

Debate Worksheet instructions:

One of the most important privileges of teaching social studies is teaching students the skills to be active and involved citizens, and one of the greatest opportunities to do this comes during the election process. It is an opportunity for students to experience in a very real and hands-on way, how we choose our leaders.

As we head into the current Presidential campaign, I am asking that students watch at least one of the 3 scheduled Presidential debates or the scheduled Vice-Presidential debate. The debates offer at least a brief opportunity to evaluate the candidates side-by-side, see where they stand on important issues, how they handle pressure, and get a sense of who is most suited to the job. To help students develop the skills to critically watch a debate, I have assigned a debate worksheet with multiple questions to answer before, during, and after the debate. Students can receive additional credit for watching more than one debate, or even all 4. Students will have 3 school days after each debate to turn in that debate's worksheet.

As a teacher, I believe that students should learn to evaluate multiple viewpoints, develop critical thinking skills, and make decisions based on their own beliefs, values, and priorities. Critically evaluating the debate based on the questions on the debate worksheet I have given to students will help them to fairly and critically evaluate the candidates.

I am also aware that in today's increasingly polarized political atmosphere, some parents do not want their students exposed to candidates that they do not agree with. While I believe this may limit a student's opportunity to learn, I will respect the wishes of parents who do not want their students to view this year's debates. I will offer those students the same credit for instead watching one of the following historically significant debates, and links to view them will be on my website:

- Sept. 26, 1960-John Kennedy and Richard Nixon
- Oct. 21, 1984-Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale
- Oct. 5, 1988-Dan Quayle and Lloyd Bentsen
- Oct. 13, 1988-George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis

If you do not believe this accommodation is adequate, please contact me with alternate suggestions by September 30, and we can try to reach a mutually agreeable alternative.

I hope you take the opportunity to watch the debates with your student, and discuss how you gain information about the candidates and how you use that information to reach your own voting decisions.

If you have any questions, please call or email me at rbower@apps.fluco.org with DEBATE QUESTION in the subject line.

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Social Studies 6—U.S. History I

