

Teacher's Guide for ODYSSEY

October 2012: Who Will Be the Next President?

*Teacher Guide prepared by: Nancy I. Colamussi, Elementary Education, B.S., M.A.
Rocky Point School District, Long Island, New York*

Teacher's Note:

This guide contains project ideas, short answer, extended response, fill-in, and true/false with correction. The variation is designed to have the students think critically, as well as to test their comprehension. An answer key to the short answer sections can be found at the end of the guide.

Extended Response: Comprehension & Critical Thinking

The questions below can be used as written, simply answered in complete sentences or easily transformed into longer essay (ELA) style questions, or even research topics. In any case, have the students support their answers with details from the text or use critical thinking skills to create a thorough and interesting answer. The questions, essays and projects have been aligned with the **Common Core Standards**. Consider the level of your students when deciding how to use the questions.

"Game Theory and the Electoral College" p. 10-14

1. What is that process that follows after you officially cast your vote in an election?
2. How does our country of the US select senators and representatives?
3. How do the states of Nebraska and Maine differ from other states regarding the 'popular vote'?
4. What did the Founding Fathers consider to be the major obstacles to holding a successful election?
5. What model did the Founding Fathers ultimately turn to establish the fairest system?
6. Explain 'game theory'.
7. How has the assumption of why we need the Electoral College changed?
8. How is it possible for a presidential candidate to win the popular vote and lose the Electoral College vote?

Essay: *Read the Pros and Cons of the Electoral College on page 14. Decide what position you take on the debate whether or not to keep the Electoral College. Support your decision with facts from the article and other supportive details.*

"You are in Charge of Voting for Election 2012!" p. 15-17

1. What are the two golden rules for designing voting devices?
2. How do voting devices protect the vote?
3. How do voting devices protect the voter?
4. What are the pros and cons of voting lever machines?
5. How do voters mark their vote using punch cards? What are the best and worst characteristics of this system?
6. Explain how optical scanners are used in some voting systems.

7. What are the benefits of using touch screens to vote? What is the downside?
8. What is the greatest advantage of internet voting? What could be the most damaging element of voting by internet?

"Poll-itionally Correct?" p. 18-21

Read the article in its entirety and then fill in the blanks. Refer back to the text if necessary.

1. A _____ is one in which everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected.
2. Approximately _____ percent of the nation currently only use a cell phone, and do not have private landlines.
3. After collecting data, poll organizations compare their sample with population information from the _____ and other sources.
4. The margin of _____ is the amount by which actual values might be under or over a survey's results.
5. A _____ victory is when a candidate beats his or her opponent by a big margin.
6. A _____ state is one that could go either democratic or republican in a presidential election.
7. A _____ group is an interactive group of people whose members are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward an idea, candidate, product etc. for qualitative research purposes.
8. Reliable survey organizations try to ask _____ questions that don't suggest specific answers.

"Tweet, Post, Share!" p. 23-25

1. Even though you may not be old enough to vote, how do your words and opinions have the power to influence politics in a way that was not previous in other generations?
2. Explain the term 'viral reach'. Write a few sentences outlining how you personally have the power of viral reach.
3. How did our current president, Barack Obama, use the power of online organizing to help him win the election?
4. How are people making more of a personal investment and taking more of a personal interest in today's government?
5. Why are we seeing a gradual reversal of the top-down hierarchy and what exactly does that mean in our society?
6. Explain the term "Arab Spring".

"Baboon for President!" p. 26-31

1. What are some of the perks of being the alpha male in the baboon society?
2. How are female baboons ranked?
3. What evidence proves that physical power and life experience are both important when leading a group?
4. Explain the collective decision-making process of bees.
5. What role does the queen bee play in the colony?
6. How does it happen that the bee colony gets a new queen?
7. How do worker bee larvae and queen bee larvae ultimately differ?
8. What does the old queen do when her daughter takes over?
9. Which elephant is the leader of the family?
10. How do elephants lead?
11. What is the main role of the elephant matriarch?
12. Why is 'group think' so beneficial?

Essay: *Although there are undisputable benefits to being the leader, it is also risky being at the top. Write an essay explaining how this is true of both the animal and human populations of the world. Use details to support your answer.*

"The Human Hive" p. 34-37

1. Explain the following statement: "The cost of not doing things together can be very high."
2. Define the term "aggregate".
3. How do army ants work together to perform tasks more efficiently and avoid predation?
4. Provide an example that demonstrates that collective thinking may be in use in your school hallways.
5. How do individual decisions have consequences for the whole group?
6. How does making decisions through consensus give an advantage to group living?
7. Do you believe that in the appropriate circumstances, human groups might achieve greater productivity from less individual leadership and more groupthink? Why or why not? Support your answer.

"The Bicentennial of Governor Gerry's Monster" p. 38-41

Mark the following statements TRUE or FALSE. Provide the correct answer if false.

- _____ 1. The map of Massachusetts Governor Gerry's voting district was purposely contorted to give the governor's political party an advantage in an upcoming election.
- _____ 2. "Salamander" was the name invented for such an abuse of public trust, which meant to unfairly divide for political gain.
- _____ 3. There are 425 House of Representative seats in the United States.
- _____ 4. The Declaration of Independence states that representatives are to be allotted by population.
- _____ 5. A census is an official, periodic population count, including the collection of data pertaining to the population.
- _____ 6. States are free to set their own rules for drawing the boundaries of their congressional districts.

- _____ 7. Territory over which an authority has power is called its allies.
- _____ 8. "Stacking" means pairing a clump of opposition voters with a larger population of allied voters so that the opposition's votes get swamped.
- _____ 9. A constituent is one who authorizes another to act as his or her representative.
- _____ 10. A polygon is a closed plan figure bounded by four or more line segments.

"Taking the Pulse of the Prez" p. 42-43

1. What does Gilbert's research reveal regarding the health of U.S. presidents?
2. What is the science behind Gilbert's statistics?

Project: *Make a T-chart listing the presidents mentioned in this article and their ailments. Research 3 presidents to add to your list. What factors may lead to the earlier deaths of a person who becomes president?*

ANSWER KEY:

"Poll-itically Correct?"

1. random sample
2. 30
3. Census Bureau
4. error
5. landslide
6. swing
7. focus
8. objective

"The Bicentennial of Governor Gerry's Monster"

1. True
2. False, Gerrymander
3. False, 435
4. False, Constitution
5. True
6. True
7. False, jurisdiction
8. True
9. True
10. False, three

