The Electoral College

Students know ways people can influence the decisions and actions of their government such as voting; taking an active role in interest groups, political parties, and other organizations that attempt to influence public policy and elections; attending meetings of governing agencies (e.g., city council); working in campaigns, circulating and signing petitions; and contributing money to political parties, candidates, or causes.

Students will analyze fiction and nonfiction texts and synthesize the information in a variety of ways.

Paired Texts Reading and Activities

★ Still Counting (page 98)—Direct students to read the fictional newspaper article, Still Counting. Review the Electoral College and its role in elections. Discuss as a class how close the fictional election is and how it’s important that people vote in order to have an influence on the government. Have student pairs discuss whether it is fair that a president can win the popular vote but lose the election. Ask students to share their discussions.

★ Finding Facts (page 101)—In this activity, students will use information from both the informational text and the fictional newspaper article to complete the graphic organizer. Students can complete the page individually or in pairs. When students have finished, have volunteers share their responses with the class.

★ Your Turn to Count (page 102)—With this activity, students will use an Electoral College map to determine the winner of an election and answer the questions on page 102.
Primary Source Connection
★ D.C. Dilemma Primary Source (pages 103–104)—Study the primary source and read the background information on page 103 with students. Then, go over page 104 with students and have them complete the page independently. Explain to them that they will create license plate slogans for Washington, D.C., to help with its fight to get more electoral votes.

Puzzle Time!
★ Electoral College Crossword Puzzle (page 105)—Students will enjoy completing the crossword puzzle that consists of Electoral College-related vocabulary words.
★ Electoral Map Puzzle (page 106)—Students will have fun solving math problems by using an Electoral College map.

Answer Key
Finding Facts (page 101)
Fact 1: A candidate must have at least 270 electoral votes to win.
Fact 2: A president winning the election but losing the popular vote has only happened four times in history.
Fact 3: The number of electoral votes a state has is based on its population.
Fact 4: To get rid of the Electoral College, a change would have to be made to the Constitution.

Your Turn to Count (page 102)
And the winner is Burns.
1. California because it has the most electoral votes.
2. Answers will vary based on where the student lives.
3. 3 electoral votes

Electoral College Crossword Puzzle (page 105)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Down</th>
<th>Across</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. official</td>
<td>6. Electoral College (no space)</td>
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<td>2. pledge</td>
<td>7. electoral votes (no space)</td>
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<td>3. Senators</td>
<td>8. popular votes (no space)</td>
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<td>4. representatives</td>
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<td>5. Amendment</td>
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Electoral Map Puzzle (page 106)

| 1. 70 | 5. 9 | 9. 11 |
| 2. 20 | 6. 2 | 10. 2 |
| 3. 31 | 7. 0 | |
| 4. 11 | 8. 15 | |
By Currer Bell

Freedom Press
Staff Writer

Atlanta, Georgia — By now, we usually know who the next president will be. But this year, we do not. We are still waiting to see who won. The election is too close to call.

Thursday, it looked like candidate Barnes was going to win. He had the most votes. He was leading the popular vote with 48,591,577 votes. And he had the most electoral votes with 255. A candidate must have at least 270 electoral votes to win. He needed only 15 more electoral votes.

But then, the unthinkable happened! Barnes lost in Ohio. He lost in his home state. No one saw it coming. All 18 electoral votes for that state went to candidate Bello.

Bello is now leading the electoral vote with 267 votes. He only needs 3 more electoral votes to win. But he is still losing in the popular vote. He only has 46,789,987 votes.

Only one state is still counting its votes. And it is our state! Whoever wins Georgia will win the election. Our state has 16 electoral votes.

If Bello wins the election, he will make history. He will win the election on electoral votes. But he will not have the most popular votes. This has only happened four other times in history! The idea that this could happen is making many people mad. They think the candidate who wins the popular vote should win the election. But that is not what our Constitution says.

Our Constitution says that each state has a certain number of electoral votes. This number is based on how many people live in the state. The candidate that gets more than 270 electoral votes wins the election. To change this law, we would need to change the Constitution.

In the meantime, we sit and wait. Who will win Georgia’s electoral votes? Who will be the next president? Barnes? Bello? The suspense is maddening!

Directions: Do you think it is fair that a president can win the popular vote but lose the election? Discuss this topic with a partner. Write your opinion and list three reasons that support your opinion.
Puzzle

Time

Standards

Connections

Source

99

© Shell Education #51353—Understanding Elections

America Votes

Presidential elections can be tricky. Counting the votes is not easy. This is because there are two kinds of votes. There is the popular vote. This means the number of votes cast by citizens. There is also the electoral vote. This means the number of votes given to a candidate by each state. When people vote for a president, they are really voting for electors. This group of electors is called the Electoral College.

The number of electors in each state differs. Some states have lots of electors. Others have just a few. To find the number of electors for each state, you have to do some simple math. You add the number of senators to the number of representatives. Each state has two senators. But each state has a different number of representatives. The number of representatives is based on how many people live in the state. For example, Missouri has two senators. But it has eight representatives. You add eight plus two. So the state has 10 electors.

Electors take a pledge. They promise to be honest. They vote for the candidate who wins the popular vote in their state. Each elector casts one vote. States with more people have more electoral votes. Texas has 38 electoral votes. California has 55 electoral votes. Candidates really want to win these states. All those electoral votes can help them win the election.

Citizens cast their votes in November. A winner is usually announced in a couple days. But it is not made official until later. Electors cast their votes in December. The votes are then sent to Congress. On January 6, the votes are counted. The candidate that gets the most electoral votes wins. Now, it is official. It takes at least 270 electoral votes to win. If there is no winner in the Electoral College, then the House of Representatives chooses the president.

Sometimes a candidate can win the popular vote but lose the election. This means they did not get the most electoral votes. This has happened four times. The last candidate this happened to was Al Gore, who lost the 2000 election to George W. Bush. Because this can happen, many people do not like the Electoral College. They think the president should be chosen based on the popular vote alone. But it would not be easy to change this law. An amendment would have to be passed. This is a change to the Constitution. People have tried to do this more than 700 times! But it has yet to happen.

★ ★ ★ Finding Out Who Won ★ ★ ★
**Finding Out Who Won** (cont.)

**Directions:** Pick four words that you found tricky or confusing in the nonfiction text and use them to complete the graphic organizer below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Define It</th>
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**Finding Facts**

**Directions:** Use both texts to complete the graphic organizer below. The *Still Counting* text is fiction, but it does contain facts. Use the *Finding Out Who Won* text to help you find at least four facts in the fiction text.

**Main Idea**

A candidate can win the election without having the most popular votes.
Your Turn to Count

Directions: Study the map below. Use it to find out which candidate won the presidential election and to answer the questions below. Show your math on the back of this sheet.

And the winner is . . .

1. Which state has the highest population? How do you know?

2. How many electoral votes does your state have?

3. What is the least amount of electoral votes a state has?
Primary Source Background Information

Did you know Washington, D.C., is not a state? It is a district. It is the District of Columbia. It is our nation’s capital. But there is not a star on the flag for it. Over 600,000 people live in D.C. But they do not have representatives in Congress. They have no senators and only one non-voting representative. The residents of the District think this is unfair. But the Constitution says only states have these rights, and the District of Columbia is not a state.

In 1961, a change was made to the Constitution. The 23rd Amendment was added. It said the people living in D.C. could vote for president. Before the amendment, they were not allowed to vote, but now they have three electoral votes.

Today, many District residents are still upset. They want more electoral votes. And they want representatives and senators. If you visit the capital, look at the license plates on the cars. On them it says, “TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION.” This is a reference to a famous slogan from before the American Revolution. It is what the colonists said to Great Britain. They had no representation in the British government, but they still had to pay taxes. So do the people living in Washington, D.C., today.

Edited from Wikimedia Commons
Directions: Many people who live in D.C. want representation in Congress, and they want more electoral votes. They came up with a clever license plate slogan to help bring attention to their cause. Design another clever license plate slogan that residents of D.C. could use, and create your license plate.
Electoral College Crossword Puzzle

Directions: Use the clues to complete the puzzle with the words in the Word Bank.

Word Bank
- Amendment
- Electoral College
- electoral votes
- official
- pledge
- popular votes
- representatives
- Senators

Down
1. something that is done in a public and formal way
2. a serious promise or agreement
3. members of the Senate
4. people who represent others in Congress

Across
5. the body of electors who formally elect the president and vice president
6. a law or statement added to the Constitution
7. votes cast in the Electoral College by electors
8. votes cast by the public or citizens of a nation
**Electoral Map Puzzle**

**Directions:** Use the map and find the number of each state's electoral votes to solve the math equations. Be sure to make sure that your answers are part of the Answer Bank.

1. California + North Carolina = ______
2. Florida – South Carolina = ______
3. Utah + Colorado + Arizona + New Mexico = ______
4. Ohio – Vermont – Maine = ______
5. North Dakota x South Dakota = ______
6. Georgia ÷ Kentucky = ______
7. Pennsylvania – Illinois = ______
8. New York – New Jersey = ______
9. Oklahoma + Idaho = ______
10. Oregon – Nebraska = ______

**Answer Bank**

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