Articles and Questions

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1) a PDF file

*and*

2) a Word file

These files contain **only** the article and questions. They do **not** contain Answer Keys.

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<https://support.google.com/docs/answer/187189?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform=Desktop>

**The 2024 U.S. Election**



Who’s the most powerful person on Earth? Many people say it's the American president. Why? Because the United States is a **superpower** – and the president is its leader. So when there’s a U.S. presidential election, people in other countries – not just Americans – are interested in the results.

The world is certainly watching closely now. Under the **U.S. Constitution**, presidential elections must be held every four years. The next one takes place on November 5 – and the run-up so far has been full of drama.

**A tense election season**

For one thing, there was a heart-stopping moment on July 13 when Republican candidate Donald Trump was almost **assassinated**. A gunman’s bullet nicked his ear as he spoke at an open-air rally in Pennsylvania.

For another, the Democrats have experienced a roller coaster ride. The reason? Joe Biden is the **incumbent** president and he was elected in 2020 after he defeated Donald Trump. Mr. Biden planned to run again.   
U.S. presidents can serve a maximum of two four-year terms.

But Mr. Biden is 81. Some observers watching his increasingly shaky **demeanor** feared that’s too old to take on such a demanding job for another four years.

Yet Mr. Biden vowed to keep going even as his popularity sagged and Democratic hopes waned. Finally, in July, after a poor debate performance and pressure from friends and allies, Mr. Biden declared he would not seek re-election. He endorsed   
**Vice President** Kamala Harris.   
U.S. presidents choose their own vice presidents. Mr. Biden had picked Ms. Harris in 2020. Mr. Biden will remain president until January, when November’s winner will be sworn in as the 46th U.S. president. Then, he will retire.

After Mr. Biden’s decision, Democrats quickly rallied to support Ms. Harris as the new candidate.

**About the vice president**

Ms. Harris lived in Canada from 1976 to 1982. When she was 12, Ms. Harris, along with her mother and sister, moved to Montreal. She graduated from Westmount High School and then attended Vanier College. She   
attended Howard University, in Washington, D.C., and then law school. She was a district attorney in San Francisco before becoming the attorney general of California. She then served as a U.S. **senator** from 2017 to 2021.

Ms. Harris is the first female vice president and if she wins, she will be the first woman, and the first person of Black and Indian descent, to become a U.S. president.

Democrats celebrated the candidate change and the campaign restart. The party became energized and supporters showed their enthusiasm by opening their wallets. During the first week, over $200 million was donated to Ms. Harris's campaign. On August 6, Ms. Harris announced Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her vice presidential running mate.

**About the challenger**

And what about Donald Trump, the Republican candidate running again? He already served as U.S. president between 2016 and 2020. Now, he’s hoping for a comeback in 2024.

Mr. Trump attended New York Military Academy (a private boarding school), Fordham University in New York, and he received an economics degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He then worked for his father’s real estate business. Mr. Trump became a real estate developer and businessman and was involved with hotels, casinos, golf courses, resorts, and various properties in New York City and around the world.

In 2016 he won the Republican nomination and defeated Hillary Clinton to become president. But he then lost to Joe Biden in 2020. He is the Republican candidate again and in   
mid-June he selected JD (James David) Vance as his vice presidential candidate. Mr. Vance is an author and Marine veteran who has served since 2023 as a senator from Ohio.

**Competing campaigns**

In early summer, the Republican effort was running smoothly and gaining ground. The polls favoured Mr. Trump. However, when Kamala Harris took control of the Democratic campaign, supporters rallied behind the new candidate and momentum shifted to the Democrats.

Both parties have multi-million dollar war chests for advertising and there are a number of major issues at the heart of the campaign. These include: the economy, immigration, health care and prescription drugs, taxes, tariffs, trade, crime, and foreign policy. There are many other issues as well.

Democrats also want voters to remember Mr. Trump's four tumultuous years in office. During his term he was dogged by legal and ethical scandals and he was **impeached** twice by the House of Representatives. His efforts to undermine the 2020 election and overturn the results peaked when he incited an insurrection in Washington on January 6, 2021.

Mr. Trump also occupies a unique place in history. He is the first former U.S. president to be convicted of a **felony**. In May he was found guilty of 34 counts of falsifying business records. He is also facing various other charges. Prosecutors say he illegally removed and stored secret government documents. They also claim he tried to tamper with Georgia's election results.

**Too close to call**

The polls continue to show a close race. Here’s why. About 40 to 45 percent of all voters from either party are committed supporters ('the base'). About ten percent of all voters are independent-minded and this group will decide who wins. Also, national polls do not show regional patterns. Some states always vote for a certain party. Texas is a Republican fortress and California always votes Democratic. Most campaign efforts are focussed on a small number of 'swing' or 'battleground' states which could go either way.

So will you pay attention on Nov. 5? It’s bound to be a nail-biter.

**A Two-Party System**

Since the 1860s, the Republicans and the Democrats have dominated electoral politics in the U.S. The difference between these two political parties? The Republicans have a more conservative **platform**. They believe in less government control, a strong military, and reduced taxes. The symbols of the Republican Party are the elephant and the colour red.

The Democrats are more **progressive**. They emphasize the military less, but the environment and social programs more. Their symbols are the donkey and the colour blue.

**The U.S. Electoral System**

In the U.S., voters don’t directly elect the president. Instead, the head of state is chosen by the **Electoral College**.

Here’s how the system works: Each of the 50 U.S. states has a number of electoral votes. The more people in a state, the more electoral votes the state gets. California, the most populated state, has 54 electoral votes. Alaska, with a much smaller population, has only three electoral votes.

Voters in each state cast a ballot for their choice for president. The candidate who wins the **popular vote** in each state usually wins all of that state’s electoral votes, too.

There are 538 electoral votes in total. The candidate who wins the most electoral votes – 270 or more – wins the presidency, even if he or she doesn’t win the nation-wide popular vote.

**assassinate:** to kill someone famous or important, usually for political reasons

**demeanor:** the way that someone looks or behaves

**Electoral College:** the group of electors who formally elect the U.S. president and vice president

**felony:** a serious crime in the United States

**impeach:** to charge a public official with misconduct

**incumbent:** a person who holds a particular office or position

**platform:** a political party’s statement of principles and goals

**popular vote:** votes calculated across an entire region

**progressive:** favouring progress, improvement, and reform

**senator:** member of the upper branch of the U.S. legislature

**superpower:** a country that has great military, economic, and political power and can influence other countries

**U.S. Constitution:** the fundamental law of the U.S.

**vice president:** the assistant to the president

**Comprehension Questions**

1. When will the U.S. presidential election occur?

2. Describe what the Republican Party stands for. What symbols represent this party?

3. Describe what the Democratic Party stands for. What symbols represent this party?

4. List the Democratic and Republican presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

5. Explain what the **Electoral College** is.

6. How many votes are needed to become the president of the U.S.?

7. Why did President Biden withdraw his bid for re-election?

8. Identify at least three important details about Kamala Harris. List this information in the order you think is important.

9. Identify at least three important details about Donald Trump. List this information in the order you think is important.

**Questions For Further Thought**

1. Joe Biden had planned to run again for a second term as U.S. president but made the decision to pull out of the race and to endorse his vice president, Kamala Harris. As you see it, did President Biden make the right decision? Discuss the pros and cons of his choice.

2. Donald Trump's presidency from 2016-2020 is described as 'tumultuous'. During his term as president, he endured legal and ethical scandals, was impeached twice by the House of Representatives, claimed that the results of the 2020 election were false, incited an insurrection in Washington on January 6, 2021, and he has been convicted of a felony for falsifying business records, with other legal challenges still ahead of him.

In your opinion, for what reasons would American voters support a candidate with such a checkered past? Do you believe that a convicted felon should be allowed to run for political office? Why or why not?

3. If Kamala Harris wins the U.S. presidential election, she will be the first woman, the first person of Indian descent, and only the second Black person to become a U.S. president. As you see it, what impact would a 'President Harris' have on the voters of the United States? Give examples to support your thinking.

**Questions For Online Exploration**

*Note:* The links below are listed at **www.lesplan.com/links** for easy access*.*

1. Watch this TED-Ed video which explains how the Electoral College works during a U.S. presidential election:  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468** [5:21]

What questions do you have?

2. Hear why President Biden made the decision not to run for re-election:  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=-iyLT6Ze1j0** [11:02]  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=xLH4fKB2V6E** [3:02]

What did you learn about why President Biden decided to step down?

3. Learn how Kamala Harris is recharging the Democratic party since her nomination as candidate for president:  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=32DtCdZ9crU** [9:55]  
What qualities might Vice President Harris bring to the presidency?

4. Why did Kamala Harris choose Tim Walz as her vice-presidential running mate for the Democratic party?  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=rYS4SI7dovg** [8:34]

5. Explore the highlights of Donald Trump's acceptance speech for presidential nominee:  
**https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/trump-rnc-speech-thursday-1.7268328**

What ideas stood out for you? Explain.

6. Why did Donald Trump choose JD Vance as his vice-presidential running mate for the Republican party?  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=0mIF1l5uvGw** [3:13]

7. Visit the official websites of both the Democratic and Republican parties.  
Democratic Party website: **https://democrats.org/**  
Republican Party website: **https://gop.com/#**

How are they similar? How are they different?

Putting It All Together

**A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1. **How long can a U.S. president serve in office?**  
 a) 4 years b) 6 years  
 c) 8 years d) 10 years  
 e) 12 years

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. **Which institution officially decides who becomes the U.S. president?**  
 a) Supreme Court b) Electoral College  
 c) Senate d) State Department  
 e) Congress

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3. **Who is the current U.S. president and the current vice president?**

a) Donald Trump - Nancy Pelosi b) JD Vance - Ron DeSantis  
 c) Barack Obama - Joe Biden d) Joe Biden - Kamala Harris  
 e) Kamala Harris - Tim Walz

**B.** Mark the statements **T** (**True**) or **F** (**False**). If a statement is **True**, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is **False**, write the words that make it true on the line below.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4. **True** or **False**? Either political party has a good chance to win a ‘swing state.’

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5. **True** or **False**? Joe Biden decided last year not to run for re-election.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6. **True** or **False**? The U.S. presidential candidate who wins the popular vote wins the election.

**C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.**

7. A person who holds a position is called the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

8. The two major U.S. political parties are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

9. A serious crime in the U.S. is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. *(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)***

10. *What prediction can you make about the upcoming U.S. presidential election? Who do you suppose will win?*Give reasons to support your response.

**Assessment Rubric**

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students’ responses holistically. This easy-to-modify activity is included in the doc file which you can download from:   
**www.lesplan.com/subscribers**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Emerging** | **Developing** | **Proficient** | **Extending** |
| **Supports thinking** | Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/ evidence. | Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/evidence. | Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence. | Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence. |
| **Shows understanding** | Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the ‘so what’. |
| **Thinks  critically** | Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling. | Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical | Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T).  Inferences are plausible. | Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W).  Inferences are plausible and insightful. |

