

Activity 2: The Election of 1864

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Imagine that it is 1864 and you are a member of the campaign staff for either the Republican or the Democratic Party in the upcoming presidential election. The class will be broken up into two large groups: those favoring McClellan and those favoring Lincoln. As part of each of these presidential campaigns, it is your responsibility to get your chosen leader elected. Your group has selected you for the following role:

Candidate (Lincoln or McClellan)

You are the man of the hour. It is your job first and foremost to make sure you know you and your party's positions on the major issues. Be sure to rehearse both your opening and closing speeches, and familiarize yourself with the questions that your team is developing. It may be helpful to also understand your opponent's beliefs so you can challenge him during questioning.

The following documents will be helpful in understanding the major issues in the election, as well as you and your opponents' views on them.

Republican Party Platform of 1864:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1472>

"The Momentous Day," *New York Times*, November 8, 1864:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1480>

Democratic Party Platform of 1864:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1489>

"Last Words," *New York World*, November 8, 1864:

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Campaign Manager

The role of the Campaign Manager is all-encompassing. It is your job to ensure that all of the other jobs are being accomplished in a timely manner. You will also want to proofread all speeches and make sure that they are on topic. It is also your responsibility to practice the opening/closing speeches with your candidate and quiz him on the questions that are likely to be asked.

The following documents will be helpful in understanding the major issues in the election, as well as your candidate's (and his opponent's) views on them.

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Speechwriter(s)

After the Intro speaker introduces the candidate, candidates give a speech briefly explaining their key beliefs. Your job is to write your candidate's opening speech. This speech should be approximately three minutes in length and should highlight the key issues of your platform.

If your team has more than one speechwriter, the second speechwriter will write a closing speech for the candidate. While this is similar to the opening speech, the key focus of this speech is why your candidate is a better choice for president than his opponent is.

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Intro Speaker(s)

Your job is to give a brief (3-5 minute) introduction for your candidate. You will want to mention key facts about his past, both professionally and personally. You may wish to utilize the following websites to gain information about your candidate:

Brief Biography of Abraham Lincoln: <http://elections.harpweek.com/1864/bio-1864-Full.asp?UniqueID=17&Year=1864>

Brief Biography of George B. McClellan: <http://elections.harpweek.com/1864/bio-1864-Full.asp?UniqueID=18&Year=1864>

Lincoln, Grant, and the Election of 1864: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/liho/1864/1864a.htm>

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Question Writer(s)

After reading the documents for your candidate, your job is to come up with ten questions that you would like either your candidate or his opponent to answer. Questions should center on the key political issues of the election of 1864. Submit the questions to your teacher before the debate.

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Publicist(s)

Your job is to create posters, buttons, and flyers promoting your candidate and his virtues. Each team should create at least five posters to hang around the room prior to the debate. Items such as flyers and buttons could be handed out to students in the class immediately before the debate begins. Such items should not only be historically accurate (i.e., accurately representing your candidate's views) but should also be visually appealing. Your goal is to use visual aids to convince people why your candidate is the best.

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You will find good examples of actual campaign materials from the 1864 election at this site:

<http://elections.harpweek.com/1864/cartoons-1864-list.asp?Year=1864>

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