

Week Twenty-One: Political Parties

Weekly Focus: Comprehension
Weekly Skill: Compare and Contrast

Lesson Summary: This week students will be introduced to the new essential question “Who creates change?” We will begin discussing political parties in the United States by having students compare and contrast the Democratic and Republican National Parties.

Materials Needed: Laptops and Internet, Projector, Political Party Video, Political Party Article, Political Party Comparison Chart

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Identify major political parties involved in US politics
- Identify key defining characteristics and symbols associated with major parties
- Compare and contrast US political parties' stance on major political issues

Common Core Standards Addressed: [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7](#)

Notes: This unit as we work through the CARE steps, we will be utilizing various comparative graphic organizers. As we use these, be sure to discuss with students what the purpose of these tools are and how using them to compare and contrast various topics is helping them to develop important critical thinking skills that will be useful on the GED test as well as in postsecondary education and careers. You may choose to ask students for examples of how these comparative skills might benefit them in their future careers or classes.

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Activities:

Warm-Up/Review: What is a Political Party?

Time: 20 minutes

Ask the class what a political party is. Have students brainstorm and then look up definitions either online or in a dictionary. Then, as a class, discuss the purpose of a political party. Why do they exist and what role do they play in politics? Have students pair-share their answers and then share as a class.

Reading Activity: Jigsaw

Time: 30 minutes

- 1) Introduce students to this unit's new essential question, "Who creates change?" Explain that we will be examining this issue in both the Social Studies and the RLA classes. In the Social Studies class, we will focus on who creates change in politics. Today, we will begin examining this issue by taking a look at political parties.
- 2) Hand out the "What is a Political Party" article. Explain to students that we will be using a "Jigsaw" activity to ensure that we fully comprehend the article. Each student will be responsible for answering a particular question that addresses a main idea in one section of the article. The student will then share her answer with her group. Have students count off by fours. Each student should remember her number. This will be her "Jigsaw" number.
- 3) Next, have the class form groups of four. Each group should be made up of a Jigsaw #1, #2, #3, and #4.
- 4) Individually, have students work to answer their comprehension questions about the article (Jigsaw member #1 will answer Jigsaw #1 question, Jigsaw member #2 will answer Jigsaw #2 question, etc.). They will be able to find the answers to their questions in the section of the article that is marked with their number. You may also choose to cut up the article and only give the group member his or her numbered section (10 minutes).
- 5) Have students leave their group and join with other Jigsaw members of the same number to compare and tweak their answers. (5 minutes)
- 6) Each group member is then responsible for returning to her group and presenting her information so that other group members can write it down as answers to the questions that they weren't assigned and fully fill out their summary chart. (10 minutes)

Break: 10 minutes

Compare and Contrast: America's Political Parties

Time: 40 minutes

- 1) Tell students that now we will have a chance to examine the two major political parties in-depth. Hand out comparison chart and go over categories together.
- 2) Tell students that you are going to show them a video comparing the two parties. By watching the video, students should be able to fill out the first page of the comparison chart.
- 3) Show video. Give students a minute afterwards to fill out charts (they may work with a partner if they'd like).
- 4) Go over answers to page one of chart together.
- 5) Have students break into small groups (You may also offer the opportunity to work individually). Assign each student an issue from page two of the chart. Have students work with a partner to complete the comparison charts by doing research either online or using print materials that you bring into class to research the differences between the two parties on the selected issue. As students are doing their own research, create a larger comparison

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chart on the board for students to fill out with information gathered as a class.

Presentation: Students Share Research

Time: 20 minutes

- 1) Go over classroom chart together and have student groups share the political issue they looked up along with the differing viewpoints from Republicans and Democrats.

Differentiated Instruction/ELL Accommodation Suggestions

Activity

Advanced students may choose to research an issue of their choosing that is not on the comparison chart

Research

Extra Work/Homework:

Time:

Have students choose an issue that was not on the list to research and then write a paragraph comparing the stance of Democrats and Republicans on the issue.

Online Resources:

- 1) [On the Issues: Breakdown of Party Stance on Major Issues](#)
- 2) [Difference between Democrats and Republicans](#)

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WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

THE FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES (GROUP 1)

Political parties perform an important task in government. They bring people together to achieve control of the government, develop policies favorable to their interests or the groups that support them, and organize and persuade voters to elect their candidates to office. Although very much involved in the operation of government at all levels, political parties are not the government itself, and the Constitution makes no mention of them.

The basic purpose of political parties is to nominate candidates for public office and to get as many of them elected as possible. Once elected, these officials try to achieve the goals of their party through legislation and program initiatives. Although many people do not think of it this way, registering as a Democrat or Republican makes them members of a political party. Political parties want as many people involved as possible. Most members take a fairly passive role, simply voting for their party's candidates at election time. Some become more active and work as officials in the party or volunteer to persuade people to vote. The most ambitious members may decide to run for office themselves.

REPRESENTING GROUPS OF INTERESTS (GROUP 2)

The people represented by elected officials are called **constituents**. Whether Republican or Democrat, constituents make their concerns known to their representatives. In turn, elected officials must not only reflect the concerns of their own political party but must also try to attract support from people in their districts or states who belong to the other party. They can attract this support by supporting **bipartisan** issues (matters of concern that cross party lines) and **nonpartisan** issues (matters that have nothing to do with party allegiance).

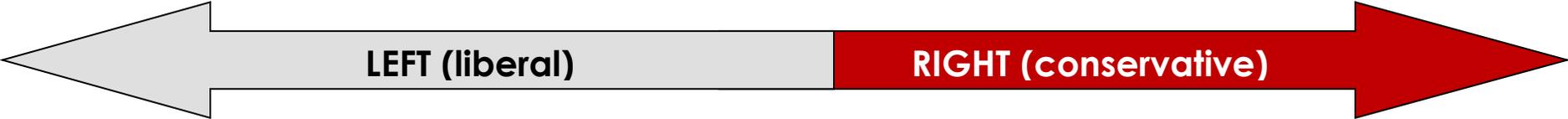
Political parties represent groups as well as individuals. These interest groups have special concerns. They may represent the interests of farm workers, urban African Americans, small business operators, particular industries, or teachers — any similar individuals who cooperate to express a specific agenda.

SIMPLIFYING CHOICES (GROUP 3)

The two main political parties in the United States appeal to as many different groups as possible. They do so by stating their goals in a general way so that voters are attracted to a broad philosophy without necessarily focusing on every specific issue. Republicans are known for their support of business, conservative positions on social issues, and concern about the size of government; Democrats traditionally have supported labor and minorities and believe that government can solve many of the nation's problems. The alternative to using the general philosophies of the political parties to sort out candidates is to vote for individuals based on just their own one-or two-issue programs.

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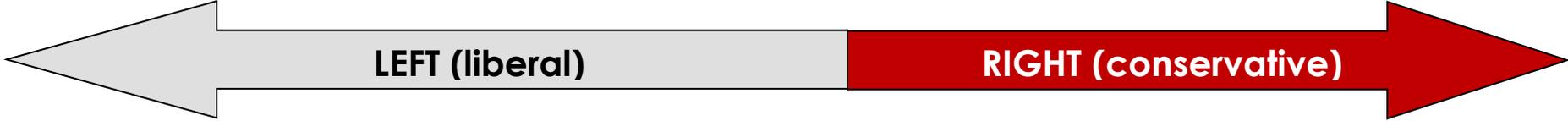
POLITICAL PARTY COMPARISON CHART



UNITED STATES MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES		
PARTY NAME		
POLITICAL ANIMAL SYMBOL		
COLOR		
2012 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE		
PREFERRED ROLE OF GOVERNMENT		
POSITION ON TAXES		

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POLITICAL PARTY COMPARISON CHART



UNITED STATES MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES		
PARTY NAME		
GUN CONTROL		
HEALTHCHARE		
BUSINESS REGULATION		
ENVIRONMENT		

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NOTES:

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