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## Elect a Candidate Simulation

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### Purpose

This is an activity where students participate in a task of determining leadership qualities. They are given the résumés of famous people who have lived during the past century. The names of the individuals have been omitted.

The goal of the activity is to help a new nation elect its first president. Finding the right person for the job is a huge task in today's world. What qualities are needed? What experience is necessary? How much education does a leader need to be effective?

Students will choose the individual they feel is best qualified by reviewing the education, experience, and background of each candidate. Students will learn about the qualities that make one a successful leader above all others, and they will also have a chance to get acquainted with some famous individuals from the past century.

Each student must decide whom he or she will pick as the first president of this new nation and write the reasons why their choice would best serve the country. The ending can generate a great deal of excitement as students learn the real identities of the candidates.

### Materials

- *Presidential Candidate Résumés* (pages 3–5)
- *Elect-a-Candidate Tally Form* (page 6)
- *Profile Cards* (pages 7–12)

### Preparation

1. Make copies of all six *Presidential Candidate Résumés* (pages 3–5), making one complete set for each student.
2. You will need the *Elect-a-Candidate Tally Form* (page 6) copied for each student and copied for one overhead transparency.
3. Finally, you will also need the *Profile Cards* (pages 7–12), which serve as an answer key. (These can be copied for each student or made into overhead transparencies.)

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**Elect a Candidate Simulation** (cont.)

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**Activity**

1. Ask the class to think of a list of qualifications that a presidential candidate should have. Students can brainstorm ideas with others sitting nearby. Let a few students share their ideas with the class. Make a class list on the board.
2. Tell students that an important historical decision needs to be made and they are going to help make it. They will be electing an individual to serve as a president of a new nation that has just been formed.
3. Place students into small groups (about 3–5 students each). Distribute copies of the *Presidential Candidate Résumés* (pages 3–5) to students and have them compare and contrast the information about the six unknown candidates. Each group is responsible for selecting the individual they think would be the best choice for president. Encourage students to refer to and use the set of qualifications given by the class at the beginning of this lesson as they make their decision.
4. Within each group, have students vote for a candidate. The majority selection wins.
5. Have each student explain and justify his or her decision in a few paragraphs.
6. Next, have the students select the candidate they think would be the worst choice for president. Once again, they need to vote for a majority, and then state their reasons in written form.
7. Tally the votes using an overhead transparency of the *Elect-a-Candidate Tally Form* (page 6), and determine who the class chose as the best choice for president and the worst choice for president. Have students fill out their own copies of the graph during this time.
8. After completing the bar graph, discuss each individual candidate. Beginning with résumé 1, ask students who favored this candidate to discuss the reasons for their choice. Then, let students who disliked this candidate to discuss their reasons.
9. After each candidate is discussed, reveal the candidate's identity using the *Profile Cards* (pages 7–12), which contain more information about each candidate as well as his or her name.
10. Have students reflect on the experience in their journals.

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## Presidential Candidate Résumés

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### Résumé #1

**Education:** formal education until age 16; professional orator; gave speeches that captured people's attention and inspired them; studied and appreciated the arts; had aspirations to be an artist; published author

**Experience:** served his country bravely in a major war; had many narrowing escapes from death during the war; received a total of five medals in the war; active political party member; political fundraiser; sought-after public speaker

**Background:** homeless early in life; nonsmoker and nondrinker; single; no children

**Age:** 56 years old

### Résumé #2

**Education:** no formal education as a child; thought to be dyslexic; graduated from Princeton University; attended law school for a brief period of time; earned Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University

**Experience:** college professor; president of Princeton University; state governor; authored a best-selling book; successful at passing legislation for the working man; sought-after public speaker

**Background:** father was a Presbyterian minister; married two times; one child

**Age:** 57 years old

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## Presidential Candidate Résumés

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### Résumé #3

**Education:** National Merit finalist; graduated with honors with a political science degree; Yale Law School; post graduate study

**Experience:** National Honor Society member; president of the Young Republicans and president of the government association; intern at the House Republican Conference; research assistant; published author; faculty member of a law school; lawyer; nonprofit and for-profit board member; U.S. senator

**Background:** married, one child

**Age:** 60 years old

### Résumé #4

**Education:** gained early entrance to college at age 15; bachelor of arts degree in sociology; bachelor of divinity degree; Ph.D. in systematic theology by the age of 25 from Boston University; given 19 honorary doctorate degrees

**Experience:** debate team; public speaker; founder and president of a Southern Christian Leadership Conference; elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

**Background:** TIME Magazine's Man of the Year; Nobel Peace Prize recipient; Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient; married; four children

**Age:** 39 years old

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**Presidential Candidate Résumés**

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**Résumé #5**

**Education:** bachelor of arts degree in political science from Columbia University; Harvard Law School *magna cum laude*

**Experience:** published author; president of Harvard Law Review; Civil Rights lawyer; lecturer of constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School; nonprofit community organizer; state senator; U.S. senator

**Background:** lived overseas as a child; married; two children

**Age:** 47 years old

**Résumé #6**

**Education:** Attended 20 different schools as a child; excelled at wrestling; lightweight boxer; Graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy

**Experience:** naval captain; aviator; Navy liaison to the U.S. Senate; received decorations of Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, and Silver Star; member of the U.S. House of Representatives; U.S. senator; chaired Senate Commerce Committee; published author

**Background:** born at a naval air station; divorced once; married again; seven children (three adopted); prisoner of war for 5.5 years

**Age:** 72 years old

## Elect-a-Candidate Tally Form

Favorite							Least Favorite						
12							12						
11							11						
10							10						
9							9						
8							8						
7							7						
6							6						
5							5						
4							4						
3							3						
2							2						
1							1						
<b>card ★</b>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	<b>card ★</b>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6

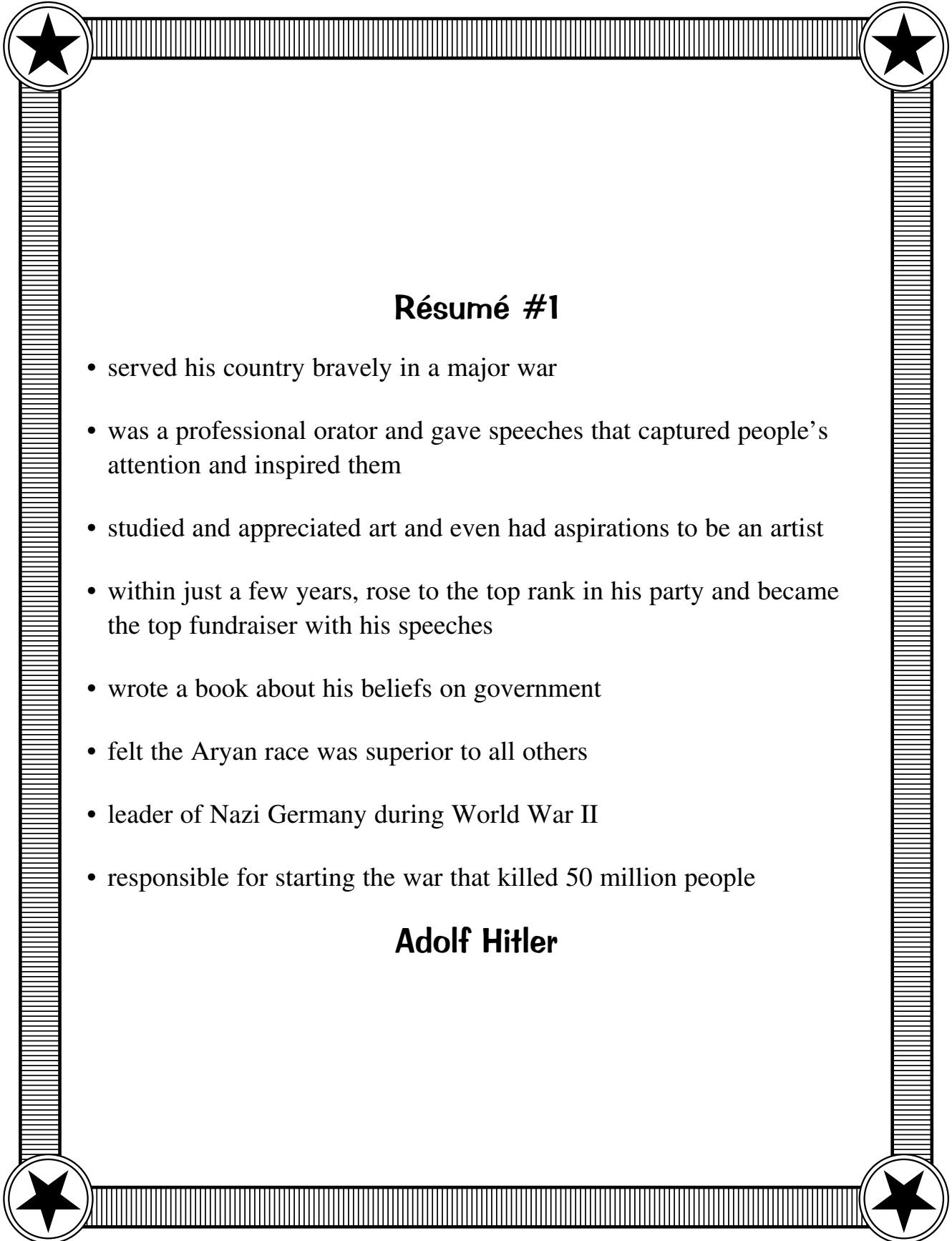
**Directions:** After discussing the results of your candidate selection process, complete these questions on another sheet of paper.

1. In what ways did you learn by doing this activity?
2. In what ways did your list of qualifications of a presidential candidate help or not help you in making the decision?

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## Profile Cards

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**Résumé #1**

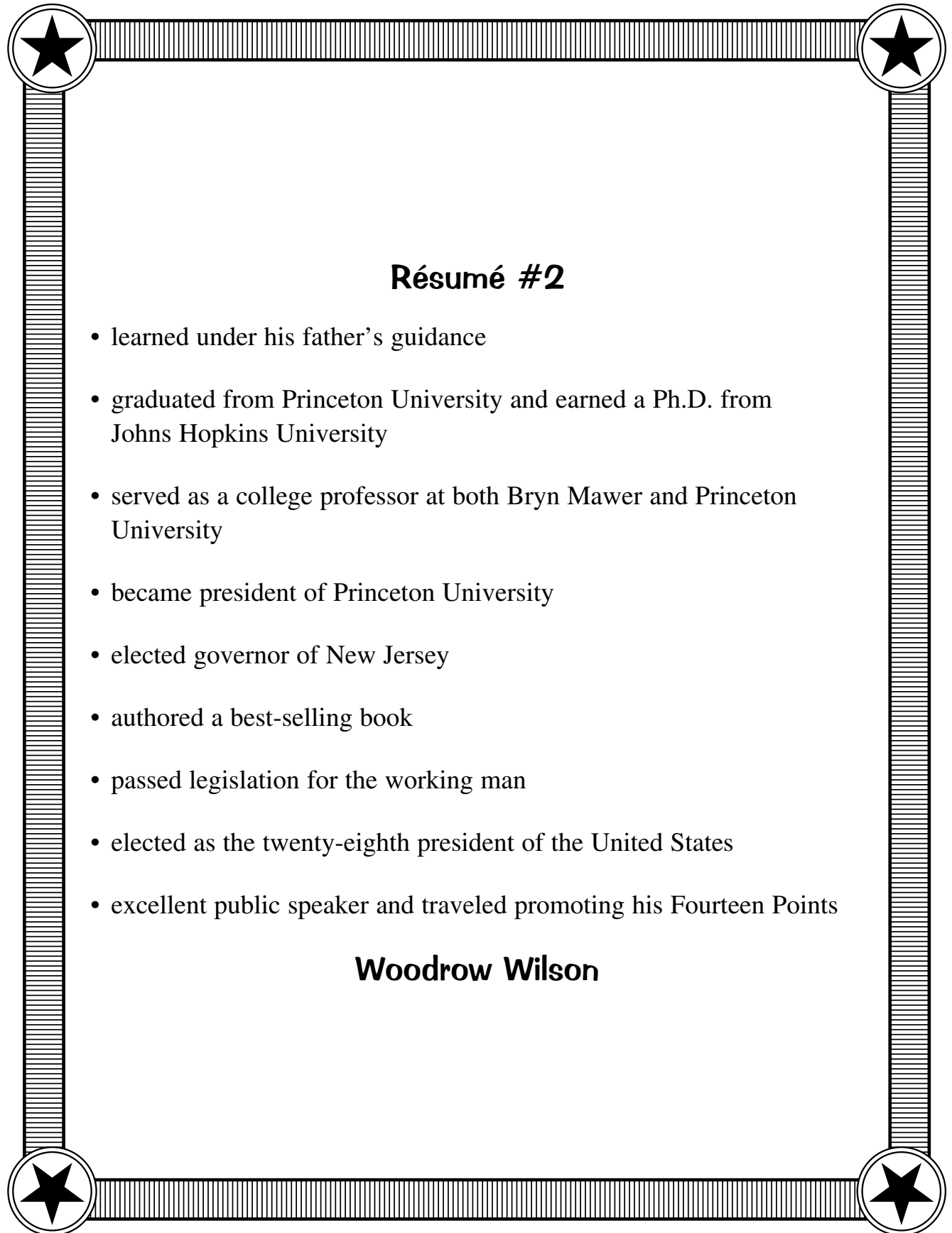
- served his country bravely in a major war
- was a professional orator and gave speeches that captured people’s attention and inspired them
- studied and appreciated art and even had aspirations to be an artist
- within just a few years, rose to the top rank in his party and became the top fundraiser with his speeches
- wrote a book about his beliefs on government
- felt the Aryan race was superior to all others
- leader of Nazi Germany during World War II
- responsible for starting the war that killed 50 million people

**Adolf Hitler**

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## Profile Cards

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**Résumé #2**

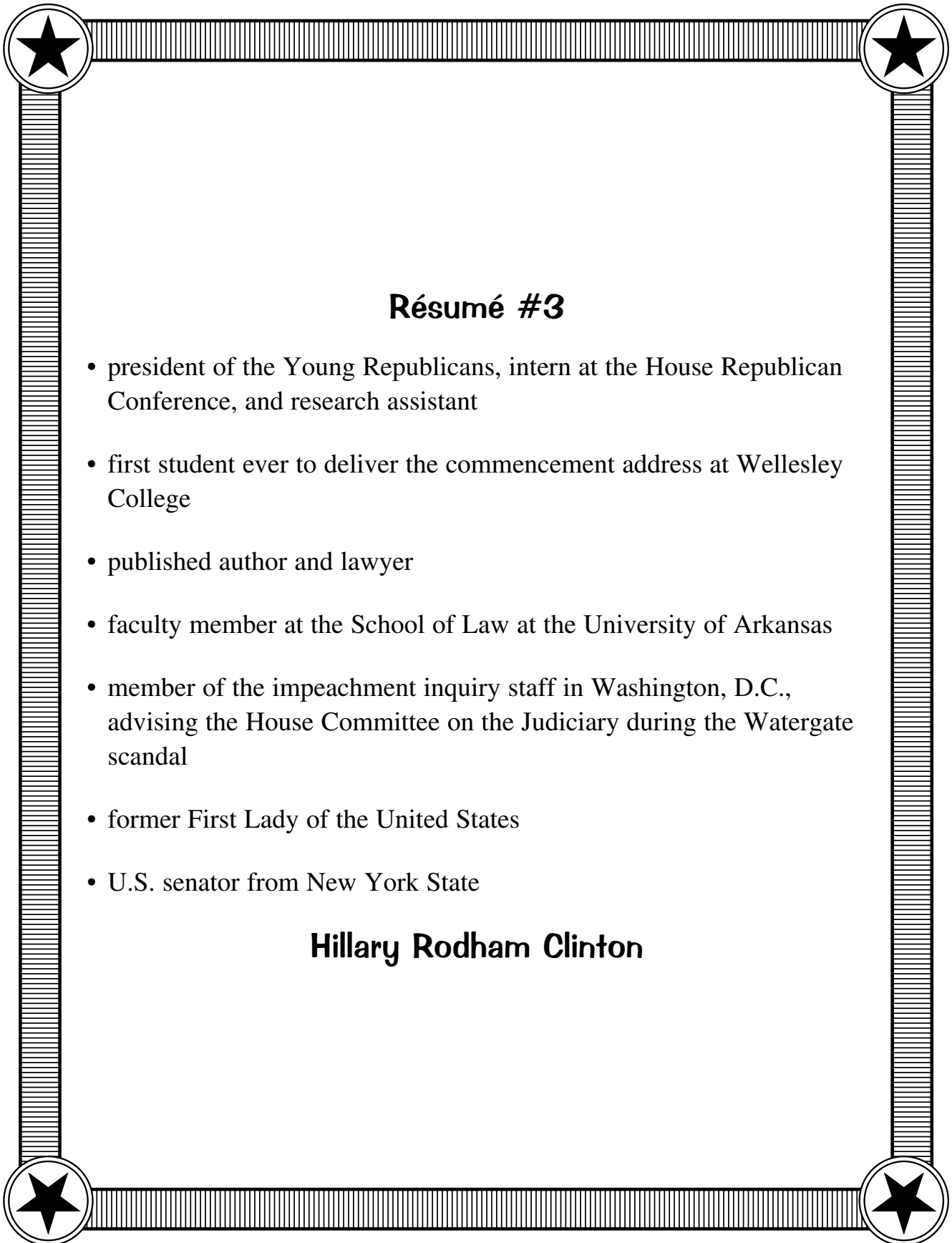
- learned under his father's guidance
- graduated from Princeton University and earned a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University
- served as a college professor at both Bryn Mawer and Princeton University
- became president of Princeton University
- elected governor of New Jersey
- authored a best-selling book
- passed legislation for the working man
- elected as the twenty-eighth president of the United States
- excellent public speaker and traveled promoting his Fourteen Points

**Woodrow Wilson**

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## Profile Cards

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**Résumé #3**

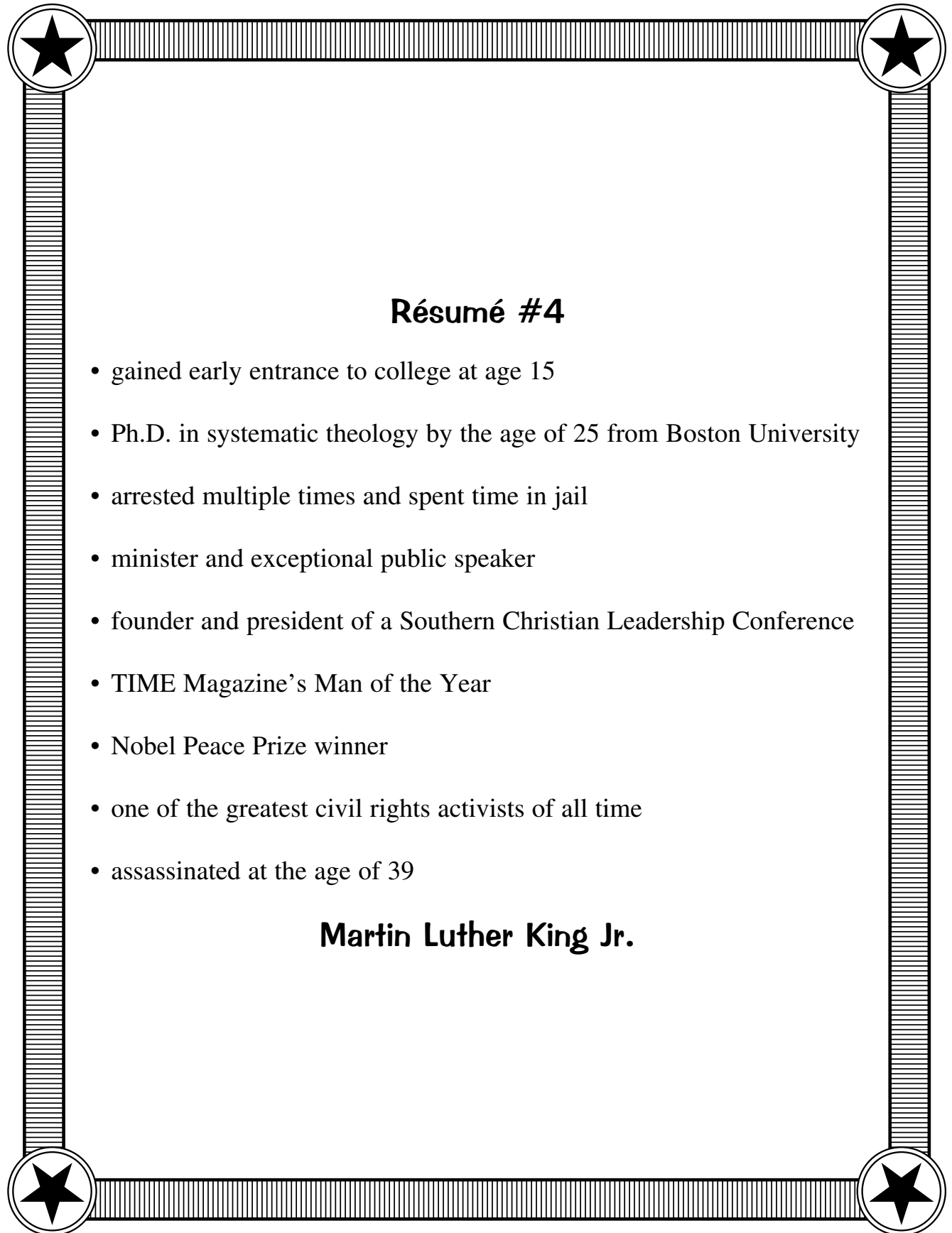
- president of the Young Republicans, intern at the House Republican Conference, and research assistant
- first student ever to deliver the commencement address at Wellesley College
- published author and lawyer
- faculty member at the School of Law at the University of Arkansas
- member of the impeachment inquiry staff in Washington, D.C., advising the House Committee on the Judiciary during the Watergate scandal
- former First Lady of the United States
- U.S. senator from New York State

**Hillary Rodham Clinton**

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## Profile Cards

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**Résumé #4**

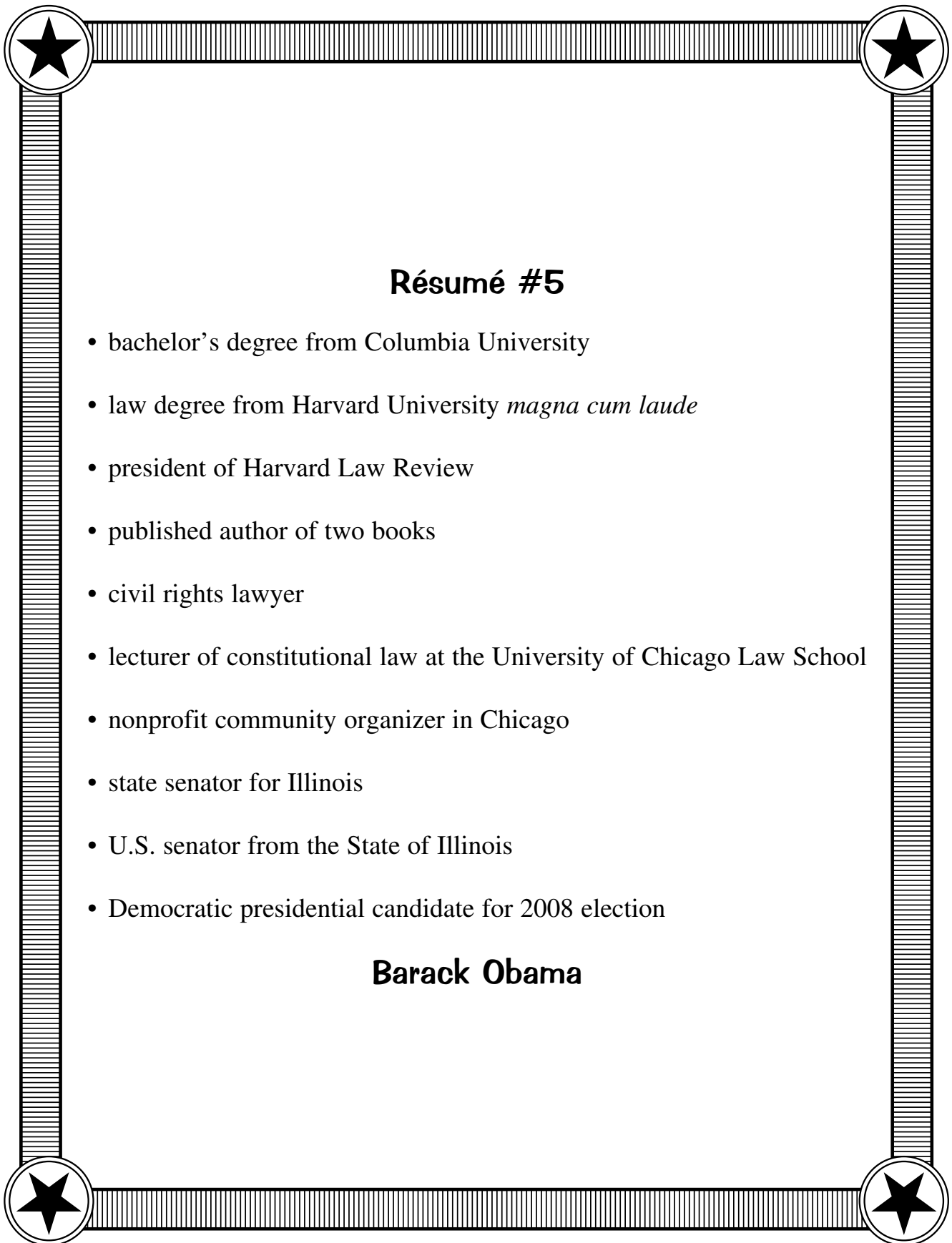
- gained early entrance to college at age 15
- Ph.D. in systematic theology by the age of 25 from Boston University
- arrested multiple times and spent time in jail
- minister and exceptional public speaker
- founder and president of a Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- TIME Magazine's Man of the Year
- Nobel Peace Prize winner
- one of the greatest civil rights activists of all time
- assassinated at the age of 39

**Martin Luther King Jr.**

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## Profile Cards

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**Résumé #5**

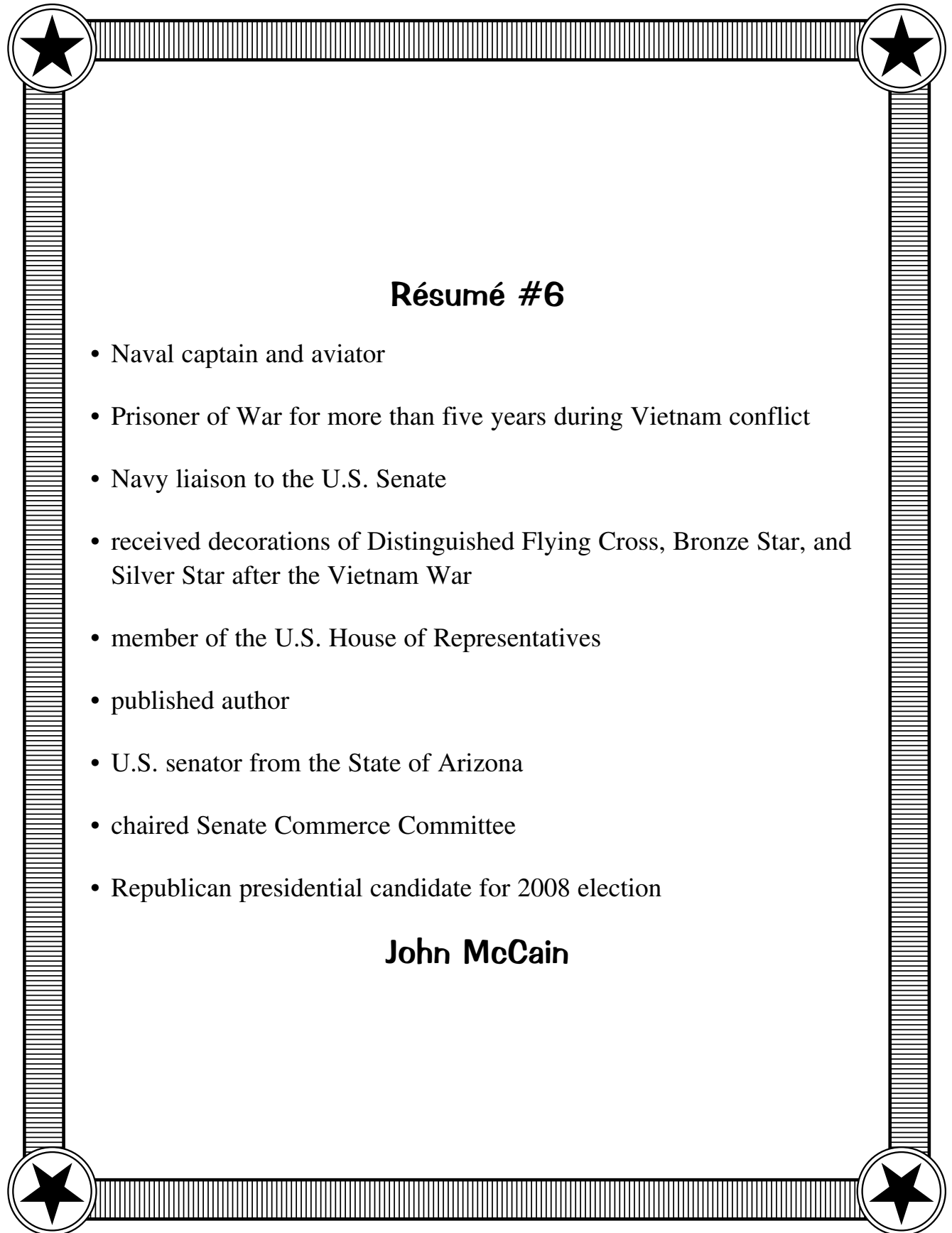
- bachelor's degree from Columbia University
- law degree from Harvard University *magna cum laude*
- president of Harvard Law Review
- published author of two books
- civil rights lawyer
- lecturer of constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School
- nonprofit community organizer in Chicago
- state senator for Illinois
- U.S. senator from the State of Illinois
- Democratic presidential candidate for 2008 election

**Barack Obama**

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## Profile Cards

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**Résumé #6**

- Naval captain and aviator
- Prisoner of War for more than five years during Vietnam conflict
- Navy liaison to the U.S. Senate
- received decorations of Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, and Silver Star after the Vietnam War
- member of the U.S. House of Representatives
- published author
- U.S. senator from the State of Arizona
- chaired Senate Commerce Committee
- Republican presidential candidate for 2008 election

**John McCain**