

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008

A Newspaper In
Education Series

EVERY FOUR YEARS

WASHINGTON COMES ALIVE!

It's a brisk January day in 2009 and Washington, D.C., is alive with crowds and excitement. All eyes are on 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. It's inauguration time – meaning that a President of the United States is about to be sworn in. Many people believe the President to be the most powerful person in the world. What we know for sure is that the next president will be the leader of a country of over 300 million people and will have awesome economic capabilities, incredible technology, and a myriad of immense social and political problems. The job is certainly one of the most difficult jobs on earth. Why would anyone want that job? What exactly is the job? What preceded the new president's journey to the inauguration? What are the pressures that will make his life easier or harder? What does it mean to be "President of the United States?"

This special newspaper series will address those questions. We'll look at the role of the president – the president's jobs, responsibilities, and challenges. We'll also look at how one gets to be president, from caucuses and primary elections to national conventions and campaigns. We'll examine what the Constitution says about the presidency, from what the president can and cannot do to exactly how the president gets elected (it's not the way you might think). So, come along. There'll be questions, profiles, quizzes, and interesting trivia.

WHO CAN BE PRESIDENT, ANYWAY?

QUIZ: QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENCY

Every four years, dozens of people decide to run for the presidency. They come from a variety of political parties, philosophies, and parts of the country, and they meet the qualifications for becoming president. But what are those qualifications? What does it take to be eligible to run for the presidency? The Constitution of the United States sets forth those qualifications in Article II.

FROM THE LIST BELOW, PUT A CHECK NEXT TO EACH OF THE QUALIFICATIONS THAT YOU BELIEVE ARE IN THE CONSTITUTION.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COLLEGE GRADUATE | <input type="checkbox"/> BE A NATURALIZED OR U.S.-BORN CITIZEN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AT LEAST 35 YEARS OF AGE | <input type="checkbox"/> LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED OR ENGAGED | <input type="checkbox"/> HAVE LIVED IN THE UNITED STATES FOR AT LEAST 14 YEARS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHRISTIAN | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MALE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LAWYER OR BUSINESSMAN | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HELD POLITICAL OFFICE BEFORE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HAVE NO FELONY CONVICTIONS | |



PRESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

THE REASONS FOR THE RULES

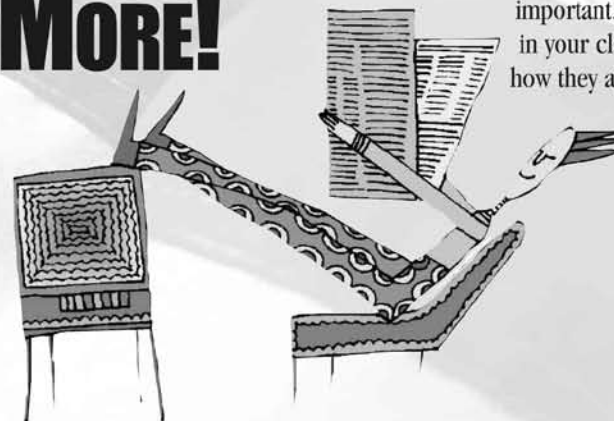
There really are only three official qualifications to be President of the United States. A president must be 35 by the time of the inauguration, have lived in the United States for at least 14 years, and be a natural-born citizen of the United States. This may seem strange now, but if you look at the United States in 1787, when the presidency was designed, it makes sense. Constitutional government was a new idea. The founders of the country wanted the head of this new government to be someone old enough and experienced enough to have made difficult decisions and demonstrated responsibility in his life. The natural citizenship requirement came about because the United States was a new country that was born in conflict. The founders wanted to be sure that a president would not have split loyalties between the United States and the country of his birth. That's also the reason why they wanted someone who had lived in the United States for at least 14 years. He would be familiar with the country he was to lead and its issues and needs.

Of course, people consider other qualifications when voting for president. These might be called the "unofficial qualifications" – the things that individual voters think are important. Most of our presidents, for example, have been married. And all of them have been men. Many people think we'll see a woman president soon. Hillary Clinton came close to being the nominee for the Democrats this year, as she ran neck and neck with Barack Obama.



LEARN MORE!

A. What "unofficial qualifications" do you think are the most important ones for a candidate to possess? Review the list of qualifications and indicate those that you would consider. If something you think should be there isn't, add it. Then write a paragraph about your three most important "unofficial qualifications," explaining why you think each is important. Compare your responses with the responses of other students in your class. Finally, check the Help Wanted ads in the newspaper to see how they are written. Write one seeking a new president, including the qualifications you think are most important.



B. Interview an adult over 25. Write down that person's list of the most important "unofficial qualifications" for president. Ask that person to rank them in order of importance. Compare that list to yours. Is there anyone in today's E-edition or print newspaper that you think would make a good president?

Learning Standards: writing for fluency, comparing, portraying positive characteristics

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The League of Women Voters
of the Northampton Area