

OTTO RUNS FOR PRESIDENT

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Ages: 4-8

Themes: Feelings, Friendship, School, Elections, Leadership

Running Time: 13 minutes

SUMMARY

There is a big election at the Barkadelphia School. Who will win? Tiffany, one of the popular girls; Charles, an all-star sport; or Otto, a good friend and listener? Each student has a different campaign strategy, and with the help of their friends and families, each tries his or her best to win. Their different approaches motivate their fellow students to think about what qualities and characteristics they really want in a leader. When the ballots are finally counted, the best dog wins!

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify and describe the responsibilities of the U.S. President.
- Students will identify qualities of past U.S. Presidents and use this knowledge to infer qualities of strong leaders.
- Students will investigate and analyze campaign techniques.
- Students will understand the steps of the election process.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Elicit students' background knowledge about the current and former U.S. Presidents. Guiding questions:

- Who is our U.S. 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 U.S. Presidents can you name?
- Who was the first President of the U.S.?
- What are some of the jobs that U.S. Presidents do?
- How does a person become the President?
- Who gets to vote for the President?
- Besides the country, what other organizations have presidents?
- What are the responsibilities of a president?

- What are some qualities that a person who wants to be a president should have?

Investigate campaigning with the students. Discuss the reasons that candidates campaign and read about campaign history and slogans on the following websites:

<http://www.multied.com/elections/campaigns.html>

<http://www.presidentsusa.net/campaignslogans.html>

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/elections/history/2676.html>

Talk with students about how campaigns can persuade and dissuade voters. Ask them what kinds of information and messages would be important for candidates to communicate while campaigning. Discuss "smear campaigns" and challenge students to debate whether or not these types of campaigns are useful, ethical, or productive. Tell students to watch for the campaign tactics used by the characters in *Otto Runs for President*. Revisit the discussion after viewing the movie.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Compare and contrast the three characters in *Otto Runs for President*. What were the general issues that Tiffany, Charles, and Otto were tackling in their campaigns? What tactics did each candidate use? Which tactics proved to be effective and which were not? How was Otto's campaign different from Tiffany's and Charles'?

Guide students through the campaigns of some former U.S. Presidents. Using the internet, history books, and encyclopedias, have students compare and contrast the campaign strategies of different Presidents. Guiding questions:

- Did he have a slogan? What was it?
- What party was he affiliated with?
- What major issue or issues did he focus on in his campaign?

Design a graphic organizer for students to put their findings into. This could be a simple chart, or something more artistic, such as a picture of the President with a speech bubble for them to write the motto into, a picture of a donkey and elephant for the student to color or circle party affiliation, and a blank box representing a sign or poster for the students to list the issues in.

Have students each create a campaign poster for themselves. Encourage them to focus on one issue that they would work to improve in the school or their community. Help students brainstorm strong vocabulary to use on their posters. Remind students of the values that they discussed that were important for leaders to have. Which values would they bring to a leadership position? How?

Have students create speeches that would convince others to vote for them for class president, vice president, secretary, or treasurer. Guide students through the process of brainstorming, planning, writing, and revising. Give students the opportunity to present their speeches to the class.

Hold a class election for a class president or larger student government. Model the example set in *Otto Runs for President* and have each student collect a certain number of names for an endorsement to run. Give students time to form campaign committees, posters, and speeches. After the elections, set aside time for the student government to meet at a lunch period at least twice a month. Encourage other students in the class to become involved by writing letters to the student government, volunteering at events, and heading up smaller committees. The role of the government could be as small as organizing classroom jobs or as large as enacting a recycling program for the school.

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