

## Week #2: Unconventional Conventions!

Now that we've created our political parties, it's time to throw a party. This week we're getting ready to watch the real conventions on TV, so our purpose is to learn the vocabulary, become familiar with the different types of speeches, so that we will understand what we're watching.

### **Read-Along Teach-Along Sheet: Political Conventions**

There is a lot of information to pack in here and I glossed over some of the details of the nominating process in the interest of not overloading the students. When they watch the convention on TV and see each state's delegation casting their votes, it will become more clear.

### **Writing and Reading: The "A Man Who" Speech**

Beginning readers may not be able to wade through all of the two introductory speeches I linked to. If you are reading them aloud to your students, make sure to do it with high drama. After the students' own introductions are written, have them practice introducing each other as well as being introduced. I purposefully made the format very short so that multiple ones could be written. Write an introductory speech for the dog. Write an introductory speech for Jack and Annie. Etc.

### **Science and Reading: The Physical Effects of Political Rhetoric**

Here's a miniature science project. This will be more interesting if the student delivers the speech at top volume with many gestures. Also, make sure the clapping and cheering during the listening segment is very enthusiastic and possibly even aerobic.

### **Thinking Activity: Choosing a Running Mate**

I had originally planned for siblings to be each other's running mates, but I think now that it's better if the students invent someone to fit the ticket. If your student has someone in mind that exists in real life, that would be cool too.

### **Art: How to Make a Duct Tape Hat**

Make a tough, colorful, waterproof hat out of two rolls of duct tape! Wear it to watch the speeches on TV! This lesson is available online with how-to illustrations. <http://tinyurl.com/5ad8e4>

**Multimedia Assignment:** Watch the Conventions on TV!

## Read-Along Teach-Along: Political Conventions

Each political party gets to choose one **candidate** for President. That candidate then chooses his **Vice President**. The pair of candidates is called a **ticket**. The contest that leads up to the election is sometimes called a "**race**." The Vice Presidential candidate that the Presidential candidate chooses is called a "**running mate**."

Candidates used to be chosen by members of **Congress** in secret meetings called **caucuses**. People didn't like this! They wanted the choice to be more **democratic**, meaning that more people would have a say in **choosing the candidate**. So the parties began having **primaries and conventions** so regular people could vote and participate. A primary is an **election** within each party. A convention is a **huge party** that lasts for days, attended by **delegates and leaders of the party**.

Each state holds a **primary**, an election where people in each political party compete with **each other**. Whoever gets the most votes in each state sends the most **delegates** to the national **convention**. During the convention, delegates officially **vote**, and a candidate is officially **nominated**. This will be the person to compete against the other parties' candidates for President in the **general election**.

The convention has two other purposes. The first is to **adopt a platform**. A platform is a statement of **beliefs and issues** that are important to the party. The second purpose is to **get excited** about the general election in November. Delegates and guests waves signs, wear funny hats, yell, laugh, cheer, and have **pep rallies**.

### Challenge Questions:

1. What is another meaning of the word "convention"?
2. How do you think delegates are arranged on the floor of the convention hall? Why?
3. Why do people yell and cheer during political speeches?
4. Can you make up a rhyming cheer that includes your name?
5. Look up some pictures of conventions on the internet.

# Political Speeches: The “A Man Who” Speech

At every convention, before the nominated candidate gives his acceptance speech, he or she is introduced. The introductory speech has three functions:

1. To grab the audience’s attention.
2. To describe and praise the person being introduced.
3. To get the audience excited and cheering.

Read the introductory speeches delivered at the Democratic and Republican conventions in 2004.

Max Cleland’s introduction of John Kerry: <http://tinyurl.com/6fpknt>

George Pataki’s introduction of George Bush: <http://tinyurl.com/5vjfoo>

Why is this speech sometimes called the “A Man Who” speech? Because the phrase “a man who” often appears in the speech. Look at this example of an introductory speech:

*“Ladies and gentlemen, our country is in a terrible situation and we need help! Only a truly great person can save us from the problems that we have! I stand here to introduce a man who has been an inspiration to this country for many years. He is a man who has proven himself to be an honest, faithful, hard-working leader. A man who will challenge, thrill, and delight you. A man who will lead you into the next four years of happiness and joy. Please join me in giving a warm welcome to the next President of the United States, Joe Jones!”*

Of course, if the candidate is a woman, this becomes the “A Woman Who” speech. A good introductory speech can get the audience screaming and yelling, so that when the candidate comes onto the stage, they’re all ready to listen to what he or she has to say.

## Assignment

1. Write down two problems that you see in the world, that you intend to fix as President. These can be big or small.
2. Write down two things about yourself that are amazing and great, that will qualify you to be the President.
3. Create a introductory speech for yourself in five sentences. The first two sentences should get the audience’s attention by describing the problems they are having. The second two sentences should praise you and tell good things about you. The last sentence should invite the audience to cheer for you as you come on stage.
4. Have your home teacher read the introduction and then burst into the room to thunderous applause.

# Science of Political Rhetoric: What a Feeling!

How does a political speech affect your body? Is it like exercise? Does it make you feel tired? How does running for President compare to running a real race?

For the following exercises, you will read and listen to this piece of stirring political rhetoric from John McCain's speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention:

"We are Americans first, Americans last, Americans always. Let us argue our differences. But remember we are not enemies, but comrades in a war against a real enemy, and take courage from the knowledge that our military superiority is matched only by the superiority of our ideals, and our unconquerable love for them. Our adversaries are weaker than us in arms and men, but weaker still in causes. They fight to express a hatred for all that is good in humanity. We fight for love of freedom and justice, a love that is invincible. Keep that faith. Keep your courage. Stick together. Stay strong. Do not yield. Do not flinch. Stand up. Stand up with our President and fight. We're Americans. We're Americans, and we'll never surrender."

**Question:** Does reading and listening to political rhetoric affect your pulse and breathing rate as much as running in place?

**Hypothesis:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Experiment:

1. Record your resting pulse and breathing rate in beats per minute and breaths per minute. Count for 10 seconds and then multiply by six.
2. Have someone read the above speech to you while you quietly listen, and record your pulse and breathing.
3. Listen to the speech, this time clapping and cheering after each sentence. Record your data.
4. Deliver the speech yourself, as loudly as you can. Record your pulse and breathing rate. Have someone time you while you speak.
5. Run in place for the same amount of time that you spent delivering the speech. Record your data.

## Observations:

	Resting	After Listening Quietly to Speech	After Cheering and Clapping During Speech	After Delivering Speech Loudly with Gestures	After running for equal amount of time.
Pulse					
Breathing Rate					

**Conclusion:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Thinking Activity: Choosing a Running Mate

When a Presidential candidate chooses a running mate, he or she has to think of these criteria:

1. Would this person make a good President? If anything happens to me, can this person lead the country?
2. Where is this person from? It might be a good idea to choose a running mate from a different part of the country, to reach more voters. For example, if I'm from the South, maybe I should choose someone from the North.
3. What does this person believe? A running mate should agree with me on the most important issues, but should have his or her own ideas too. Choosing someone with different ideas can reach out to more voters. For example, if protecting the environment is my most important issue, my running mate should agree with me on that, but also have another issue to talk about, like improving health care.
4. Who is this person? If I choose someone too much like me, then the ticket will be **redundant**. If I choose someone that's too different from me, the ticket will be **unbalanced**. I should choose someone who is similar but different.

If the Presidential candidate chooses a great running mate, the ticket is **balanced** and voters can get excited about both candidates.

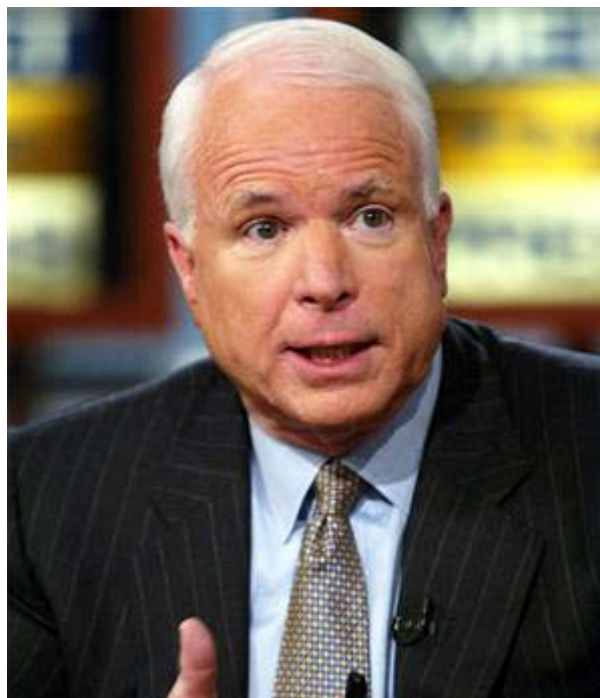
### Invent a Running Mate:

1. What is your running mate's name?
2. What makes your running mate a good leader?
3. Where did he or she grow up?
4. What are his or her most important issues?
5. How is he or she like you? How is he or she different?

### Challenge Questions:

1. Define these words: Redundant, balanced, criteria.
2. Write an introductory speech for your pretend running mate.
3. Does having a good-sounding last name help a candidate? Would we ever elect Mr. John Hoogleboogleton?
4. Research why a team of candidates is called a ticket.
5. Should running mates also be friends?

## Balancing the Ticket: Page 1



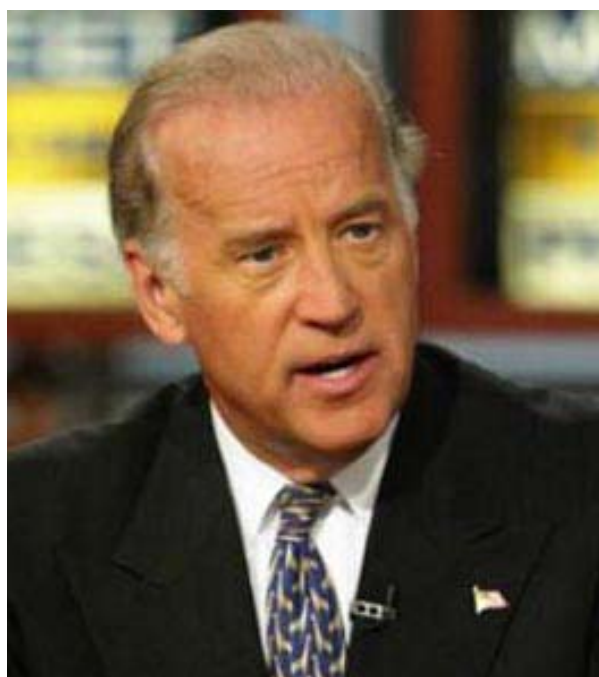
**John McCain**



**Sarah Palin**



**Barack Obama**



**Joe Biden**

# Balancing the Ticket: Page 2

Look at the pictures on the previous page. Using the pictures and what you know about these candidates from watching the conventions, think about these questions:

1. List three things that are the same and three things that are different about John McCain and Sarah Palin. Think about physical appearance, identity, experience, geographic location, and personality:

Same

Different

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2. List three things that are the same and three things that are different about Barack Obama and Joe Biden. Think about physical appearance, identity, experience, geographic location, and personality:

Same

Different

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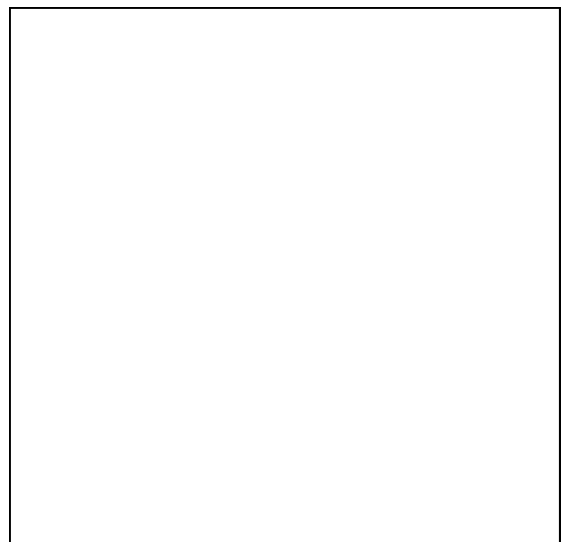
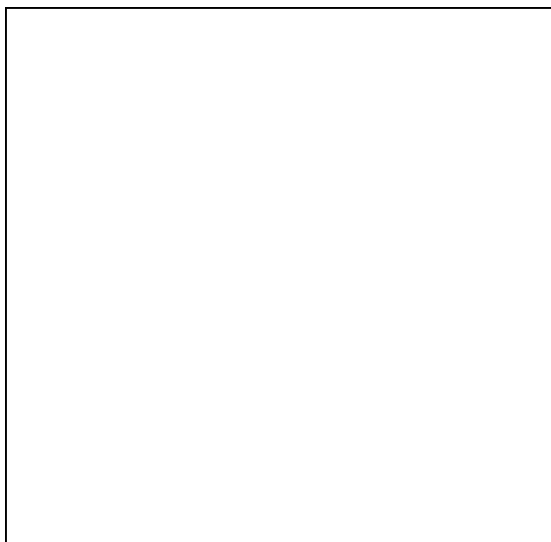
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3. Do you think it's more important to find a running mate who agrees with your ideas or a running mate who balances your ticket?
4. Do you think that appearance is important when choosing a running mate?
5. Try cutting out the pictures on the previous page and rearranging them. Mix and match. How would the tickets change if John McCain were with Joe Biden and Barack Obama were with Sarah Palin?
6. What would you think of a ticket with two women (like the Green party has) or a ticket with two men (like the Democrats)?
7. Sarah Palin is the first Republican woman to be on a presidential ticket. Why do you think John McCain chose her?
8. Draw pictures of yourself and your invented running mate in the boxes below. Mix and match yourself in with the candidate pictures you cut out on page 1.



# Promoting A Candidate: The Biographical Video

First watch the following videos from the Democratic National Convention:

Hillary Clinton's Intro: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4wzPHjBzU>

Barack Obama's Intro: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XL0KxjeKlrM>

Discussion Questions:

1. Immediately after watching the Clinton video: List three things you remember seeing in the video.

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2. Immediately after watching the Obama video: List three things you remember seeing in the video.

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3. How would you describe the music in the Barack Obama video?
4. How would you describe the music in the Hillary Clinton video?
5. Barack Obama is the nominee for President from the Democratic Party. What is the purpose of this video? What were the people who made the video trying to accomplish by making it?
6. Hillary Clinton almost won the nomination instead of Barack Obama. Many of her supporters were really angry and were there at the convention. What do you think the purpose of this video was? What were its creators trying to accomplish?
7. The Clinton video had clips from comedy TV shows. It pointed out that she is a bad singer and has a funny laugh. Do you recall seeing any laughing in the Obama video?
8. Why might the Clinton video be more upbeat and funny, and the Obama video be more serious?
9. What are three moments from your life that you would want to include in a biographical video about you?

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10. What are three songs you'd like to include?

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