

Unit Plan Cover Page Template

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Subject: Electoral College – Executive Branch

Grade Level: 6th Honors Social Studies

Class Time Required: 3 days (possible 5 depending on how much assigned homework)

Unit Title: Government

Essential Question:

1. What is our role as citizen in electing the President of the United States of America?
2. Does the Electoral College process effectively represent the phrase “We the People...?”

Brief Description of Unit:

In this activity students will research the Electoral College process. Students will be provided with a variety of print and media clips but may research additional information in order to participate in an organized classroom debate. After the debate, students will use their research to write an argumentative essay.

Objectives/Common Core Reading and Writing Standard(s):

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/GLE/SSGLE10.20.04.pdf> & www.corestandards.org/ELA-literacy
Course Objective: The learner will understand the purpose of government and the duties and responsibilities each citizen plays in government. PC1A6, SS3, SS1 1.6
The learner will describe how the Electoral College works in our system of government. PC2C8, SS2 1.10
CCSS: R6.1; R6.7; R6.8; W6.1a,b,c,d,e; W6.8; W6.9

Material Needed:

Anchor Texts: None

Support Texts: Article A: Scholastic Scope article written October 4, 2004

Article B: Article and Political Cartoon from U.S.News: News Opinion

Support Audiovisual:

Video A:How the Electoral College Works:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUS9mM8Xbbw>

Video B: The Trouble with the Electoral College: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wC42HgLA4k>

Video C: What if the Electoral College is tied? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wC42HgLA4k>

Video D: Five reasons for defending the Electoral College <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec9-vGUQkmk>

Video E: Electoral College: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTbvYGH_Hiw

Video F: How the Electoral College works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKDJGeYxaAE>

- Students will utilize computers to view segments; write, edit and print argumentative synthesis.

Instructional Strategies: (Teacher Methods)

Provide text and video material for research and annotation
Consultation for debate preparation
Follow-up discussion after debate
Instructional review for argumentative writing

Instructional Activities: (What students do)

Students will research the Electoral College process. They will participate in an assigned debate arguing for or against the following prompt: The Electoral College effectively represents the phrase, "We the People..." Upon debate conclusion and discussion, students will write an argumentative synthesis paper addressing the same prompt.

Suggested Timeline:

Class period (minutes): 3-5 class periods depending on research and writing assigned for homework. One period is necessary for debate preparation. One period is for debate and follow-up discussion. One to two class periods is needed for argumentative writing instruction, revision and / or typing.

Unit Resources:

- Debate Simulation Score Card
- Viewer Participation Sheet
- Electoral College Argumentative Essay Prompt
- Argumentative Writing Rubric for Electoral College (adapted for this assignment)

Assessment Descriptions: Write a brief overview here; attach scoring guides & keys.

Students will be assessed in two parts.

- 1) Student participation in classroom debate.
- 2) Students will write an argumentative essay using the district's argumentative rubric as a grading tool.

Debate Simulation Score Card

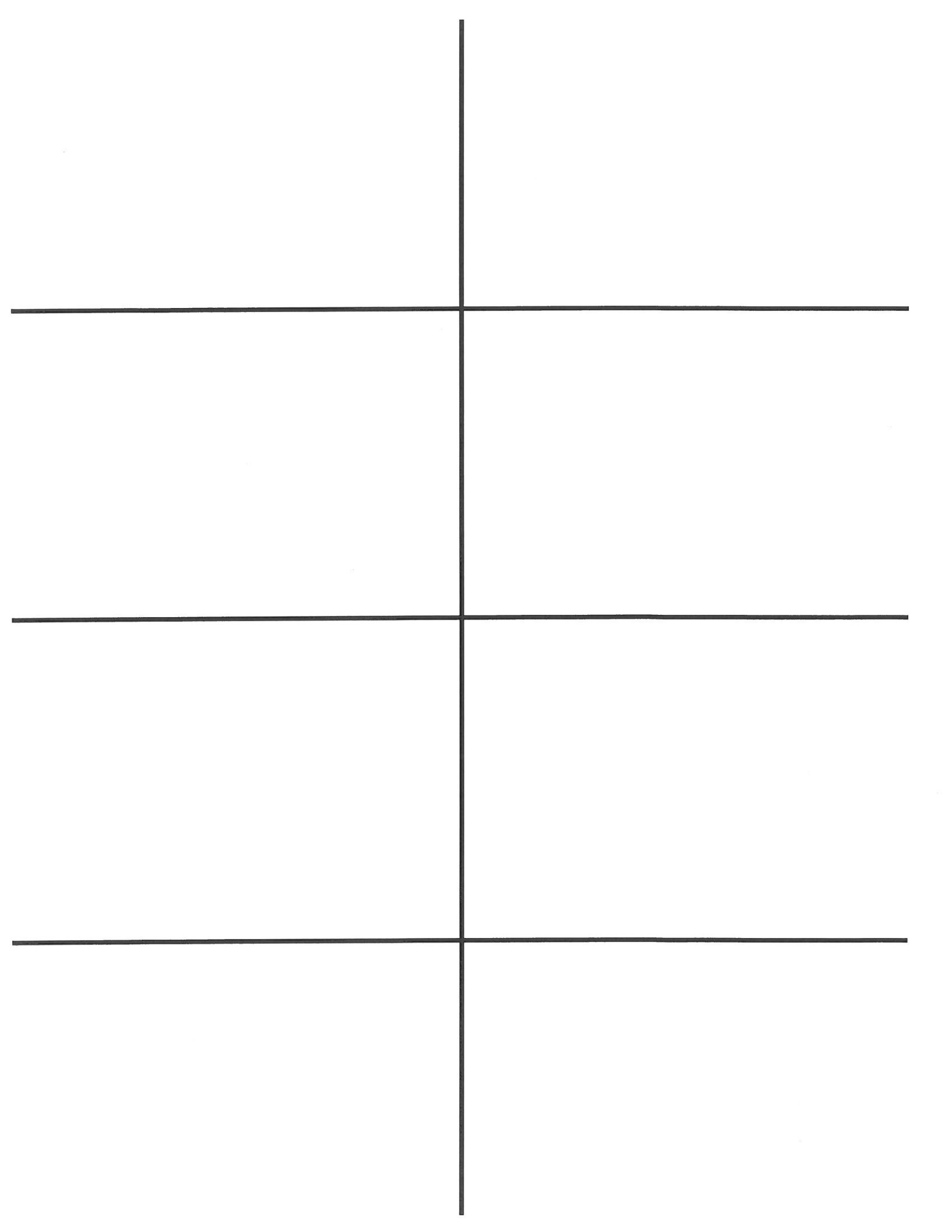
6th Grade Honors Social Studies

Debate topic: Does the Electoral College effectively represent the phrase, "We the People?"

	AFFIRMATIVE STANCE	OPPOSING STANCE
Team Members:	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

	Affirmative 1-10	Opposing 1-10
Opening Statement		
Rebuttal		
Closing statement		
Content		
Delivery		
Teamwork		
Overall		
Total		

OPENING STATEMENT Clear, well organized, factual and relevant.
REBUTTAL to opposing side's argument was evident, clear, relevant, fact-based and effective.
CLOSING STATEMENT: Clearly stated and effectively summarized team's position.
CONTENT: High quality argument, imaginative, and coherent. Good points backed up by examples or evidence. Deals fully with the subject and is challenging for the other side to respond to.
DELIVERY: Good quality performance. Does not struggle with floundering, hesitancy, inarticulation, or simply reading index cards.
TEAMWORK: Good quality teamwork is shown with evidence of team preparation. Team avoids excessive repetition. Reference to team's partners appear natural and unscripted. Team worked naturally together and supported the argument with unique information.
OVERALL: Open to judge's discretion and represents an individual judge's impression overall.



Viewer Participation Sheet

Name _____

Date _____ Hr _____

Affirmative

Opposing

Affirmative	Opposing

Electoral College

Argumentative Essay Prompt

Name _____

Date _____ Hr _____

DUE _____

PROMPT: Before the 2004 Presidential election took place, little attention was placed on the Electoral College. You will read a couple articles and view several video clips representing the pros and cons of the Electoral College process. After researching for a class debate, you will write an argumentative essay to make a claim whether the Electoral College effectively represents the phrase, “We the People.” Support your claim with details from what you have read and viewed and address potential counter arguments in your essay. Use appropriate formal writing that shows an awareness of your audience: teacher.

Your essay will be scored on:

- 1) Establishing your Claim and addressing counter claim
- 2) Organization—How well your ideas logically flow to support your claim: introduction, body and conclusion
- 3) Evidence—How well do you support your claim. Do you use credible sources and accurate facts and details?
- 4) Elaborative Techniques—Your writing should use a variety of sentence structure and fluency. You used a variety of ways (examples, anecdotes etc.) to argue your claim.
- 5) Language / Convention—Your writing uses appropriate language and is free of distracting mistakes in conventions.

Sources to research and take notes: (You may research additional sources)

- Article A: Scholastic Scope article written October 4, 2004
- Article B: Article and political cartoon from U.S.News: News Opinion
- Video A: How the Electoral College Works:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUS9mM8Xbbw>
- Video B: The Trouble with the Electoral College:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wC42HgLA4k>
- Video C: What if the Electoral College is tied?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wC42HgLA4k>
- Video D: Five reasons for defending the Electoral College
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec9-vGUQkmk>
- Video E: Electoral College:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTbvYGH_Hiw
- Video F: How the Electoral College works:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKDJGeYxaAE>

Steps to follow:

Read and annotate the articles.

View and take notes on the videos.

Participate and prepare for class debate simulation...either debater or viewer

Organize your research into Pros and Cons.

Write your claim (also called a thesis).

Choose two of the best pieces of research to support your claim.

Choose a couple worthy counter claims that you can “flip” to support YOUR claim.

Build an outline to help organize the details. Example model:

I. Thesis _____

II. Support Piece #1

A. Detail

B. Detail

III. Support Piece #2

A. Detail

B. Detail

IV. Counter Argument #1

A. Flip

B. Detail to support flip

V. Counter Argument #2

A. Flip

B. Detail to support flip

VI. Closing

Use your outline to help write your essay.

Be sure to cite sources for quotes and statistics.

Be prepared to type your finished essay _____ in computer lab.

DEBATE: Making judgments

Electing the PRESIDENT

Is the Electoral College fair?

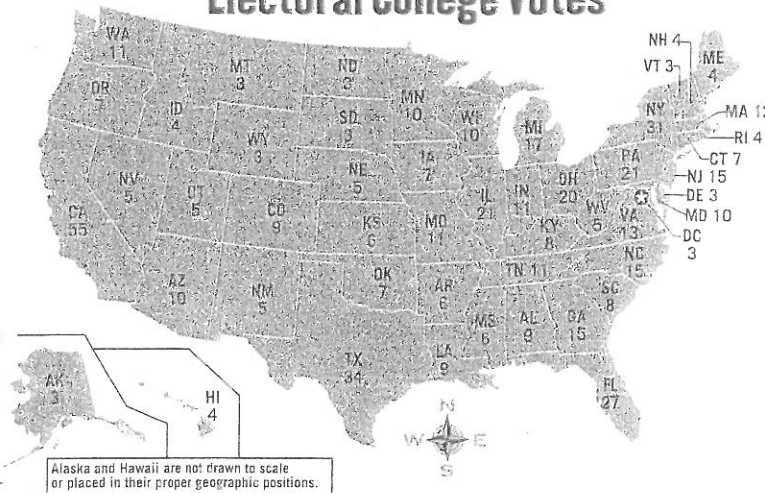
Al Gore received more individual votes than George W. Bush in the 2000 election. So how did Bush become President?

The answer has to do with the Electoral College. U.S. citizens don't vote directly for the President and Vice President. When they vote, they're actually voting for state electors—people who are expected to vote for particular candidates.

Each state has at least three electors—one for each of the state's two Senators, and one for each Representative. The number of Representatives varies according to state populations. The most populous state, California, has 55 electors. The least populous, Wyoming, has three, as does Washington, D.C.

In all, there are 538 electors. Together, they're known as the Electoral College. A candidate who wins a majority of the Electoral College—270 votes—takes office.

Electoral College Votes



percent of the country's population but only about 10 percent of the electoral vote. By contrast, Wyoming had 0.2 percent of the population but 0.6 percent of the electoral vote.

Plus, every state but Maine and Nebraska has a winner-take-all policy: A candidate who wins 51 percent of the popular vote wins all the state's electoral votes.

In the 2000 election, Bush won 271 electoral votes. It was Florida that put him over the top. He won Florida by just 531 individual votes but got all 25 of the state's electoral votes. Only three other times in history has a candidate who lost the U.S. popular vote become President.

YES: KEEP THE COLLEGE

Electoral College supporters say it protects large states with small populations, such as Montana. It encourages candidates to pay attention to rural areas, and keeps these areas from being dominated by voters in more populous regions.

Supporters point out that the Electoral College usually selects the winner of the popular vote anyway.

➤ What do *you* think? Is the Electoral College system fair?

—DAVID MARC FISCHER

NO: VOTE FOR CHANGE

Critics of the Electoral College say it doesn't fully represent the will of the people. They note that the system favors states with fewer people. In 2000, California had 12



The Electoral College has worked well for more than two centuries. It balances regional interests and the wishes of the majority. Any new system would just pose a few set of problems. Plus, the electoral winner usually is the popular winner.

IF YOU SAY YES: Is there any Electoral College reform that you would support?



The Electoral College departs too far from the will of the people. It's wrong for voters to lose representation because of a winner-take-all system and small states being favored. The candidate with the greatest number of popular votes should win.

IF YOU SAY NO: How would you improve or replace the Electoral College?

WRITE YOUR OPINION!

What do *you* think? Is the Electoral College fair? Write a persuasive paragraph explaining your opinion. Then e-mail your name, age, city, state, and response to us at scopemag@scholastic.com. We may print your thoughts in a future issue of *Scope*!



Has the Electoral College Outlived Its Usefulness?

Our Electoral College voting system allows campaigns to only focus on the nine swing states and ignore everyone else.

Has the Electoral College outlived its usefulness? Are we in danger of having presidential campaigns ignore 80 percent of the states because they are not in play in the Electoral College? This year we have certainly gone to extremes to write off nearly all the states and most of the American people.

Let's look back at the past three elections. In 2000, as we all know, Al Gore won the popular vote by over 500,000 votes yet, because of the Florida fiasco, lost the electoral vote by four votes. In 2004, a change of 60,000 votes in Ohio would have given John Kerry that state's electoral votes and the presidency, even though George Bush won the popular vote by over 3,000,000 votes.

After these two elections you can say one thing—campaigns know how to target!

[See a collection of political cartoons on the 2012 campaign.]

This year, polls are extremely close at the national level yet still show President Barack Obama leading in key states with the key electoral vote swings. It is not inconceivable that Romney could win the popular vote and lose the electoral vote. Not likely, maybe, but not by any stretch an impossibility.

What we do promise in this country is a very close election every four years, at least potentially very close. More and more the "hard red" and "hard blue" states have emerged very clearly. This year, it appears that only nine states are in play: Nevada, Colorado, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, and New Hampshire.

[\[Check out our editorial cartoons on President Obama.\]](#)

The vast bulk of the advertising dollars, organizational heft, candidate time, and overall attention have focused on those states. The states of California, New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, Washington, etc. have been used as ATM machines—stop-overs to raise the needed campaign cash to air ads in the nine targeted states.

With both campaigns and independent groups spending in excess of \$2 billion, probably \$3 billion, this is a Mercedes-protection program for TV station managers in those nine states. Not to mention a boon to the local economy in general.

Does anyone remember Richard Nixon's convention pledge to visit all 50 states before the end of the campaign? Not a politically wise move back then, either, but we have come to the point where we have nearly 40 of the 50 states that don't matter in the campaign, because the outcome is predetermined.

[\[See a collection of political cartoons on Mitt Romney.\]](#)

We will never return to a candidate who visits every state but are we going down the path of future campaigns that won't spend any effort whatsoever on 75-80 percent of America? Is this truly a healthy development? My guess is that we need another crisis like 2000 before people begin to truly move the country away from the Electoral College. But we should be asking ourselves the question: Has this process of electing a president outlived its usefulness? Shouldn't we truly examine going to a strict popular vote?

Now may be the time we should consider whether we are locked into a campaign system that makes a mockery of "representing all Americans" and whether it is getting worse.

Source: <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/peter-fenn/2012/10/11/electoral-college-lets-obama-romney-ignore-80-percent-of-america>