

## Parties, Primaries, Caucuses & Conventions

**Time Needed:** 1-2 class periods

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

**Materials:**

- Student Handouts

**Handouts:**

- Reading (4 pages; class set)
- Spotlight (1 page; class set)
- Activities (3 pages; class set)

- Describe the role of political parties
- Contrast primaries and caucuses as ways to nominate someone within a political party
- Explain the role of national conventions in the political process
- Describe the electoral process in primary elections
- Identify key dates for national elections

***Fillable PDF handouts are available as an alternative to paper. Find them on the web page for this lesson.***

### Step by Step

- ANTICIPATE** by asking students how we go from many candidates tossing their hat into the ring for presidential elections to just two (or a few) main candidates.
- TELL** students that today they will be learning about political parties, primary elections, caucuses, and conventions. Share that these are all part of narrowing the field of presidential candidates down to the names that will appear on the general election ballot in November.
- DISTRIBUTE** the reading pages to the class.
- READ** the reading pages with the class, pausing to discuss as appropriate.
- CHECK** for understanding by asking: What political parties exist in the United States? Why are third parties beneficial? What processes happen before the general election in November? What's the difference between a primary and a caucus?
- READ** the Spotlight with students, if you wish. The Spotlight focuses on the first caucus and primary in Iowa and New Hampshire. Pause to discuss as appropriate.
- DISTRIBUTE** the activity pages to students. Review instructions as needed.\*
- ALLOW** time for students to complete the activities. Review and discuss answers with students as time permits.
- CLOSE** by asking students to share their thoughts on our election system. Ask: What are the advantages/disadvantages of this part of our election system? What do you like about it or what would you change?

**\*Math Alert:** Full disclosure, by the time your students reach our third example in Activity E. Delegate Simple Math, you may hear groans. We included this example to show how complicated the process of awarding delegates can be. It may lead to an interesting discussion in your classroom. And just in case math isn't your thing, here are some instructions to help you help your students through the process: (1) Discard any votes awarded to candidates not meeting the 15% threshold; (2) Recalculate the percentages earned by those meeting the threshold; (3) Distribute the delegates proportionally from there.