentation demonstrates a minimal, undeveloped understanding of the relationship between your state's issues and those of the national party and the candidate. You used few, if any, details and examples to support your statements. Your presentation is disorganized and contains a many errors.</p>
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“Conventions 2008” Language Arts Curriculum

This lesson has been designed to support *the.News* video “Conventions 2008.” The video can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/thevote/story.php?id=3054&package_id=634.

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Content Areas: Language Arts/Media Literacy

Key Concept: Students will analyze how politicians use language to connect with voters and to achieve goals. They will also develop their own platform and practice persuasive writing.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Anaphora**
- **Brokered convention**
- **Parallelism**
- **Platform**
- **Rhetoric**

Background:

Presidential nominating conventions in the modern United States are, by and large, almost entirely ceremonial. So why do they remain so important? Because a convention may be the most important ceremony a candidate attends all year. With an arena full of ardent supporters and with millions nationwide watching at home, a presidential candidate accepting the nomination of his or her party has a captive audience to “sell” himself or herself without debate or opposition. Like a high school pep rally,



conventions stir up excitement and feelings of pride—just the kind of optimism people want from newly elected leaders.



However, 2008 may offer more than just political cheerleading. Beyond the relatively high public interest in this year’s race, two conditions make this election cycle unique: (a) it’s the first time in 80 years that no incumbent president or vice president is seeking the nomination of his party and (b) the Democratic Party, as of April 28, 2008, still has not selected a nominee for the election (the Republicans have a likely candidate in John



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McCain). Although Democratic leadership hopes to resolve the bitter, competitive fight between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton by mid-summer, there remains the possibility that the fight for the nomination will culminate at the Denver convention. For the first time in more than a half century, delegates attending the convention may be required to cast multiple rounds of votes to determine the nominee—this is called a *brokered convention*.

The 2008 election has so far been notable for several key, yet divergent, themes: experience vs. change, hope vs. realism and so on. The candidates, too, have defined themselves by their differences. Democratic hopeful Barack Obama is widely regarded for his inspirational *rhetorical* skills. Hillary Clinton has cast herself as a fighter who has the toughness and experience to handle rough times. Republican John McCain has pushed “straight talk”—an ideal of honest, independent governance that will seek compromise and balance among the parties.

With such divergent messages and messengers—and with America’s growing political and economic unease—words matter more than ever in the 2008 presidential race. This language arts lesson plan asks students to analyze how political language is sculpted on the basis of the needs and concerns of an audience—even one as rapt as convention-goers. It also provides for the students practice in crafting their own platform and recognizing the belief systems of others.

Materials:

- Computer with a browser access to the Internet
- Segment of *the.News* titled *the.Vote*
- “The Convention: Editorial Cartoons” Worksheet (p.30)
- Student handout #1: “Analyzing Political Language: The Rhetorical Triangle” (p.31)
- Student handout #2: “Excerpt from John McCain’s Remarks to the 2004 Republican National Convention” (p.32)
- Student handout #3: “Excerpt from Barack Obama’s ‘The Audacity of Hope’” (p.33)
- Student handout #4: “Excerpt from Senator Hillary Clinton’s Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention” (p.35)
- Pens and highlighters
- Overhead projector (optional)
- Scratch paper

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 9—Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Understands a variety of messages conveyed by visual media (e.g. main concept, details, themes or lessons or viewpoints).

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Uses a range of strategies to interpret visual media (e.g. draws conclusions, makes generalizations, synthesizes materials viewed, refers to images or information in visual media to support point of view or deconstructs media to determine the main idea).

Procedure:



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(Time frame: 2–3 class periods)

Lesson 1:

1. Explain to students that they'll be watching and discussing a short video about the 2008 presidential election, specifically the nominating conventions held by the Democratic and Republican parties. Briefly assess their prior knowledge by asking students to explain what they think occurs at a convention and what purpose(s) a convention serves. As the teacher, you may want to place some of the students' ideas on the board for future reference.

2. Pass out copies, or place on an overhead projector the "Editorial Cartoon" (p.30) handout. Then give students 3–5 minutes to respond to the following two questions:

- What ideas or perspectives do the three editorial cartoons share?
- What do these cartoons suggest about the general public's involvement in political conventions?

3. When a few minutes have passed, have students pair up with a classmate sitting next to or nearby and share their responses. Have each group designate a note-taker. Additionally, have the students address an additional question: *Why do you think these cartoons express negative views of the conventions?* Bring the class together and discuss the students' responses, returning—when relevant—to a discussion of the initial question about what actually occurs at a convention. This approach will help students understand the criticism expressed in the cartoons. Encourage

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 1 - Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Uses a variety of prewriting strategies (e.g., makes outlines, uses published pieces as writing models, constructs critical standards, brainstorms or builds background knowledge).
- Uses content, style and structure (e.g. formal or informal language, genre or organization) appropriate for specific audiences (e.g. public or private) and purposes (e.g. to entertain, to influence or to inform).
- Writes persuasive compositions (e.g. engages the reader by establishing a context, creating a persona and otherwise developing reader interest; develops a controlling idea that conveys a judgment; creates and organizes a structure appropriate to the needs and interests of a specific audience; arranges details, reasons, examples, anecdotes or a combination of these in a persuasive manner; excludes information and arguments that are irrelevant; anticipates and addresses reader concerns and counter arguments; or supports arguments with detailed evidence, citing sources of information as appropriate).

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Uses a variety of prewriting strategies (e.g. develops a focus, plans a sequence of ideas, uses structured overviews, uses speed writing or creates diagrams).
- Uses strategies to adapt writing for different purposes (e.g. to explain, inform, analyze, entertain, reflect or persuade).
- Writes persuasive compositions that address problems/solutions or causes/effects (e.g. articulates a position through a thesis statement; anticipates and addresses counter arguments; backs up assertions using specific rhetorical devices [appeals to logic, appeals to emotion or uses personal anecdotes]; or develops arguments using a variety of methods such as examples and details, commonly accepted beliefs, expert opinion, cause-and-effect reasoning or comparison-contrast reasoning).



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students who remember the 2004 or 2008 conventions to convey their personal memories or opinions of those events.

4. Transition to the video by asking this question: *Do you think this year's Democratic and Republican conventions were or will be any different?* You can take a poll of students or call on a few volunteers to share their thoughts.
5. Show *"the.Vote."* (You may also refer to the transcript.)
6. When the video is completed, check student comprehension by asking what a platform is. Draw a T-Chart on the board with Democrats in the left column and Republicans in the right. Then ask this question: *What would you expect to be the key elements of each party's platform this year?*
7. Point out the other important component of a convention: the political addresses by major figures of the political party. (If students have not done so already, note the likely connection between those speeches and the lack of interest by viewers in the editorial cartoons. See pages 32-35 for examples). Discuss what purpose the speeches serve. Pass out the "Analyzing Political Language" (p.31) handout and review the key components and questions of the document.

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 5 - Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Establishes and adjusts purposes for reading (e.g. to understand, interpret, enjoy, solve problems, predict outcomes, answer a specific question, form an opinion, skim for facts as well as to discover models for own writing).
- Understands specific devices an author uses to accomplish his or her purpose (e.g. persuasive techniques, style, word choice or language structure).
- After reading, reflects on what has been learned and formulates ideas, opinions and personal responses to texts.

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Understands writing techniques used to influence the reader and to accomplish an author's purpose (e.g. organizational patterns, figures of speech, tone, literary and technical language, formal and informal language or narrative perspective).
- Understands the philosophical assumptions and basic beliefs underlying an author's work (e.g. point of view, attitude and values conveyed by specific language; or clarity and consistency of political assumptions).

8. Pass out the handout and read aloud the excerpt from John McCain's 2004 Republican National Convention speech. Divide the class into groups and assign each group to focus specifically on one component: the message, the audience or the author. Have the students prepare answers to the questions on the "Analyzing Political Language" (p.31) handout in response to McCain's speech. Then have them identify examples of language in the text of the excerpt that supports their responses.



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9. Discuss answers as a class, with students in each group presenting their answers. Be sure to ask students to indicate where in the excerpt they located their answers.
10. Pass out the homework assignment sheet, giving half of the class the Barack Obama excerpt and the other half the Clinton excerpt. Address any questions students may have about the assignment.

Lesson 2:

On the board, place the following for students to see as they walk into the classroom:

“Suppose you are a presidential candidate who just received his or her party’s nomination at its convention. Your acceptance speech is tonight. Think about the state of America in 2008. What should be the purpose of the speech? Whom should your speech address? How? On what themes or values would you focus?”

Have students spend 3–5 minutes responding to this situation.

1. Form groups of four, and have the groups each discuss their answers; each group should nominate a reporter to share with the class how members responded to the prompt. Discuss the similarities and differences in students’ approaches.
2. With the students remaining in groups, have them share their homework responses and discuss the Obama and Clinton speeches. To extend the discussion, have the students discuss how their responses

correlate to the components of the “Analyzing Political Language” (p.31) handout. Monitor group discussions.

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 7 - Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Uses a variety of criteria to evaluate the clarity and accuracy of information (e.g. author’s bias, use of persuasive strategies, consistency, clarity of purpose, effectiveness of organizational pattern, logic of arguments, reasoning, expertise of author, propaganda techniques, authenticity, appeal to friendly or hostile audience or faulty modes of persuasion).

3. Explain to students that they will now write their own nomination speeches. Tell students to take out a sheet of paper; they should invent a name for their party and should place the name of the party at the top of their scratch paper. Next, give students several minutes to identify and develop the ideals that define their *platform*. You may want to provide them with common issues—such as the economy, education, the environment, foreign policy—to think about. Or you can allow them time to search on the Internet at <http://www.votegopher.com> and have them review the candidates’ position to help formulate their own. As they take notes, remind them to think of potential voters. They



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should ask themselves this question: *To what themes, value, or principles will your party appeal?*

4. Allow each student to pair up with a classmate to receive feedback on the platform and to discuss ideas for the speech.
5. Assign students to compose a one-page speech in which each student accepts his or her party's nomination and defines the goals and values of the party.

Extension Activities:

Extension Activity 1:

The teacher can adjust the speech assignment to fit individual curricular goals and instructional time. For example, the assignment can be completed overnight as homework or it can be developed over multiple classroom sessions as a more formal writing assessment, with mini-lessons targeting specific writing skills (see *Extension Activity 3* for an example).

Students can also be asked to deliver their speeches and can be assessed for their speaking skills.

Extension Activity 2:

This lesson can be extended into a mini-unit on persuasion or media literacy by turning the platform response into a group project. Form groups of four and assign students to develop their own party. Differentiate roles on the basis of individual needs and abilities: one student can develop the **platform**; one can complete a poster, logo or other visual element; one can write a convention speech; and one can deliver the speech to the class. Have students present their platforms and give their nomination speeches to the class. When each is finished, have classmates identify elements of **rhetoric** in the speech and evaluate their colleague's efficacy.

Extension Activity 3:

A common stylistic technique used in both the McCain and Obama speeches—and by nearly all effective speakers—is **parallelism**. To encourage students to incorporate parallel structures into their **platform** speeches, provide examples of parallelism from both excerpts. Then ask students to discuss how and why the sentences are effective in persuading their audiences. Here are two examples (parallel structure emphasized):

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 10 - Understands the characteristics and components of the media

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Understands the ways in which image-makers carefully construct meaning (e.g. idea and word choice by authors, images created by photographers, television programs created by groups of people or photos or cutlines chosen in newspapers).

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Understands that media messages have economic, political, social and aesthetic purposes (e.g. to make money, to gain power or authority over others, to present ideas about how people should think or behave or to experiment with different kinds of symbolic forms or ideas).



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McCain: “*We were not poor or rich. We were not Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative. We were not two countries. We were Americans.*”

Obama: “*There is not a liberal America and a conservative America — there is the United States of America.*”

Both of these examples use the repetition of phrases at the start of a sentence—called *anaphora*—to emphasize or draw comparisons. Students should imitate

the sentence structures of the models to create parallel sentences for their own platform speeches. Have a few volunteers place their sentences on the board and discuss with students what they can do to include effective parallel structures in their writing.



Resources:

- AmericanRhetoric.com, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm> (contains speeches by leading Democratic and Republican figures)
- PBS.org - 2000 Convention, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/election2000/gopconvention/>
- PBS.org - 2000 Convention Speeches, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/election2000/gopconvention/speeches.html>
- PBS.org - 2000 Democratic Convention Speeches, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/election2000/demconvention/speeches.html>
- PBS.org - 2004 Democratic Convention, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2004/demconvention/index.html>
- NY Times - Politics, <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/index.html>
- University of California, Santa Barbara - American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/nomination.php>
- VoteGopher.com, <http://www.votegopher.com> (provides information on candidates' platforms)

Activity Designer:

Brad Cawn,

Brad Cawn is a curriculum and assessment specialist based in Chicago.



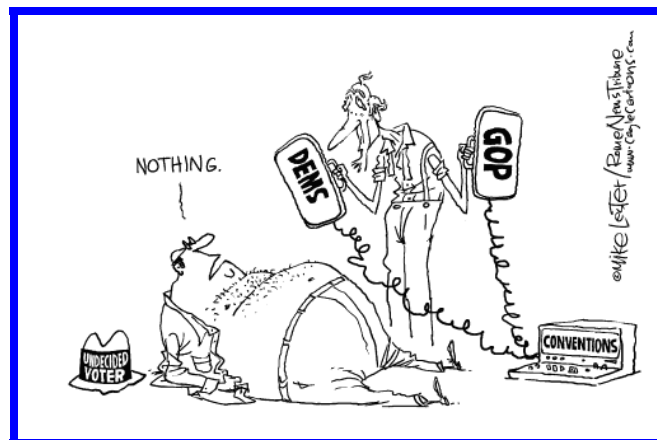
The Convention: Editorial Cartoons



Jeff Parker, www.CaglePost.com



Jeff Parker, www.CaglePost.com



Mike Lester, www.CaglePost.com



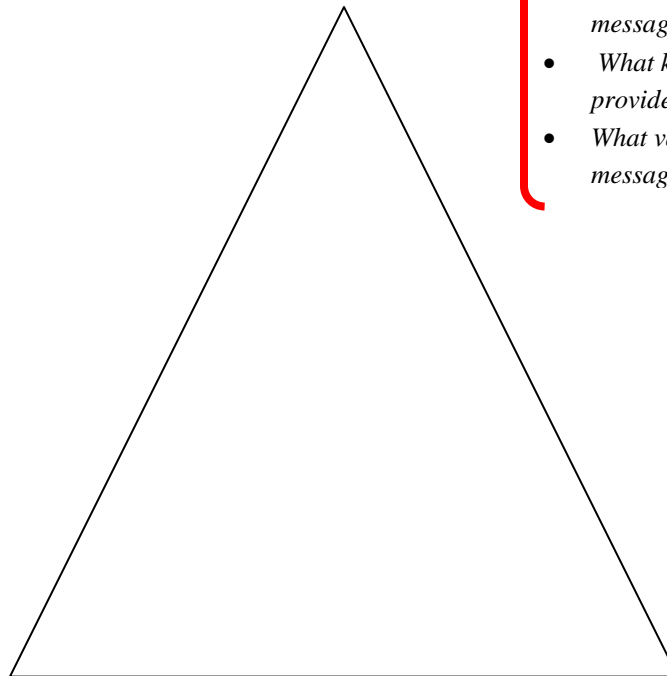
STUDENT HANDOUT #1

Analyzing Political Language: The Rhetorical Triangle

When discussing how one person persuades another, we look to see how three elements interact: the author, the audience and the message transmitted from author to audience. This interconnection is commonly illustrated as a triangle to suggest how each “point” affects the shape of the other two components.

The Message

- *What is the purpose of the message? What is its argument?*
- *What kinds of information are provided? Why?*
- *What values and ideas does the message invoke?*



The Author

- *What impression does he or she want to make?*
- *What does he or she do to appear credible and trustworthy?*
- *What common bond does he or she establish with the audience?*

The Audience

- *What characterizes or defines the audience?*
- *What does the audience value?*
- *What emotions or feelings is the message trying to invoke in the audience?*



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STUDENT HANDOUT #2

Excerpt from John McCain's Remarks to the 2004 Republican National Convention

(Note: John McCain was a four-term Senator from Arizona when he gave this speech.)

Whether we wished it or not, we have come to the test of our generation, to our rendezvous with destiny. And much is expected of us. We are engaged in a hard struggle against a cruel and determined adversary. Our enemies have made clear the danger they pose to our security and the very essence of our culture—liberty.



You remember how we felt when the serenity of a bright September morning was destroyed by a savage atrocity so hostile to all human virtue we could scarcely imagine any human being capable of it. We were united—first in sorrow and anger, then in recognition; we were attacked not for a wrong we had done, but for who we are—a nation united in a kinship of ideals, committed to the notion that the people are sovereign, not governments; not armies; not a pitiless theocracy; not kings, mullahs, or tyrants; but the people.

In that moment—in that moment, we were not different races. We were not poor or rich. We were not Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative. We were not two countries. We were Americans. All of us, despite the differences that enliven our politics, are united in the one big idea that freedom is our birthright, and its defense is always our first responsibility. All other responsibilities come second. We must, whatever our disagreements, stick together in this great challenge of our time.

We are Americans first, Americans last, and Americans always.

Let us—let us argue—let us argue our differences. But remember we are not enemies, but comrades in a war against a real enemy, and take courage from the knowledge that our military superiority is matched only by the superiority of our ideals, and our unconquerable love for them. We fight for love of freedom and justice, a love that is invincible. Keep that faith. Keep your courage. Stick together. Stay strong. Do not yield. Do not flinch. Stand up. Stand up with our President and fight.

We're Americans.



STUDENT HANDOUT #3

Name _____

Date _____

Closely read the following excerpt from a convention speech. Select an aspect of the speech that was meaningful, powerful, or persuasive to you. This element could be the use of certain language, a theme, or an idea—and write a one-page response explaining your reaction. In your response, connect the speech to the rhetorical triangle: what emotions did the speech stir? How was trust built?

Excerpts from Barack Obama’s “The Audacity of Hope”

(Note: When Obama gave this speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, he was a state senator in Illinois; he would be elected to the United States Senate in the fall of that year.)



Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our Nation—not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy.... The true genius of America [is] a faith—a faith in simple dreams, an insistence on small miracles; that we can tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm; that we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden

knock on the door; that we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe; that we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution; and that our votes will be counted—at least most of the time.

This year, in this election, we are called to reaffirm our values and our commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we’re measuring up to the legacy of our forbearers and the promise of future generations.

People don’t expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a slight change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all. They know we can do better. And they want that choice.

...Now even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us—the spin masters, the negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of “anything goes.” Well, I say to them tonight, there is not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there’s the United States of America. In the end, that’s what this election is about. Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or do we participate in a politics of hope?



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I'm not talking about blind optimism here—the almost willful ignorance that thinks unemployment will go away if we just don't think about it, or the health care crisis will solve itself if we just ignore it. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about something more substantial. Hope—hope in the face of difficulty. Hope in the face of uncertainty. The audacity of hope! A belief in things not seen. A belief that there are better days ahead.

America! Tonight, if you feel the same energy that I do, if you feel the same urgency that I do, if you feel the same passion that I do, if you feel the same hopefulness that I do—if we do what we must do, then I have no doubt that all across the country, from Florida to Oregon, from Washington to Maine, the people will rise up in November, and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come.”



STUDENT HANDOUT #4

Name _____

Date _____

Closely read the following excerpt from a convention speech. Select an aspect of the speech that was meaningful, powerful, or persuasive to you. This element could be the use of certain language, a theme, or an idea—and write a one-page response explaining your reaction. In your response, connect the speech to the rhetorical triangle: what emotions did the speech stir? How was trust built?

Excerpts from Senator Hillary Clinton’s Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention

(Note: When Senator Clinton gave this speech, she was completing her first term as a United States Senator from New York.)

We meet at a moment of great peril, but also of great promise for the country we love. Together we can, once again, widen the circle of opportunity for all Americans. We can, once again, transcend our differences and divisions. We can, once again, give our children a safer and more secure future.



That is the promise of America.

... You know, we’ve been through our share of challenges as Americans, from a Civil War, Great Depression, World Wars, and so much more. But being a Senator from New York, I saw firsthand, as all of my friends and colleagues did, the devastation of September the 11th. I visited Ground Zero the day after we were attacked. And I felt like I was standing at the gates of hell. I hope no American ever has to witness a horrible sight like that ever again. And yet, that tragedy both changed and challenged us. I know it did for me. And every day now as a mother, as a Senator, as an American, I worry about whether we are acting as wisely as we can to protect our country and our people.

... We need to take care of our men and women in uniform who risk their lives and, for too many, lost their lives in service to our country. These brave Americans deserve better. We need to increase our troop strength. We need to raise their pay. We need to provide our veterans, our National Guard and Reserve with the benefits they are entitled to for the service and duty they perform for our nation.”

... So let’s join together not just those of us in this great hall tonight, but throughout our nation, and do everything we possibly can to convince our fellow Americans to look to the future, to look deep inside themselves. They know what is best for our children. And if we just have the courage to act on our conviction, we will by an overwhelming majority send [our candidates] to do their duty for us in the White House starting next year.