



Lesson 4: The Candidates

Standard

- Students know ways people can influence the decisions and actions of their government such as voting and taking an active role in political parties and other organizations that attempt to influence public policy and elections (McREL Civics 28.2)

Vocabulary

- ballot
- candidate
- politics
- run

Materials

- *The Candidates Content-Area Vocabulary* (page 52)
- *The Candidates Background Information* (page 53)
- *The Candidates Graphic Organizer* (page 54)
- *James K. Polk: Presidential Candidate Primary Source Connection* (pages 55–56)
- *Meet the Triangle Party Candidate* (page 57)
- *Meet the Square Party Candidate* (page 58)
- *The Candidates Comprehension Check* (page 59)



1 Introduce the Content

1. If you did not do the lesson titled *Political Parties* (page 16), then divide your class into two political parties at this time. One party is the Triangle Party. The other party is the Square Party. Allow students to name and create symbols for their parties.
2. Have students work with their political parties. Explain that they will meet their candidates soon. Have the Triangle Party think about ways candidates can help voters know who they are. Have the Square Party think about ways voters can get to know the candidates better. Have one spokesperson from each group share their ideas. List them on the board.
3. Distribute copies of *The Candidates Content Area Vocabulary* activity sheet (page 52) to students. Review the definitions as a class. Then, have students work with a partner to complete the activity. You may also ask students to complete one of the following Vocabulary Extension Activities.

✓ Vocabulary Extension Activities

- Ask students to explain how each term is related to a presidential election. Have them show the relationships on a separate sheet of paper.
- Tell students to pretend they are candidates who are “tossing their hats into the ring.” Explain this idiom. Have students use each vocabulary term in a sentence related to this idea.



Lesson 4: The Candidates *(cont.)*

4. Explain that the process to run for president is more complicated than a person just announcing that he or she will run. Review the qualifications a person must have to run for president (see Lesson 2). Explain that a person must also be supported by his or her party. Distribute *The Candidates Background Information* activity sheet (page 53) and *The Candidates Graphic Organizer* (page 54) activity sheets to students. Read and discuss the information as a class or in small groups. Review how candidates might help voters know who they are, and how voters might get to know candidates better. Then allow students to complete the activity sheet independently or with their group.

Differentiation Idea

On sentence strips, list the steps that candidates take to help voters know them better, and the steps voters take to get to know candidates better. Meet with **below-level students** and **English language learners** in a small group to review the background information. Have students sort the sentence strips under two categories: Candidates Do This and Voters Do This.

5. Distribute copies of the *James K. Polk: Presidential Candidate Primary Source Connection* activity sheets (pages 55–56) to students. Discuss the photograph and information with the class. Then, allow students to complete the activity sheet with partners.



Conduct and Assess

1. Review the responsibilities of candidates and voters. Have students discuss the concept of *politics*.
2. Explain that students will meet their candidates now. Divide the class into their political groups. Have each group decide on one spokesperson. Distribute the appropriate *Meet [My] Candidate* activity sheet (page 57 or 58) to the spokesperson in each party. Read the directions as a class. Then, have the groups read about their candidate and record their ideas. Explain that the ideas they record will become part of the candidate's campaign in the next lesson.
3. Collect the groups' work for use during the next lesson.
4. Distribute copies of *The Candidates Comprehension Check* activity sheet (page 59) to assess students' understanding of candidates. Use the *Comprehension Check Evaluation Rubric* (page 15) to evaluate students' work. For further comprehension, have students complete the *Research Extension* (page 51) for homework.



Lesson 4: The Candidates *(cont.)*

Extension Ideas

Find Out More

Research to find out which presidential election had the most candidates and which had the fewest candidates. Report your findings in the form of a graph.

Research Extension

Have students research posters, advertisements, speeches, and public appearances that past presidents have given when they were candidates for president. Have students write the topics of the speeches or summarize the posters. They can share this information with their political party as they begin to prepare for the campaign.

Connecting Elections

Students meet new people all the time. Some of these people may become good friends. But everyone must get to know each other better first. Have students think about a time when they met someone new. It might be a coach, a new student at school, or a distant cousin. Ask them to write a story to tell about how they got to know this person better.



Name: _____ Date: _____

The Candidates Content-Area Vocabulary

Directions: Look at the terms below. Write a definition for each vocabulary term in your own words. Then, write or draw an example for each term.

ballot—a sheet of paper used to cast a vote
candidate—a person running for political office
politics—the act of being involved in government
run—to compete in a race for political office

Vocabulary Term	Definition	Example
ballot		
candidate		
politics		
run		



Name: _____ Date: _____

The Candidates Background Information

Many people dream of being the next president or the next governor. Running for office takes a lot of dedication and hard work. First, people who want to run for public office must qualify for that race. They must check to be sure they can **run** for office. Then, they must be sure important people in **politics** know who they are. They attend meetings. They smile and speak a lot. They also shake hands with people. Finally, they get on the **ballot**. Each office has different steps to follow to do this. But, it is always important to make their name well known.

The people who want to be elected to public office are **candidates**. Candidates also need voters to know who they are. They want voters to know about their ideas. They hope the voters agree with their ideas. Then, the voters will probably vote for them!

Some candidates get on the ballot without a lot of name recognition. This means that not very many people know who they are. They must work extra hard to make sure the voters know their names by Election Day.

The candidates work to be sure you know who they are. They might appear on television ads or radio shows. Voters can hear about their ideas. Voters can hear how they might solve problems.

You might see their names and faces on billboards or signs. But, it is not all up to the candidates. Voters can learn more about the candidates by getting involved. Voters can become part of a political party. They can help with elections. They can attend meetings to hear the candidates speak. They can be part of another group that needs politicians. Say you want to help homeless animals. Your area might have a group that works to help find homes for homeless animals. But, this group needs help. They need support. Politicians can give this group the support it needs. So, the group leader might ask a candidate for help. In exchange, the group leader promises to support the candidate and vote for him or her. This is politics. People make promises to help each other. The candidate promises to help the group, and the group leader promises to support the candidate.

Voters have a very important responsibility when they vote. They vote for people who they believe will lead the government well. It is important that they know who their candidates are. They should know which candidates they agree with. They should know which candidates they believe will do the best job. Then, they can help the government become better.



Name: _____ Date: _____

The Candidates Graphic Organizer

Directions: Use the information from *The Candidates Background Information* activity sheet to explain each person's part during an election.

To help the voters know them, the candidates do these things:

- _____

- _____

- _____

To help themselves know the candidates better, voters can do these things:

- _____

- _____

- _____

1. Why is it important for voters to get to know the candidates before they vote?

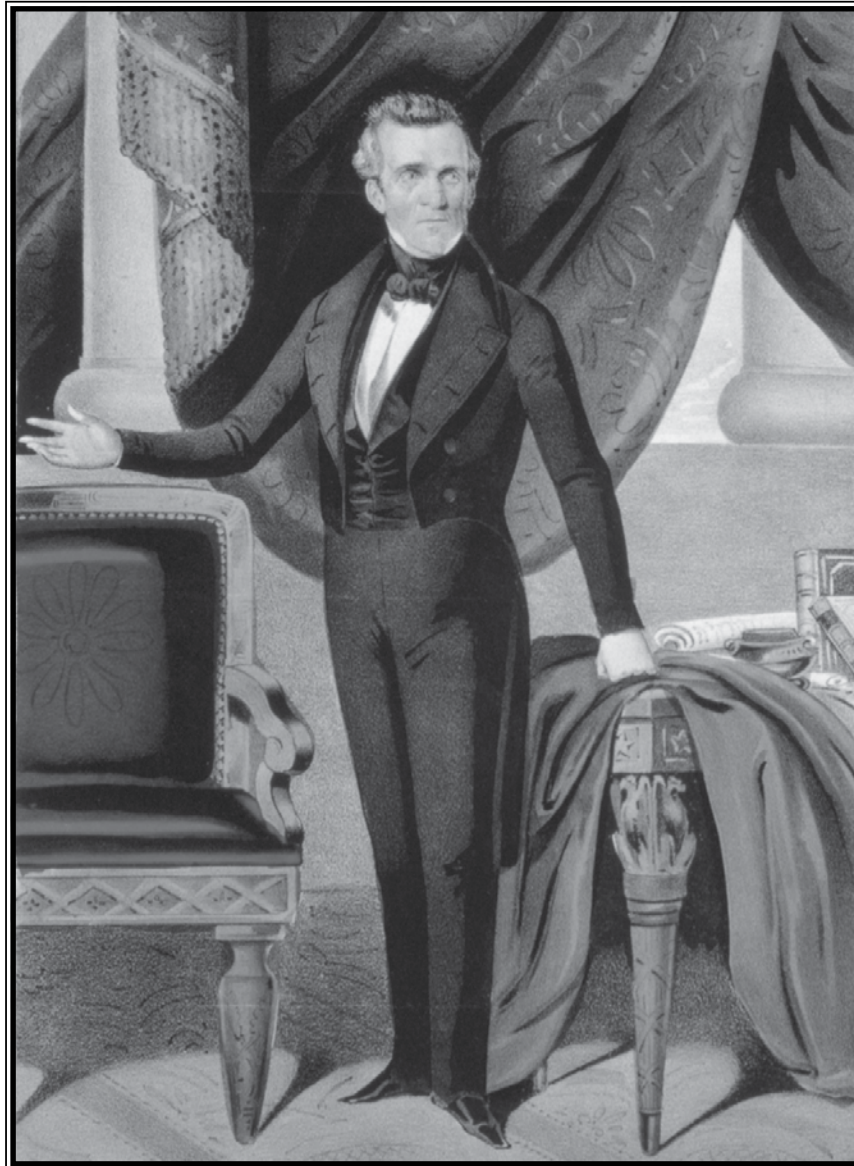
2. Why do you think candidates need the support of other people in politics?



Name: _____ Date: _____

James K. Polk: Presidential Candidate Primary Source Connection

Directions: Read the information below.



Primary Source Background Information

This picture is printed. It is hand colored. It shows James K. Polk in 1844. He is “The People’s Candidate for President,” according to the print. Polk served as president from 1845 to 1849.



James K. Polk: Presidential Candidate

Primary Source Connection *(cont.)*

Primary Source Questions

Directions: Look at the James K. Polk picture. Then answer the questions below.

1. Describe what you see in the picture.

2. How is this print similar to and different from posters you might see of candidates today?

3. The picture claims that Polk is “The People’s Candidate.” Do you think this was an effective slogan? Explain your thinking.

4. When this print was made, there was no television or Internet. There were no airplanes! What do you think James K. Polk did in 1844 to help voters know who he was?

Primary Source Extension

Find out about James K. Polk’s presidency. First, whom did he run against in 1844? From what you find out about him, why do you think he won the election? List three or more accomplishments of Polk’s while he was in office. On a separate sheet of paper, explain why these were important.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Meet the Triangle Party Candidate

Directions: You belong to the Triangle Party. You believe you have a strong candidate. This person will run for president. Read about your candidate below. Write ideas about how the candidate can get voters to know more about her. Write ideas about how voters can get to know the candidate better.

Triangle Party Candidate:

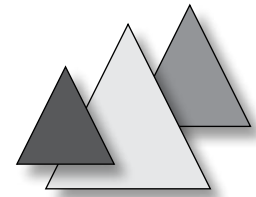
Mrs. E

Characteristics:

sly, smart, quick thinker

Political History:

Mrs. E has been a Triangle Party member for 12 years. When she started in politics, she discovered that the forest areas were becoming more and more polluted with litter. She wanted to do something to clean up the forest. She started a group that met weekly to clean up. The group grew and grew. Today, "Clean It Up" is run by private citizens who care about the forest. Mrs. E also started educating people about putting litter in its place. She found private donors who set up trash cans on forest trails. Now, there is very little litter on the forest floor. Mrs. E went on to be elected governor of her state. She continues to support local cleanups in the state capital.



To help voters know her better, Mrs. E can:	To get to know Mrs. E better, voters can:





Name: _____ Date: _____

Meet the Square Party Candidate

Directions: You belong to the Square Party. You believe you have a strong candidate. This person will run for president. Read about your candidate below. Write ideas about how the candidate can get voters to know more about him. Write ideas about how voters can get to know the candidate better.

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Square Party Candidate:

Mr. J

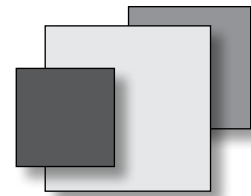
Characteristics:

flexible, takes advantage of opportunities, hard worker

Political History:

Mr. J has been a Square Party member for ten years. His parents were Square Party officials. His grandparents were Square Party politicians, too. Mr. J was concerned about the growing amount of trash around wetland areas. He thought littering should be illegal. He wanted the government to pass tougher anti littering laws. He met with other Square Party politicians in the state capital. The government started a new group. It was the State Litter Control Board. Mr. J led this new group. He helped the government pass the first tough anti litter law. Many more laws followed. Mr. J still leads the State Litter Control Board. He is in charge of making sure that litter laws are followed and that litter cleanup crews do their jobs.

.....



To help voters know him better, Mr. J can:	To get to know Mr. J better, voters can:



Name: _____ Date: _____

The Candidates Comprehension Check

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions below according to the directions from your teacher.

★ Remember

List two ways candidates can help voters get to know them better. List two ways voters can get to know candidates better.

★ Understand

Why do candidates want voters to get to know them? Explain why this is so important to candidates.

★ Apply

List three ways you could get to know a person better. Explain how each of these ideas will help you get to know this person better.

★ Analyze

Say you want to get to know a candidate better. Make a questionnaire for this person to complete. A questionnaire asks questions that help others find out about a person. Your questionnaire should have at least five questions.

★ Evaluate

Candidates need to get voters to know them better. What do you think are the best ways for candidates to get voters to know them better? List two of the best ideas, and explain why you think they are the best.

★ Create

Some politicians write books about their life's work. Make a book jacket for a fictional presidential candidate. Include a title, an author, and a publisher on the front. Include a short biography on the back. On the inside front cover, write a summary to explain how this person helped voters get to know him or her better. On the inside back cover, include a picture and explain what this person is doing now.