

## Presidential Campaigns and Debates

**Lesson Objective:** Students will be able to analyze the presidential campaigning process.

1. Review the trove of resources on the Presidential Election Process at [usa.gov/election](https://www.usa.gov/election). It opens with a video on “How to Become President of the United States” and includes a downloadable infographic showing steps to becoming president, from primaries and caucuses to the Electoral College.
2. Have students look up the following terms and write definitions for the mini-lesson, using this [link](#), provided courtesy of Scholastic Inc.
  - a. Campaign: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Political Party: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Poll: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have students watch this [video](#) about the role of presidential debates in history, provided by PBS LearningMedia. Be sure to check out the attached support materials (which are TEKS-aligned). (Note the role in several debates of the late [Jim Lehrer](#), a longtime anchor of the PBS NewsHour who started his journalism career in Dallas.)
4. Have students write responses to the following discussion questions:
  - a. Why do former presidents view the presidential debates as an important part of the political process?
  - b. Why was 1960 an important year for presidential campaign history?
  - c. When was it decided that presidential debates were a pivotal point in the presidential election process?
  - d. What does the public learn from the candidates’ actions during debates?
5. Ask a few students to share their responses.

**(IMPORTANT NOTE TO TEACHERS:** When using PBS LearningMedia, it helps to [create an account](#) to gain quick access to the TEKS and special teaching tools. It’s easy and worth the effort!)

### 2020 Debates

Assign students to watch a presidential debate during the 2020 election season and answer questions on their perceptions about what they saw.

Date of the debate: \_\_\_\_\_

City of the Debate: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Presidential Candidates debating:

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Choose two candidates and write the three most important points they made. Briefly explain why you thought the points were important.

Candidate Names	Important Points	Why you think these points were important
	1. 2. 3.	
	1. 2. 3.	

**Reflection Question:** Who do you think won the debate? Do you think debates are a good way for voters to learn how candidates would handle important national issues? Write a paragraph explaining your answer and reasoning.

**Additional Resource**

- [icivics.org/games/win-white-house](https://www.icivics.org/games/win-white-house)  
(This interactive game from iCivics challenges students to build a campaign for a run for the White House by crafting arguments to support positions on topics that are important to them, strategize how to raise money and figure out how to keep the campaign going through the long election season.)

Get more teaching resources at [learn.kera.org](https://www.learn.kera.org)