

Analyzing Political Parties: Seventh Grade Lesson Plan

Note: This activity may be revised to coincide with any election at the city, state or national level. It may also be generalized to address just a political party's stance on issues if used in-between election years.

Objective: The student will identify different points of view of political parties on important Texas issues. TEKS: 7.16(A); 7.16(B); 7.16(C)

Materials: Critical Thinking Questions activity, Graphically Organized Notes, printed copies or electronic access to the “The League of Women Voters” website, and highlighter (any color).

Overview of Activity: The students will analyze several issues related to the political campaigns of the presidential (or other) candidates. Students will discuss the issues within their group addressing the Critical Thinking Questions, complete the Graphically Organized Notes, and decide which candidate/party they would choose based on that particular issue.

Preview: Students will begin the activity by answering three questions based on the following prompt:

Imagine that you have just moved to a new school and are ready to make new friends. How do you pick your new friends? What are you looking for in that person? Which group do you want to join and why?

Response Groups:

Prior to students beginning the preview activity, divide the class into heterogeneous groups of three.

1. Allow students 3-5 minutes to complete the preview activity.
2. Conduct a class discussion and encourage students to share their answers. The class discussion should focus on how we may tend to choose friends who share similar qualities, characteristics, and interests based on our own. Focus on people usually joining political parties based on shared views and values.

3. Distribute “The League of Women Voters” printed materials (or open their website), the Graphically Organized Notes and the Critical Thinking Questions.
4. Model one critical thinking question with the class to clarify expectations in completing the Graphically Organized Notes.
5. Assign the role of presenter in each group. The role will rotate for each Critical Thinking Question, and the presenter also will serve as facilitator during the group discussion.
6. Allow the group 3-7 minutes to discuss one Critical Thinking Question and complete the related section of the Graphically Organized Notes. Be sure each student uses a highlighter to mark the candidate they support on each issue. They should be prepared to back up their choice with facts from the handouts and their graphic organizer.
7. Have the groups debate, with one group presenter speaking at a time. Each presenter must state their argument beginning with, “I agree/disagree with (name of student)’s group because . . .”
8. Continue with steps 6-8 for the remaining Critical Thinking Questions.
9. Have students read information on political parties from the League of Women Voters. Use the following statement to debrief the roles of political parties and the differing views regarding political platforms: “Find examples of how each candidate fits the description of Democrat or Republican.” Have students write the answers in their notebook.
10. Have students begin the processing activity.

Processing: Students must select a party and candidate to complete the processing activity.

1. Create a political advertisement that includes the candidate’s name, an illustration, a slogan, and viewpoints on at least three issues (bulleted).
2. Create a :30 second radio/television advertisement for the candidate. The advertisement should include the candidate’s name and dialogue about the candidate’s position on at least three issues (in script format). For a television advertisement, students should include a description of the ad, i.e. candidate is shown shaking hands with people, candidate is petting a puppy, candidate is standing in front of a flag while talking.
3. Write a newspaper editorial supporting the candidate and their representative political party.

4. Have students assume the role of candidate and create their own political platform. At least three issues must be included in the campaign.