

# LESSON PLAN

## Step 1

### LEARNING ABOUT THE PRESIDENCY

#### Objectives

- Identify the powers of the presidency as defined by the U.S. Constitution.
- Interpret an electoral map of a presidential contest.
- Examine the function of the Electoral College.

#### Materials

- Copies of Activity Pages 1A and 1B, pages 7 and 8.
- Copies of maps of the United States.
- Chalkboard, chalk.
- Pens or pencils.

#### Subjects

Geography, language arts, math, social studies

#### Procedure

1. Tell your students that you are going to describe an important national event for them to guess. Give these details: This event takes place once every four years in November; many Americans take an interest in it; the press begins to cover this event at least one year before it happens; if you watch television, listen to the radio, or read the newspapers you see many advertisements and hear stories about it; thousands of people meet every four years during the summer to prepare for it; and

although it is not a sporting event, some people have described it as being like a long-distance race. Your students will probably conclude that you have described the election of the president of the United States.

2. Ask students why Americans show so much interest in the election of the president. They will probably conclude that Americans want to pick the right person for the most powerful elected office in America. Ask them to describe the president's job—what does the president do? Have a volunteer list the class' responses on the chalkboard.

3. Give each student a copy of Activity Page 1A and tell the class that they will be reading part of the president's job description from the U.S. Constitution. Direct them to the section entitled "Who can be president?" and choose a few volunteers to read the paragraph aloud. (*Some students might find the eighteenth-century language of the Constitution difficult to understand and may need extra coaching.*) Have your students answer the questions that follow the paragraph. Encourage them to consider why the president must be at least thirty-five years old and have lived in the United States for fourteen years. Answers may vary, but students will probably conclude that the president must be old

enough and have lived in the United States long enough to have had a wide range of experience with national issues. (*Life expectancy was significantly shorter during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than it is today, making thirty-five a relatively mature age then.*)

4. Direct students to the section entitled "Some duties of the president." Choose volunteers to read the paragraphs aloud and then have students write their responses to the questions that follow each paragraph. Encourage them to compare their answers to the class' list of presidential duties (on the chalkboard).

5. Ask students to describe how they think the president is elected. Students will probably conclude that the president is elected by a majority of popular votes in the general election. Give each student a copy of Activity Page 1B, "The Electoral College" and a U.S. map (with states' names). Tell them that they will be learning about the presidential election of 1888 and that the result might surprise them. (*To establish a context, you may wish to tell your students that this election occurred between the Civil War and World War I.*)

6. Tell students to mark the electoral map on Activity Page 1B with the names or U.S. Postal Service abbreviations of each state in 1888 (territories are already marked). Be sure to stress that the electoral map shadings indicate which candidate won which states. Direct

your students to write answers to the questions on the activity page. Next, tell them that the small numbers on the map represent the electoral votes of the states. (*Use the Introduction as a guide to discuss the concept of the Electoral College*). Be sure to stress that a state's number of electors is equal to its number of senators and representatives.

7. Ask your students to add up the numbers in the states with dark shading (electoral votes for Benjamin Harrison) and the numbers in the states with light shading (electoral votes for Grover Cleveland). (*You may have students add the numbers on the chalkboard.*) Which candidate had the greater number of electoral votes? Students should conclude that Harrison did. Tell them that as a result, Harrison won the election even though he had fewer popular votes than Cleveland.

8. Conclude the lesson by initiating a discussion on the relative merits of the Electoral College system. Is it a fair way of electing the president? Does it still work? Should the system be changed? (*Students might not see the benefits of having the Electoral College. You may wish to mention that the system encourages the stability of well-organized, locally based parties at the expense of less-established, third-party movements.*) Be sure to emphasize that the 1888 election was an exceptional case and that candidates who garner the greatest number of popular votes also usually win the Electoral College vote.

# ACTIVITY PAGE 1A

## The President on Paper

### WHO CAN BE PRESIDENT?

(From Article II, Section 1 of the U. S. Constitution)

*No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty-five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.*

How old must one be to run for president?

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How many years must one be a resident of the United States to run for president?

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### SOME DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT

(Excerpted from Article II, Section 2)

*The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States . . . and he shall have Power to Grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States.*

What duties of the president are described in this paragraph?

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### SOME DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT continued

*He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two-thirds of the*

*Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for.*

What can the president do, if he or she receives the Senate's approval?

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(Excerpted from Article II, Section 3)

*He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them . . . he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.*

What can Congress expect the president to do?

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What other duties of the president does this paragraph describe?

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# ACTIVITY PAGE 1B

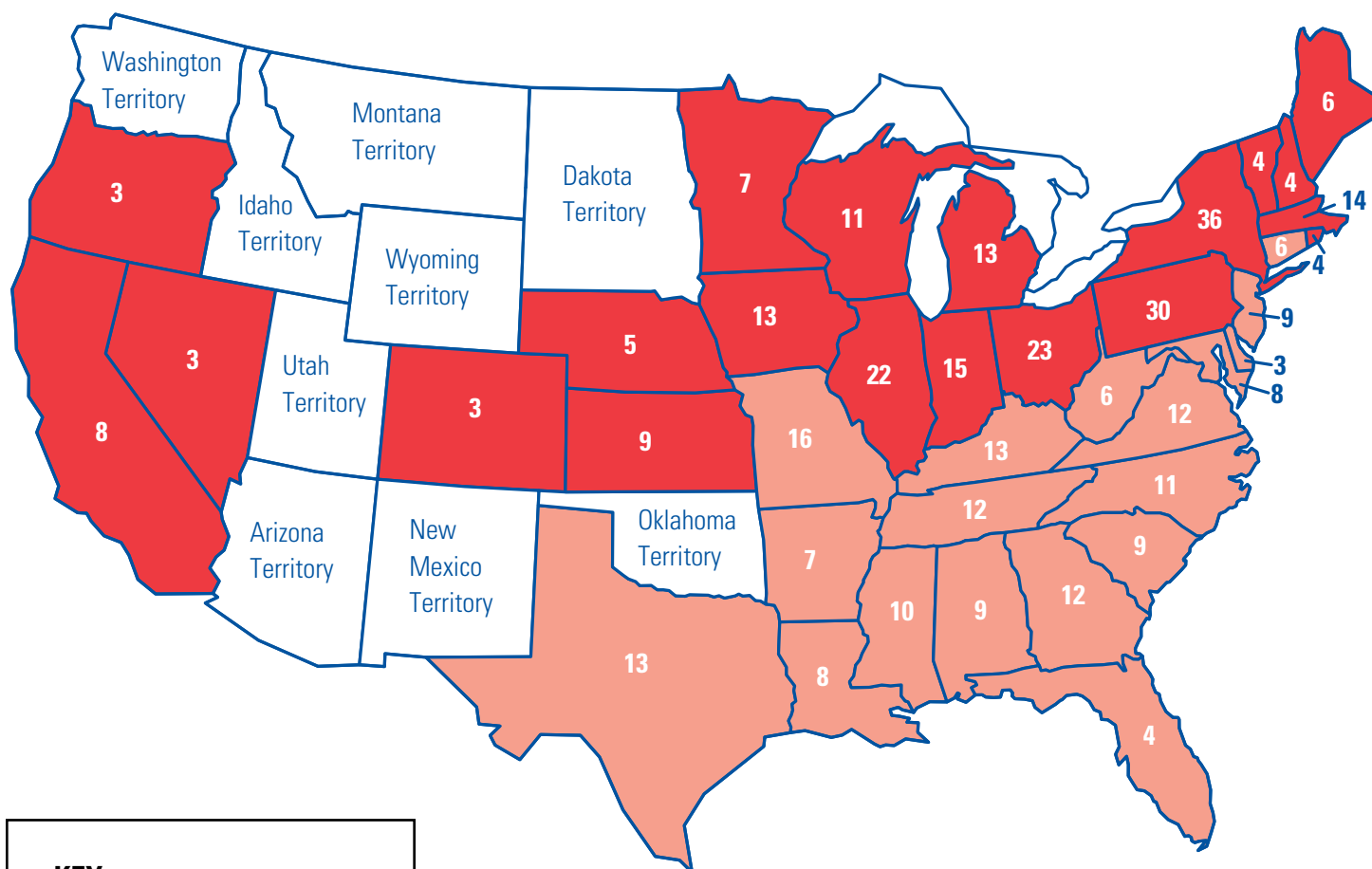
## The Electoral College

## Who were the candidates?

Which candidate had the most popular votes?

## Who do you think won the election?

Count up the number of electoral votes:     \_\_\_ Cleveland     \_\_\_ Harrison



## KEY

- Benjamin Harrison (R)
- Grover Cleveland (D)

## Popular Votes

Cleveland	5,537,857
Harrison	5,447,129