

Cobblestone™

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

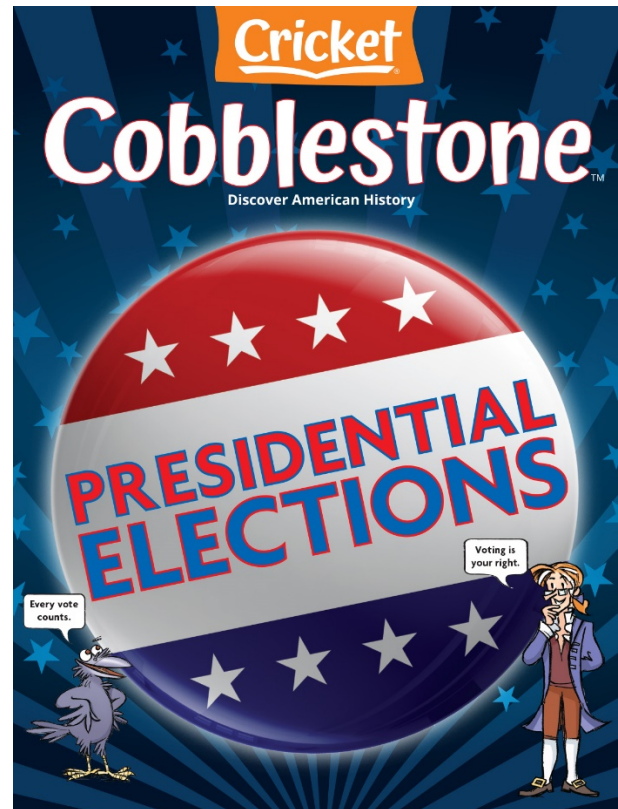
In this issue, students explore presidential elections in the United States of America. Students learn about the campaign process and the role of the Electoral College in the election of the president.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

How are American presidents elected?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a non-fiction article.
- Students will learn about presidential elections.
- Students will explain likely causes and effects of events and developments.
- Students will explain how a democracy depends on people's responsible participation.
- Students will explain why groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.
- Students will conduct research.
- Students will participate in debate.
- Students will give a presentation.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core Social Studies skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

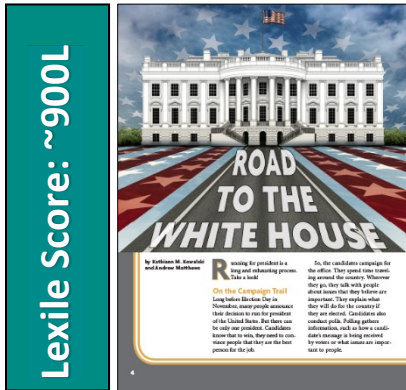
- **Road to the White House**
Expository Nonfiction, ~900L
- **Why the Electoral College**
Expository Nonfiction, ~1100L
- **Election Controversy**
Expository Nonfiction, ~700L

Cobblestone® Teacher Guide: October 2020

Road to the Whitehouse

pp. 4–8, Expository Nonfiction

What does it take to become president of the United States? Explore how candidates work to gather support and then get formally selected by their political party as a candidate.



RESOURCES

- **Cause and Effect**

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a non-fiction article.
- Students will learn about presidential elections.
- Students will explain likely causes and effects of events and developments.
- Students will conduct research.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **campaign (p. 4)** an organized effort to achieve a goal, especially relating to the goal of getting elected to political office
- **primary (p. 5)** an election early in the campaign process where states award delegates who will vote for a candidate at the party's national convention
- **national convention (p. 5)** a meeting of a major political party held to formally select a candidate for the presidency

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How are American presidents elected?

Have students recall what they know about the steps involved in becoming president of the United States. Ask them what aspects of running for president they feel might be challenging, or even, perhaps, fun.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Write the following sentences on the board. Then, ask students to decide which words from the vocabulary list should be used to complete the sentence.

- When the former Vice President decided to _____, he started organizing a team to help him.
- The outcome of voting in a _____ or caucus determines how many delegates each candidate will receive at each parties' _____.

READ & DISCUSS

Read the article with a partner, and then use these prompts for discussion:

- What do candidates attempt to do while on the campaign trail?
- What is the connection between a primary or caucus and a national convention?
- What role does the Electoral College play in electing a president?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Explain Causes/Effects

INSTRUCT: Explain that article mentions several cause-effect relationships. Inform students that they will need to re-read the article with a partner to find these cause-effect relationships.

ASSESS: Instruct students to use the graphic organizer to record information about different steps in the presidential election process mentioned in the article, including the causes (i.e., reasons for) and effects of each step. When students have finished their work, have them share with the class to ensure proper understanding of these specific cause-effect relationships.

EXTEND

English Language Arts Have students work in groups use print and digital sources to learn about presidential elections before 1804. Instruct them to identify a major difference between those presidential elections and the ones held in 1804 and after. Last, hold a class discussion where groups discuss the significance of their findings.

Name _____

Cause and Effect

One event directly leads to another; this is the simplest version of the “cause-and-effect” relationship. In the United States, presidential elections work in a similar way. Starting with the decision to campaign, record your ideas about how candidates for the presidency start on their journey to the White House. Then, fill in the rest of the chart below with details about the steps involved in being formally elected as president.

Campaign	The candidate decides to run for president.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hits the campaign trail, working to convince voters about their qualifications.• Talks to potential voters about issues that are important to them.• Conducts polls to discover how people feel about certain issues.• Builds a staff of political recruits.• Places advertisements to reach large audiences.	

SUMMARIZE

In one to two sentences, summarize how individuals are elected as president in the United States?

Why the Electoral College?

pp. 9-11, Expository Nonfiction

Discover how we came to use the system known as the Electoral College, rather than the popular vote, to elect the President of the United States.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a nonfiction article.
- Students will learn about presidential elections.
- Students will explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation.
- Students will participate in debate.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **Electoral College (p. 8)** a body of people representing the states of the United States, that formally casts votes for the election of the president
- **popular vote (p. 9)** the total number of votes received by each candidate in a presidential election

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How are American presidents elected?

Ask students how they would conduct a vote to decide who would serve as the leader of the classroom. Most likely, students will suggest electing the person who wins the majority of the vote. Then, suggest that the class if first divided into different sized groups (i.e., states) and that each group has one individual elector per three students. Ask students how they feel about the differences between the methods.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then, arrange students in small groups and have them practice using both words in a single sentence. Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

Read the article with a partner, and then use these prompts for discussion:

- What were the main proposals at the Constitutional Convention for how to choose a president?
- Why did the Founding Fathers feel was the risk with electing the president by a popular vote?
- What did the Founding Fathers think the benefits were of having an Electoral College?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Explain Participation

INSTRUCT: Explain that the idea of a representative democracy, which the United States government is based on, requires participation by various groups of people. Further explain that key participants in presidential elections include individual voters, state-level voters, and presidential electors (that are part of the Electoral College).

ASSESS: Arrange students in pairs. Have each pair work together to find how each of the three groups mentioned – individual voters, state-level voters, and electors – are involved in the system known as the Electoral College. Last, invite students to discuss why participation by all three groups is necessary for our democracy to work well.

EXTEND

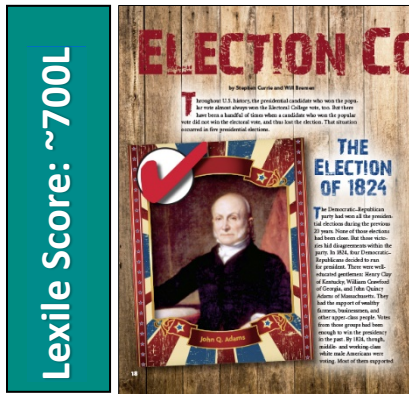
Social Studies The article discusses key pros and cons of several proposed and rejected methods of electing the president, as well as the accepted method of utilizing the Electoral College. Have students re-read the article to identify details about each method. Then, invite students to debate whether the system of using the Electoral College should be modified in any way.

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Election Controversy

pp. 18–23, Expository Nonfiction

Presidential elections in the United States can be controversial. Explore five different presidential elections where the outcome divided Americans.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a non-fiction article.
- Students will learn about how technological advances impact agriculture.
- Students will explain why groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.
- Students will give a presentation.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **popular vote (p. 18)** the total number of votes received by each candidate in a presidential election
- **electoral votes (p. 19)** the votes cast by individuals serving on the Electoral College
- **voter fraud (p. 23)** a condition where votes were gathered, submitted, or counted in an illegal way

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How are American presidents elected?

Ask students to think about what makes something controversial. Explain that controversies typically arise when two or more groups have differing opinions (and evidence to support their claims) on what has occurred. Ask them to hypothesize how a presidential election might become controversial.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Together, review the vocabulary words and read them aloud. Then, ask students to make predictions about the topic of the text using the vocabulary words. If necessary, help students guess the topic by revealing the title of the article.

READ & DISCUSS

Read the article with a partner, and then use these prompts for discussion:

- How were each of the elections discussed in the article similar?
- How has voter fraud or allegations of it in presidential elections led to controversy?
- How have controversial elections been impacted by legal decisions issued by courts?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Explain Perspectives

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that certain events happen in history that people don't agree on. Clarify that such events become controversial because different groups have different perspectives about their causes, effects, and significance.

ASSESS: Arrange students in pairs and assign them one of the five elections discussed in the article. Have each pair work together to identify two different perspectives about that election. Last, have students share their findings with the rest of the class in a class discussion.

EXTEND

Social Studies The article discusses different presidential elections in the United States where there was controversy over the outcome. Divide students into five groups and assign each group of the elections. Then, instruct them to come up with a fair way that could've resolved the controversy. Then, have them orally present their suggestions to the class.