

SPECIAL EDITION

A newsletter for ★ educators

New Frontiers

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

TWITTER UPDATES



Join JFK on the campaign trail by following @Kennedy1960 on Twitter!

• September 18

JFK's campaign flyer clears up false charges and rumors:
[HTTP://BIT.LY/D4VI2C](http://bit.ly/D4VI2C)

• September 26

Memo to volunteers about greeting JFK before the first debate:
[HTTP://BIT.LY/CEDPAE](http://bit.ly/CEDPAE)

• September 27

"I think party labels mean something. The Republicans never would have nominated me, and the Dems never would have nominated Mr. Nixon."

• September 28

Did you miss the First Great Debate? Watch JFK's opening statement (video): [HTTP://BIT.LY/ADNG9B](http://bit.ly/ADNG9B)

• September 29

"Thomas Jefferson said the disease of liberty is catching. I think it is catching in our time and I want it to spread the world over." ★



Lights... Camera... Debates!

On September 26, 1960, about 70 million Americans tuned in to see Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Richard M. Nixon, side by side, in the first live televised presidential debate. The stakes were high: polls showed Nixon slightly ahead of Kennedy, 47% to 46%.

Just ten years earlier, in 1950, approximately 10% of American families had owned a television set. By 1960, the figure had skyrocketed to about 90%. Fascinated by images of the presidential campaign, voters had an unprecedented closeup of the candidates that night, and witnessed two very different politicians. Well-prepared and confident, Kennedy addressed the cameras, speaking directly to the audience at home. His tanned face and dark suit contrasted well against the gray background of the studio. Recovering from a knee injury, a pale Nixon sweated profusely under the studio lights. His quick glances at Kennedy made him look nervous and uncertain. He faded into the gray background in his lighter-colored suit.

Although three debates followed, that first encounter is thought by some historians to have changed the course of the election. Many voters evaluated the candidates based on their television appearance that night. The results of a poll following the debate reported Kennedy edging out Nixon, 49% to 46%. ★



October 21, 1960. A television screen shot of ABC News footage showing Senator John F. Kennedy during his fourth presidential debate with Vice President Richard M. Nixon. New York, New York.



October 21, 1960. A television screen shot of ABC News footage showing Vice President Richard M. Nixon during his fourth presidential debate with Senator John F. Kennedy. New York, New York.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BURTON BERNISKY/JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, BOSTON

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Classroom Activities: Analyzing Political Debates

For Elementary School Audiences

Televised Debates: Candidates Take a Stand

The 1960 debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon are historically significant because they were the first live televised presidential debates and they had a great impact on voters in a very close election. As students investigate this historic event from the 1960 presidential campaign, they will learn how political debates help voters select a candidate for office.

Essential Question

What criteria should voters use to select a leader?

Standards

- ✓ *National Standards for Civics and Government V: What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?*
- ✓ *National History Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation*
- ✓ *NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts 4, 5, 6*

Background Information

During the fall of 1960, polls showed that Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy were in a very tight presidential race. As November drew near, the two candidates pushed to prove that they had the necessary qualities to be the next president of the United States. Still recovering from a knee injury, Nixon dashed from state to state, hoping to fulfill his campaign promise to

visit all fifty states before the election. Kennedy campaigned hard to convince the public that although he was just 43 years old and had not yet completed his second term as senator, he would make an excellent leader.

In September 1960, a relatively new medium would help to reinvent the traditional campaign. With 90% of American households owning a television, voters were able to watch presidential candidates for the first time in history, side by side. Kennedy and Nixon had agreed to discuss their opinions on important issues in a series of four nationally televised debates. The first debate captured the attention of the nation. Viewers watched to see what the two candidates would say, where they stood on the issues, and how they responded to difficult questions. And what did they see?

Kennedy and Nixon were both skilled debaters. Nixon had been a star debater in high school, and had polished his talent ever since. Kennedy was an appealing figure to watch and he had learned how to speak to television audiences. His confidence, knowledge, and leadership ability came through during the debates, and this reassured voters who had questions about his background and experience.

Did the debates help either candidate win over voters? Before the first debate, a Gallup poll showed Nixon only slightly ahead, 47% to 46%. After the first debate, Kennedy had edged out Nixon, 49% to 46%. A survey after the four debates showed that of an estimated four million voters who were undecided before the debates, three million became JFK supporters. Some historians believe that the debates made the difference in this close election.



KENNEDY TIMELINE NOMINATION TO INAUGURATION

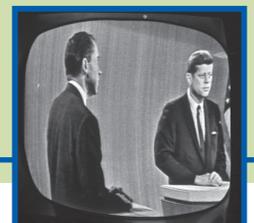
July 13, 1960:
JFK wins
Democratic
presidential
nomination

July 28, 1960:
Nixon wins Republican
presidential nomination



September 12, 1960:
JFK addresses the Greater Houston
Ministerial Association in Houston,
TX on the issue of religion

September 26, 1960:
First Kennedy-
Nixon debate,
Chicago, IL



Classroom Activities: Analyzing Political Debates, *continued*

choose, invite students to change sides if they have changed their opinion after listening to their classmates' responses.

4. Show students the photograph of the debate and ask the following questions:

- What do you see in this photograph?
- What people do you see? What objects do you see?
- What do you think the people are doing?

5. Explain that the photograph was taken on October 21, 1960 at the fourth and final debate between Senator Kennedy and Vice President Nixon. Describe the purpose of a debate, emphasizing how the “take a stand” activity models a debate. Share the background information about the campaign of 1960 provided above.

Part II: Picking a Winner

1. Ask students to imagine that it is the morning of September 26, 1960, the day of the first televised presidential debate. At home and at school, people are talking about the event and how they will get to see Senator Kennedy and Vice President Nixon on television that evening. Explain that debates provide a way for people to learn about the candidates in order to help them choose who they will vote for in an election.

2. Show students footage from the first debate. Access a 15-minute documentary on the first live televised presidential debates by visiting <http://www.museum.tv/debateweb/html/greatdebate/index.htm>. (Excerpts begin at 4:23 minutes into the film.)

3. Ask students to think about what people can learn from a debate and record their answers on a piece of chart paper. You may use the following prompts to help students generate ideas:

- What will viewers learn about the candidates during the debate? (*what they look like, how well they respond to questions, where they stand on the issues*)
- What might they learn about the candidates' appearance? (*hairstyle, height, style of dress, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact*)
- What might they learn about their knowledge and experience? (*the details they give on a topic, their ideas, what they have accomplished*)

- What will they learn about their personalities? (*how they respond to difficult questions, how they hold up under pressure, their emotional responses, confidence*)
- What will they learn about how they speak? (*their vocabulary, tone of voice, expressions, pace, accent, clarity*)
- How might a debate influence how voters select a candidate to vote for in the election?

4. Explain to students that when people watch a debate, they look to see if candidates have important leadership qualities. Ask students to list what qualities they think leaders should have and record their answers on the chart paper. You might also want students to consider if there are important qualities that are not evident in a televised debate or if there are qualities that a televised debate emphasizes that are NOT important to lead a nation (i.e. appearance).

Part III: Creating a Class Book: How to Select a Candidate

1. Assign students to create a guide book to help voters pick the best candidate to lead the country (or state, city, etc.). In small groups, pairs, or as individuals, have students select one of the qualities listed on the chart paper. Each group (or individual) will write a paragraph describing the quality, why the quality is important to have as a leader, and how it can be identified in a candidate. Each quality should be accompanied by an illustration. Assemble the pages into a class book.

Extension

What are some important issues in an upcoming election? Select an issue that is central to the election and have students research the topic. Hold a debate with selected students stating their reasons why they agree or disagree with an idea or policy. Conclude by having the class vote on the winner and discuss their choices. ★

For Middle and High School Audiences

Political Debates: Advising a Candidate

Political debates are an important part of the election process, whether on the local, state or national level. On September 26, 1960, an estimated seventy million Americans,

Classroom Activities: Analyzing Political Debates, *continued*

Materials

(available at www.jfklibrary.org—“For Teachers” section)

- *JFK in History: Campaign of 1960*
- Excerpts from September 26, 1960 debate
- Clark M. Clifford memo, dated September 27, 1960
- Debate score sheet

Procedure

1. Have students read *JFK in History: Campaign of 1960* for historical background on the debates. (www.jfklibrary.org—“For Teachers” section)
2. Have students read excerpts from the September 26, 1960 debate. (The entire debate is available online at <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/JFK+in+History/Campaign+of+1960.htm>)
3. Provide students with Clark M. Clifford’s memo to JFK dated September 27, 1960.
4. Discuss the following:
 - What points did Clifford make in writing that Kennedy was “the winner”? (*JFK was concise, convincing, and kept Nixon on the defensive*)
 - Brainstorm how a candidate can be convincing, and how he/she may keep the other candidate on the defensive.
 - What were Clifford’s main concerns? (*Kennedy should make sure voters know that his political goals are different from Nixon’s; he needs to differentiate himself; and he needs to show more personal warmth.*)
 - Why would it be important for the challenger to differentiate his goals from those of the incumbent?
 - What were Clifford’s suggestions for dealing with these concerns? (*JFK should be specific in bringing up the*

differences in their goals; he should bring up his discussions with ordinary people and his contacts with Navy servicemen to show he understands the concerns of average Americans.)

5. Use Clifford’s concerns and suggestions as you discuss with your students the important attributes that make a candidate a “winner” of a debate.
6. Brainstorm the issues in an upcoming election in your area. Write them on the board. Have students discuss where they stand on the issues.
7. Have students research where the candidates stand on these issues, and write a one-page paper describing which candidate’s views are most compatible with their own and why.

Assessment

For homework, have students watch a political debate, filling in a “score sheet” to help them evaluate the debate. (We have suggested a few attributes in the handout, but you should add your own based on your previous brainstorming with students.) Have them use their “score sheet” to write a memo to their chosen candidate in the style of Clark Clifford noting:

- who they think “won” the debate;
- what worked or didn’t work for the candidate;
- how their candidate can improve his/her image;
- what their candidate can do to better persuade voters that he/she is the right choice for them.

Encourage students to use their memo as a way to give specific help to their candidate, not as an opportunity to denigrate the other candidate. ★



2010 National Student/Parent Mock Election

The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum will once again coordinate the National Student/Parent Mock Election for Massachusetts. This voter education program actively engages students in grades K-12 in state and national campaigns, and emphasizes the importance of voting and the power of their ballots.

As state coordinator, the Kennedy Library will distribute curriculum packets featuring candidates’ biographies, their positions on the issues, and classroom activities.

On Mock Election Day, students will vote for the candidate who best represents them. Teachers will report their class’s results to the Kennedy Library, which will announce the results of the election.

Mock Election Day is Thursday, October 28th. Massachusetts educators may register by emailing Mock.Election@nara.gov. Educators outside of Massachusetts may sign up at www.NationalMockElection.com. ★

UPCOMING KENNEDY LIBRARY FORUMS

The Kennedy Library has several exciting forums this fall relating to civics and history curricula. Teachers and students are invited to attend. To register for a forum or for more information, visit www.jfklibrary.org.



A Conversation with Condoleezza Rice

Thursday, October 28,
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Former Secretary of State **Condoleezza Rice** discusses her family memoir, *Extraordinary, Ordinary People*, with Ambassador Nicholas Burns. ★



An Afternoon with Garrison Keillor

Sunday, December 5,
2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Garrison Keillor discusses why humor is a fundamental in American life. ★



Afghanistan: The Soldiers' View

Veterans' Day,
Thursday, November 11,
5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Sebastian Junger discusses his new book, *War*, about

his experience being embedded with a U.S. army platoon for 15 months, and the documentary based on it, *Restrepo*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance. ★

DANIE PENLAND, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



A Conversation with Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and David Souter

Monday, December 13,
5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Retired Justices **Sandra Day O'Connor** and **David Souter** attest to the importance of civic education in a conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* reporter and Yale Law School Fellow **Linda Greenhouse**. ★

STEVE PETTEWAY



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Ramon de los Reyes Spanish Dance Theatre, *Bravo Flamenco!*

Monday, October 11, 2010
10:30 a.m.

Get ready for Flamenco, a stylish and percussive dance from Spain, presented by the world-renowned Ramon de los Reyes Spanish Dance Theatre. ★



Gould and Stearns, *Simple Gifts*

Friday, November 26, 2010
10:30 a.m.

The comedy duo Gould and Stearns will make you laugh with a play about holiday traditions. ★



Len Cabral, *Spooky Stories*

Saturday, October 30, 2010
10:30 a.m.

Storyteller Len Cabral shares his favorite Halloween tales.

Prizes will be awarded for the best costumes! ★



Tanglewood Marionettes, *The Dragon King*

Tuesday, December 28, 2010
10:30 a.m.

Journey beneath the sea in this story of fantasy, courage, and wonder from Chinese folklore. ★

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BRING YOUR STUDENTS TO THE KENNEDY LIBRARY!

The Library offers Museum-based programs for elementary, middle, and high school students from September to June on topics ranging from a biography of JFK to the challenges of the Cold War.

For more information, visit the “For Teachers” section of our web site at www.jfklibrary.org or contact Esther Kohn at esther.kohn@nara.gov (elementary school programs); Sam Rubin at sam.rubin@nara.gov (middle school programs); or Nina Tisch at nina.tisch@nara.gov (high school programs). ★



Students from the Blackstone Elementary School in Boston pose after a program.

Additional support for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum’s history and civic education programs is provided by: Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation; Connell Family Fund; the John F. Kennedy Irish Abroad Legacy Gift; and



Museum Hours
Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Thanksgiving,
Christmas, and New Year’s Day

*The Kennedy Library and
Department of Education and
Public Programs offers free
museum passes to teachers
considering a field trip to the
Library. Please call 617.514.1600.*

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