

THE CHOICE 2004 Teacher's Guide

ABOUT THE FILM:

As Americans prepare to choose their next president, FRONTLINE offers viewers a special, two-hour dual biography of the two candidates who hope to lead the nation for the next four years. The fifth installment in FRONTLINE's continuing election series pairs filmmaker Martin Smith and correspondent Nicholas Lemann, who go beyond sound bites and political rhetoric to explore how the candidates and their values have been shaped by family background, history, victory, and defeat. By eschewing political pundits in favor of insightful comments from friends, families, colleagues, political adversaries and top journalists who have incisively reported on the candidates, "The Choice 2004" offers viewers -- and voters -- a chance to see the candidates in a fresh light before the campaign reaches its climax on Election Day.

WATCHING THE FILM:

Ideally, teachers will assign the film for viewing as homework or show the film in class. Suggested discussion questions [link] are provided. The lessons and activities in this guide can be used in the classroom regardless of whether or not the film is viewed.

A NOTE TO TEACHERS:

For classes in Social Studies, Language Arts, Current Events, and History; Grade level 9th-12th

"The Choice 2004" is a comprehensive FRONTLINE biography studying the character, experience and worldviews of incumbent George W. Bush and challenger John F. Kerry. These teaching activities are designed to help students become more familiar with the candidates in the 2004 presidential contest and to explore the political cultures that shaped their careers and support their candidacies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A list of questions for the class to discuss after viewing the film.

FEATURED LESSON PLAN:

Political Parties in Campaign 2004

Students will become more familiar with:

- the partisan affiliations of George W. Bush and John F. Kerry;
- the political parties in campaign 2004; and
- where each party stands on important issues of the 2004 campaign.

ADDITIONAL LESSON IDEAS:

Candidate Character Traits

Students will consider and compare "ideal" presidential character traits.

Candidate Character Traits and Campaign Messages

Students will learn more about how candidate character traits are marketed in campaign messages.

Analyzing Campaign Web Sites

Students will use media literacy skills to analyze and critique campaign Web sites.

Exploring Political Action Groups

Students will research political action groups and consider their impact on the 2004 presidential campaign.

The Youth Vote

Students will explore:

- how their voting behavior can make a difference in electoral politics; and
- the unprecedented number of movements and organizations working to involve young Americans in the electoral process.

PURCHASING THE FILM

"The Choice 2004" can be purchased from **Shop PBS for Teachers** [<http://teacher.shop.pbs.org/home/index.jsp>]. Also, teachers and students can watch the film streamed in its entirety on **FRONTLINE's Web site** [<http://www.pbs.org/frontline/shows/choice2004/view>].

CREDITS

This teacher's guide was developed by Simone Bloom Nathan of Media Education Consultants. It was written by Dr. Sharon E. Jarvis of the University of Texas at Austin and the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation. Advisers were Ellen Greenblatt of University High School San Francisco, Greg Timmons, executive director, The Constitution Project, and Patricia Grimmer of Carbondale High School, Carbondale, Illinois.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A list of questions for the class to discuss after viewing the film.

What did you learn about either candidate from watching the film?

What surprised you?

What do the two candidates have in common?

What are some differences between the two candidates?

How did the Vietnam War affect George W. Bush?

How did the Vietnam War affect John Kerry?

What was George W. Bush's first political experience? How did it affect him?

What was John Kerry's first political experience? How did it affect him?

FEATURED LESSON PLAN

Political Parties in Campaign 2004

Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson, students will become more familiar with:

- the partisan affiliations of George W. Bush and John F. Kerry;
- the political parties in campaign 2004; and
- where each party stands on important issues of the 2004 campaign.

Materials Needed:

Internet Access

Student Handout: What Do You Know About Political Parties in Campaign 2004?

Student Handout: Checking Your Answers

Student Handout: Democrats and Republicans

Time Needed:

45 – 75 minutes, depending on the extent of the discussion

Procedure:

1. Instruct students to answer the questions on the student handout entitled "What Do You Know About Political Parties in Campaign 2004?"
2. After students have attempted to answer these questions, give them the second handout, "Checking Your Answers." Tell students to return to questions on the first handout and research the answers, using classroom resources and the Internet resources listed on the second handout.
3. Conduct a classroom discussion about the students' answers. The conversation could address such topics as: What things are important to you and your family? Do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican or Independent? How? Why?

If desired, students can take the **Where Do You Fit** quiz offered by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center for the People and the Press to determine where on the political spectrum their beliefs fit. [URL: <http://people-press.org/fit/>].

4. Have students complete the chart about the differences between Democrats and Republicans using classroom resources and the Internet resources listed on the second handout. This can be done individually, in small groups, or as a class.
5. If desired, direct students to this **electoral state map** from PBS's *Newshour With Jim Lehrer* to learn more about the voting patterns of your home state. [URL: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2004/politics101/politics101_ecmap.html] The discussion could focus on such concerns as: How has your state voted at the presidential level? How might these voting patterns affect how much attention George W. Bush and John Kerry give your state in campaign 2004?

Method of Assessment:

Class discussion

Submission of handout(s) after discussion

STUDENT HANDOUT:
What Do You Know About Political Parties in Campaign 2004?

Directions:

Answer the following questions on your own before discussing them as a class.

What is a political party?

What do political parties do in the United States?

The present campaign is dominated by the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

Who does the Democratic Party represent?

What policies are favored by the Democratic Party?

Who does the Republican Party represent?

What policies are favored by the Republican Party?

What is the party affiliation of George W. Bush?

What is the party affiliation of John F. Kerry?

The Democratic and Republican Parties are not the only organized groups involved in campaign 2004.

What are some of the other political parties (often called third parties) in the United States?

What do these parties represent?

STUDENT HANDOUT: Checking Your Answers

Using the Web sites below, as well as books in your classroom or library and other resources suggested by your teacher, answer or check your answers to the questions. Make changes or additions if your answers were incomplete.

Key Political Definitions

Here are some Web sites with important definitions for understanding political parties and what the major U.S. political parties and their candidates stand for:

Political party:

Dictionary.com: <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?r=2&q=political%20party>

AllRefer.com: <http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/P/party-po.html>

AP Government.com: <http://www.apgovernment.com/apgovernment/politicalparties.html>

Democratic Party:

The Democratic National Committee: <http://www.democrats.org/>

- <http://www.democrats.org/about/>

Dictionary.com: <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=Democratic%20party>

Republican Party:

The Republican National Committee: <http://www.rnc.org/>

- <http://www.gop.com/About/Default.aspx>

Dictionary.com: <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=Republican%20party>

George W. Bush:

Official Web site: <http://www.georgewbush.com/>

John F. Kerry

Official Web site: <http://www.johnkerry.com/>

Third parties:

Dictionary.com: <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=third%20party>

Newshour With Jim Lehrer:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2004/politics101/politics101_thirdparties.html

Project Vote Smart: [http://www.vote-](http://www.vote-smart.org/resource_political_resources.php?category=Political%20Parties)

[smart.org/resource_political_resources.php?category=Political%20Parties](http://www.vote-smart.org/resource_political_resources.php?category=Political%20Parties)

Party affiliation:

Pew Research Center for the People and the Press: <http://people-press.org/commentary/display.php3?AnalysisID=97>

"**Where do you fit?**" -- An interactive quiz to learn more about your partisan leanings from the Pew Research Center for People and the Press: <http://people-press.org/fit/>

Electoral College Map -- An interactive map to learn more about how your state has voted in the past from the *Newshour With Jim Lehrer*:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/vote2004/politics101/politics101_ecmap.html

**STUDENT HANDOUT:
Democrats and Republicans**

Note to students: Complete the chart below by using the information you have researched to fill in each party's view of the issue.

	Democrats	Republicans
Role of Government		
Taxation		
Education		
Environment		
Business		
Social Security		
Homeland Security		

ADDITIONAL LESSON IDEAS

Candidate Character Traits

Invite students to generate a list of traits of the "ideal" presidential candidate, then to compare their list with the following "ideal candidate attributes"*:

- Honest
- Talks about nation's problems
- Moral character
- Forceful public speaker
- Remains calm and cautious
- Has experience in office
- Faithful to spouse
- Has solutions to problems
- Energetic and aggressive leader
- Younger than 60/65 years of age
- Male

*Source: Judith S. Trent, Cady Short-Thompson, Paul A. Mongeau, Andrew K. Nusz, and Jimmie D. Trent. (2001). "Image, media bias and voter characteristics: The ideal candidate from 1988-2000," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 44, 2101-2123.

Candidate Character Traits and Campaign Messages

Break students into small groups and invite them to create a campaign message (a speech, a positive political advertisement, or a Web page) for either George W. Bush or John Kerry that emphasizes one of the candidate's character traits in a positive way. When completed, ask students:

- What types of information do you convey when you focus on this character trait?
- What do voters learn from this message?
- How might voters react to your campaign message?
- Does your message accurately reflect your candidate or issue?

Ask students whether any of the character traits stand out as more or less important than others? If so, what are they and why? [Note: See the "Internet Resources" section at the end of this guide for additional sources on campaign messages.]

Analyzing Campaign Web Sites

Ask students to make observations about the images and messages they see on the candidates' campaign Web sites. What is the first visual image that they see? What message does the visual image convey? What impression do the words on the site convey? What do students notice about the way the candidate's opponent is featured or not featured on the Web site? What do students think the goals of the Web site are? How effectively are the goals being achieved?

Exploring Political Action Groups

Invite students to research political action groups and consider their impact on the 2004 presidential campaign. First, direct them to the Center for Responsive Politics' Web site to learn more about basic vocabulary terms such as "527 committees," "industries and interest groups," "PACs," "soft money" and "lobbying" (URL: [http:// www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)). Then, ask them to investigate the major advocacy groups in campaign 2004. (Note: A list can be found at: <http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527grps.asp>). Ask students the following questions: What are these groups trying to do? What type of influence will they have on campaign 2004?

The Youth Vote

Since 18 year olds were first given the chance to vote in the 1972 elections, their turnout rate has steadily declined. In the past four years, non-profit organizations, funding agencies and academics have allocated unprecedented resources in order to curb this trend. To encourage students to learn more about young voters, pose the following questions:

- What kind of influence can 18-24 year olds have in electoral politics?
- What difference can one vote make in an election?
- Why are so many groups working to involve young voters in campaign 2004?

Encourage students to generate a list of 10 reasons why young voters can make a difference in politics. Have them share their lists with the class. If desired, have students create a master list of 10 reasons from the individual lists.

To complete the assignment, have students review the following Web sites:

Research on Youth and Voting

CIRCLE (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)

<http://www.civicyouth.org>

"CIRCLE is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy and is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Carnegie Corporation of New York. Since 2001, CIRCLE has conducted, collected, and funded research on the civic and political participation of young Americans."

- **Statistics on the youth voting posted to the CIRCLE Site:**
http://www.civicyouth.org/quick/youth_voting.htm

What a Difference One Vote Makes

<http://pbskids.org/democracy/vote/onevote1916.html>

This Web site, sponsored by PBS, offers an interactive timeline that students can use to explore how one vote has made an important difference in elections over the years.

Groups Working to Encourage Youth to Vote

Citizen Change

<http://www.citizenchange.com>

"Founded by entertainer Sean 'P. Diddy' Combs, Citizen Change has one mission: to make voting hot, sexy and relevant to a generation that hasn't reached full participation in the political process. This organization was created to educate, motivate, and empower the more than 42 million Americans aged 18 to 30 that are eligible to vote on November 2nd -- also known as the 'forgotten ones.'"

Rock the Vote

<http://www.rockthevote.com>

"Rock the Vote is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, founded in 1990 in response to a wave of attacks on freedom of speech and artistic expression. Rock the Vote engages youth in the political process by incorporating the entertainment community and youth culture into its activities, and works to harness cutting-edge trends and pop culture to make political participation cool."

Youth Vote Coalition

<http://www.youthvote.org>

"The Youth Vote Coalition is a national nonpartisan coalition of diverse organizations dedicated to increasing political and civic participation among young people; building an inclusive, accountable, and responsive government; and increasing public awareness about the value of participation in democracy through the electoral process. The Youth Vote Coalition has over 100 national members who represent youth in the USA."

Kids Voting USA

<http://www.kidsvotingusa.org/>

"Kids Voting USA (KVUSA) is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that teaches students about the concepts of citizenship, civic responsibility, democracy and the importance of political participation."

INTERNET RESOURCES

In addition to the Web resources included in the guide, students and their teachers might want to look further.

Media literacy note: As with all issues, especially ones that are politically charged, students must learn to be savvy and discriminating readers. No Web site can provide all the information a student needs to know, and teachers should encourage students to "interrogate" Web sites even as they are reading. Guiding questions as they work through these activities should be: What did you learn from this source? What didn't you learn from this source? Who sponsors this source? What bias might the sponsor have?

The Choice 2004

<http://www.pbs.org/frontline/shows/choice2004>

The companion Web site to the FRONTLINE film provides collections on the candidates' lives and careers; interviews with family members, close advisers, friends, colleagues and political adversaries; glimpses of the defining moments of the candidates' lives and the attributes they bring to presidential leadership; readings on leadership; biographical chronologies; and the opportunity to view "The Choice 2004" online.

Statistics on Voting and Voting Trends

U.S. Census: Voting and Registration data

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html>

This U.S. Census Bureau link features data on voting and registration patterns from the 1998, 2000, and 2002 elections. It also offers historical data and presents voting trends over time, and estimates of the voting age population from the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Federal Election Commission:

<http://www.fec.gov/index.shtml>

The Federal Election Commission hosts a site that offers information on: recent election results, voter registration and turnout statistics, historical data, the electoral college, the U.S. federal election system, and the administrative structure of U.S. elections.

Voting and Elections

<http://www.firstgov.gov/Citizen/Topics/Voting.shtml>

FirstGov.gov is an interagency initiative administered by the U.S. General Services Administration, and its Web site serves as the official U.S. gateway to all government information. Its site presents information on the electoral college, individual candidates, voting trends, and volunteering and contributions.

Campaign Speeches

Great American Speeches

<http://www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/>

A PBS site that presents an archive of speeches, an American history challenge, pop-up trivia, a wordsmith challenge, activities for students, and ideas for teachers. These links are useful for both students and teachers.

Presidential Rhetoric.com

<http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/>

"PresidentialRhetoric.com provides news, information and resources for those interested in studying the presidency from a rhetorical perspective. Focusing largely on contemporary presidential issues,

PresidentialRhetoric.com assists researchers in locating recent information relating to American presidents, political communication, and rhetorical criticism."

Campaign Advertisements

The Living Room Candidate

<http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/index.php>

This page hosts an archive of televised presidential campaign commercials from 1952–present. The commercials are organized and searchable by election year, issue and type of commercial.

Where the Ad War Is Being Fought

http://polisci.wisc.edu/tvadvertising/Press_Clippings/Press_Clipping_PDFs/071804%20NYTIMES_AD_GRAPHIC.pdf

This link features a graphic from *The New York Times* based on data from the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project that highlights "where and on who" the campaigns are focusing in campaign 2004. This graphic reflects data between March 3 and June 20, 2004. [Note: This is a pdf file; Adobe Acrobat required.]

Online Campaigning: A Primer

<http://www.ipdi.org/UploadedFiles/onlinecampaigning2002.pdf>

This link features a guide to creating campaign Web sites developed for the 2002 midterm election cycle by the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet at George Washington University. This link could be helpful in providing students with ideas and strategies in creating Web sites for class projects. [Note: This is a pdf file; Adobe Acrobat required.]

Campaign Analysis

FactCheck.org

<http://www.factcheck.org>

Factcheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit project run out of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. This project reviews the "factual accuracy" of the television ads, debate statements, speeches, interviews and news releases of the George W. Bush and John F. Kerry campaigns. The site aims to reduce the "level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics."