

Political Debate Guide

Time Needed: One to two class periods (not including time for debate viewing)

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets, scheduled political debate (or historical debate material)

Copy Instructions:

Activity (3 pages; class set)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Evaluate candidates for political office.
- Compare different perspectives and prioritize issues according to personal views.
- Identify America's current political parties and illustrate their ideas about government.
- Analyze political communications and multiple perspectives on public and current issues.

STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** by asking students to think about why we have so many political debates during a campaign season. How can voters benefit? What can candidate's gain or lose in a debate?
- DISTRIBUTE** one Political Debate Guide to each student.
- CONFIRM** the time and viewing details for a debate if it is to be watched live. (If it's taped, or being provided in a different format, explain how students will be interacting with the event.)
- PREVIEW** the contents of the packet with the class, explaining each section and what will be asked to complete. This will help them identify the areas they will focus on during the debate.
- ASK** students to complete the Pre-Show Prep activity.
- REVIEW** the viewing details and any other special instructions you have for the students in advance of the debate viewing.

AFTER THE DEBATE

- ASK** students to "vote" for a winner *of the debate* and ask why the students voted as they did.
- REVIEW** the contents of the guide and allow for students to share their experiences and responses to the reflection questions.

Political Debate Guide

Name: _____

Pre-Show Prep. A few things to note before you sit down to watch:

1. Which office are the candidates running for?

2. What *three* issues do you care about the most?

3. Do you have a strong preference for a particular candidate prior to this debate?

Yes or No



Set the Stage. Provide details about the event.

1. Where is the debate being held?

2. Who is sponsoring the debate?

3. Who is moderating the debate?

4. How are you watching it?

Online www. _____

TV Station: _____

Other: _____

Who's Who? Complete the list of candidates, the party they represent, and any information you think is important.

Candidate Name	Political Party	Notes

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Name: _____

Issue Tracker. Remember those three issues you listed as important earlier? Place them, along with any other issue you'd like to track, in the first column. Then try to capture the candidates' positions stated during the debate.

Issue	Candidate 1:	Candidate 2:

Viewing Notes. Use this space to jot down anything from the debate you think is important: quotes, questions, exchanges, and interesting moments are all game!



Time to Reflect. The debate is over and hopefully you feel better informed about the candidates and the issues. On a different piece of paper, pick **two** prompts from each section and answer using details from the debate.

The Candidates

- A. Did the candidates directly answer the questions that were asked of them?
- B. Which candidate impressed you the most, even if you didn't agree with them? Why?
- C. Was there any common ground among the candidates on the stage? What was it?
- D. Did the candidates say anything to make you feel that they were more or less trustworthy than their opponents? Explain.
- E. Did your opinion of the candidates change after this debate? Why or why not?
- F. Describe at least two ways the candidates tried to win over the audience.

The Issues

- A. How did the candidates address the issues you cared about?
- B. Which issue got the most attention in this debate? Why do you think this was the case?
- C. On which issue did the candidates disagree the most?
- D. Where else might you go to get more detailed information on the candidates' views on the issues?
- E. How did the issues discussed in this debate reflect issues that you care about?
- F. When the candidates discussed the issues, did they provide details about the actions they would take in office? Is this important? Why?

The Questions

- A. Did any question stand out as unfair? Explain.
- B. Was there a theme among all the questions? If so, what was it?
- C. Were there any questions that all of the candidates avoided answering? What were they?
- D. Did the candidates raise any of their own questions? What were they? Why might they do that?
- E. Did one candidate get more questions than the other candidate(s)? If so, how did it affect the debate?
- F. What two questions would you ask if you were the moderator?

Highlight Reel

- A. What was the most interesting part of the debate? Why?
- B. What was the least interesting part of the debate? Why?
- C. Pick a particular exchange between the candidates and explain what you learned from it.
- D. If you could grade the moderator(s) on how well they managed the pace and behavior during the debate, what grade would you assign? Why?
- E. How helpful are debates at informing voters about the candidates?
- F. List at least five words or phrases that describe how you felt during or after the debate.