

Grace For President

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Written by Kelly DiPucchio, Illustrated by LeUyen Pham

Ages: 5-9; Grades K-4

Themes: Elections, Elementary School, Patriotism

Running Time: 11 Minutes

SUMMARY

As Grace examines the wall of presidents at her school, she is outraged to discover that THERE ARE NO GIRLS! She promptly decides to put an end to this historical debacle by running for class president. She thinks it will be a cakewalk until Thomas Cobb enters the race. They both hit the campaign trail hard, each winning the confidence of most of their respective target demographic. Will Thomas be able to rest on the historical laurels of his gender and win the class presidency at Woodrow Wilson Elementary? Or will Grace prove that girls are up to the job?

Common Core State Standard Connections:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will increase election specific vocabulary.
- Students will identify qualities of past U.S. presidents and use this knowledge to infer qualities of strong leaders.
- Students will deconstruct stereotypes.
- Students will investigate and analyze campaign techniques.
- Students will explain the function of the Electoral College.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Elicit students' background knowledge about the current and former presidents.

Guiding questions:

- Who is our president right now?
 - How long has he been president?
 - Do you know anything about this president that makes him unusual or different from other presidents?
 - What other presidents can you name?
 - Who was the first president of the U.S.?
 - What are some of the jobs that presidents do?
 - Is there anything that all of the presidents have in common?
- Discuss the idea of a woman president with the students. Ask:
- Has there been a woman president in the U.S. yet?
 - Why do you think that there hasn't been?

Make a list of things that students think are "boy things" and things that students think are "girl things." Ask students to explain why they have these views. Ask students if boys can ever do any of the "girl things" or vice versa. Explain that stereotypes are categories that groups of people or things are placed in that are based on one characteristic or idea, but that do not accurately reflect all of the characteristics of those people or things. Ask students why it would be important for everyone to have a chance to run for office.

Preview these important vocabulary words. (CCRA.R.4)

Campaign · Constituents · Democracy Electoral Votes · Nominated · Representative

Consider using the following activity to develop some of the words more deeply:

1. Fold a paper into thirds (one paper for each word).
2. Write the word in the left hand column. Read the word aloud.
3. Tell a story, dramatize, or give an example or sentence to explain the meaning of the word.
4. Ask students, What do you think this word means, based on the story/dramatization/example/sentence?
5. Give students time to discuss their ideas with partners. Then, have students share out ideas.
6. Scribe students' ideas in the middle column.
7. Using students' ideas, craft a definition of the word. Write that in the middle column also.
8. Ask students what kind of drawing could be used to represent the meaning of the word. Draw one or two of their ideas in the third column. Depending on students' independent writing ability, they can make their own 3-fold definition papers, or simply write the word and draw a picture.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Guide a discussion to compare and contrast Grace and Thomas's campaign strategies. Use a T-chart to record students' ideas. Guiding questions:

- What types of things did Grace do to try to get people's votes?
- What types of things did Thomas do?
- Who do you think was working harder? What in the story makes you think that?
- What were Grace's campaign promises? What were Thomas's? Which person's promises seem like they would help the school more? Why?

- Why do you think Grace won the election?
 - Who would you have voted for? Why?
- (CCRA.R.3)

Discuss with students how people become the president. What types of qualities do they need? Education? Experience? Training? Use the Weston Woods movie, *So You Want to be President* to help guide the discussion. Then, have students work in groups of 3-5 to research the paths that various presidents have taken to the White House. Encourage groups to all choose a different president, with one group focusing on the current president. As the groups collect information about their president, have them write important and relevant facts on individual index cards. On a separate card, have students illustrate the event. Then, students can use a piece of butcher paper or large construction paper to draw a timeline depicting the president's path to the White House. Provide students with a picture of the White House that they can affix to the end of their timeline. Culminate the activity with students displaying their timelines around the classroom and conducting a "gallery walk" in which they observe each other's timelines and analyze commonalities and differences among presidents. (CCRA.R.9, CCRA.W.8)

Present a lesson on the Electoral College. Start with a close reading or viewing of the section of the story that describes how electoral votes work. Provide students with guiding questions, then replay or read aloud the section from the text and have them take notes or discuss the questions:

- How is the number of electoral votes per state determined?
- How many total electoral votes are there?
- How many votes does a candidate need to win?
- Based on what you learned, if Wyoming has three electoral votes and Michigan has sixteen, which state has more people?

Then, read the "Author's Note" in *Grace for President*. Discuss with students why we have the Electoral College and elicit their opinions about whether they believe that it is still a good system for voting today. (CCRA.R.1, CCRA.SL.2)

Hold a mock debate in the classroom. During an election year, have students research the viewpoints of various candidates. Divide the students into teams, with each team representing one of the candidates. The teacher can serve as the moderator and pose questions for each team to respond to, based on the candidates' viewpoints and political stances. In addition to answering the questions, give each team an opportunity to respond to one other team. Finally, give each team time to write and present closing remarks. (CCRA.SL.1)

OTHER RELATED TITLES FROM WESTON WOODS:

Duck for President – written by Dorren Cronin, illustrated by Betsy Lewin
I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote – written by Linda Arms White, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter
Madam President – written and illustrated by Lane Smith
Otto Runs for President – written and illustrated by Rosemary Wells
So You Want to be President? – written by Judith St. George, illustrated by David Small

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