LESSON PLAN

The 2020 Presidential Election: What Can We Learn from Victory Speeches?

Compelling Question: How do victory speeches provide information about the winning candidate’s agenda and inspire responses?

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<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Standards/Competencies</th>
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LESSON OVERVIEW

On November 7, 2020, it was announced that Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris won the 2020 Presidential election. Biden won with the most votes ever cast for a U.S. Presidential candidate. That evening, in front of supporters in Wilmington, Delaware, the president-elect and vice president-elect delivered victory speeches. Their speeches included messages of unity and their vision for the country.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to analyze these speeches, reflect on the issues that are important to them and research one issue that students think should be a priority in the Biden-Harris Administration.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris’ victory speeches.
- Students will identify issues gleaned from the speeches and the Biden-Harris transition webpage that are important to them.
- Students will investigate one issue that they think should be prioritized by the Biden-Harris administration.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- Videos and Transcripts of 2020 Presidential Election victory speeches (Decide in advance whether you will have students watch the videos, read the speech transcripts or both. Other options are to watch the video of the speeches and have students follow along with the transcript. Or, have students read or watch the speeches for homework the evening before)

Lessons

Elections and the Youth Vote
How Do Polls Inform, Influence and Impact Elections?
Representing the People Diversity and Elections
Should We Keep the Electoral College?

Other Resources

9 Ways to Teach about the Election: A Social Justice Approach
Let’s Talk about Voting!
Teaching about Elections
The Election is Over…Now What?

Key Words

ambition audacity climate crisis conviction decency democracy demonization humbled immigrants inflection point ambition audacity climate crisis conviction mandate prosperity resilience rhetoric soul systemic racism unburdened vision vitality
PROCEDURES

Biden and Harris Speeches

1. Share that on November 7, 2020, it was announced that Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris won the 2020 Presidential election. They will be inaugurated and take office on January 20, 2021. Biden won with the most votes ever cast for a U.S. Presidential candidate. That evening they gave victory speeches in front of supporters in Wilmington, Delaware.

2. Explain to students that we will watch (or read) those victory speeches and analyze what is conveyed about their vision for the country. As they watch (or read) the speeches, they should circle (or jot down) notes on important quotes, impactful words or phrases, meaningful ideas or passages, ideas they agree or disagree with and questions they have.

3. After each speech, conduct the following:
   a. First, have students turn and talk with someone sitting near them (or use breakout rooms if online learning) to share their first thoughts about the speech.
   b. Second, reconvene the class and engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
      - How did you feel while listening to the speech?
      - What was the tone of the speech?
      - What metaphors and symbols were used?
      - What specific issues were addressed in the speech?
      - What is their vision for the country?
      - What did they say about identity, diversity and representation?
      - What did they say about issues of equity and justice?
      - What did they say about democracy?
      - What do you agree with? What do you disagree with?
      - What concerns do you have about what they said?
      - What overall message did they convey in the speech?
      - If you could ask them a question, what would you ask?

Identifying Important Issues

1. Ask students: What issues did Biden and Harris highlight in their speeches? What issues besides the ones they addressed in their speeches would you like to see them focus on during their presidency?

   Note: Other potential issues may include: civil rights, criminal justice reform, voting rights, education, gun control, health care, minimum wage, police shootings, immigration, LGBTQ rights, foreign policy, abortion, wealth and income distribution and others.

2. Show students or direct them to the Biden/Harris transition website: Restoring American Leadership. Point out the four issues highlighted on the page that Biden/Harris are going to address on “Day One”: (1) Covid-19, (2) Economic Recovery, (3) Racial Equity and (4) Climate Change.
3. Conduct a quick poll and ask which of these issues are most important to them, or have students rank the issues in order of importance. Ask students to explain their responses. Then ask students to suggest other issues that are important to them. Create a list of issues that include those gleaned from Biden and Harris’ speeches, their webpage, and other issues that students raised as important to them.

4. Explain to students that they are going to choose one of those issues to investigate further.

**Research Projects**

1. After students have identified the issues that they want to learn more about, divide students into small groups based on the issues, grouping students together by selected issue. For homework or for an extended research project, have the small groups investigate their issues by learning about the background, history of the issue and important data about the issue. They should research different perspectives on the issues, gather information, statistics, quotes and facts relevant to the issue. They will also make a case for why this issue should be a priority for the Biden-Harris administration.

2. After conducting their research, have the students decide how their research will culminate into one of the following: a speech, a PowerPoint presentation or a letter to the President and Vice President-elect. In their project, they should include: (1) background information and facts, (2) why they think this issue should be a priority and (3) what action steps they think should be taken by the Biden-Harris administration.

3. Have each small group present their issues to the class. Engage students in a discussion by allowing each small group to ask questions of the presenters and share their own perspective on the issue being presented.

**Extension Activities**

- As the presidency unfolds, ask students to check on the administration’s progress toward the vision put forth in these speeches.
- Ask students to check on progress toward the specific issues they identified as being important.
- Apply critical analysis conduct in Research Projects above to other political speeches.

**Closing**

Have each student share one word, quote or idea they found impactful from one of the victory speeches.

**ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES**

- “Biden and Harris address the nation, basking in victory and pledging to work for unity” (Politico, November 7, 2020)
- US Election 2020 (BBC News)
- “What happens next in the presidential election process?” (National Constitution Center, November 6, 2020)
## Common Core Standards

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<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>R1: 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.</td>
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<td>R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
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<td>R5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</td>
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<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
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<td>W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</td>
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<td>W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.</td>
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<td><strong>Speaking and Listening</strong></td>
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<td>SL1: 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.</td>
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<td>SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.</td>
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<td>SL5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.</td>
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<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
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<td>L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.</td>
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<td>L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.</td>
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# CASEL’s SEL Competencies

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<th>COMPETENCIES</th>
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<td><strong>Self-Awareness:</strong></td>
<td>The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.</td>
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<td><strong>Self-Management:</strong></td>
<td>The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.</td>
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<td><strong>Social Awareness:</strong></td>
<td>The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, &amp; contexts.</td>
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<td><strong>Responsible Decision-Making:</strong></td>
<td>The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.</td>
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