



A Lesson on My New President by Simone Haddad

Grade Level: Grade 8

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: More than 3 hours

Lesson Keywords: Constitutional Rights, Voting, Presidents, American History, Barack Obama, Branches of Government

Lesson Description: This lesson will help you understand key words that are apart of American elections, as well as the government and provide you with a chance to see cause and effect, in regards to personal experiences with your own learning. Through this lesson, you will critically think about people's perspectives and how they can shape how they see situations around them. By the end of the lesson, hopefully students can think critically on what it means to be an engaged American Citizen and the impact that our government branches have on our society, especially that of the President.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using : Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3e: Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

My New President

by

Content: I never liked learning U.S. history because I thought it was boring--lots of facts, lots of dates, lots of names, lots of maps. I liked the pictures, but the rest of it was uninteresting, I did not comprehend the reason to read about the past. I admit I was fairly uninformed about government.

We had to take a Constitution test, which requires knowledge about the structure of American government, and I failed it. I didn't know the responsibilities of the branches of government. I mixed up the executive branch and the legislative branch, the executive branch is the part that makes decisions and at the state level it's the governor who is responsible, at the national level it's the President. I figured out a way to recall what the judicial branch did because the root word has judge in it, it's about the courts. It took me three times to pass that exam.

Then this year I paid attention because I was involved in the election. I was proud that an individual who was like me was campaigning for the Presidency. I didn't expect that he would be elected, though, because I couldn't imagine that I could be President. There never was an African-American President in the more than 200 centuries of American history. I knew that much history. It was unprecedented.

My mother said, Don't be too sure that it is impossible, it could happen. We once elected an African-American mayor of Chicago.

I thought about that, but I was not optimistic, I didn't expect Barack Obama would win, he had only recently gained national recognition when elected as a Senator. I did hope that he would overcome the obstacles and reach that office, the highest in the land. Suddenly the Constitution was more important to me.

My mother said, Nothing happens if you do nothing. Why don't you help with the election? I said, How can I help? I am only 13.

You can help get people registered to vote. You can help his campaign office. Go and ask.

So I did. I went to downtown Chicago that Saturday. The only other time I had been there was to go to museums on a field trip or to Niketown when we shopped for new shoes. This time I went to a building with many offices, and on the first floor there was the most exciting place I have been, even more exciting than Niketown. It was the campaign headquarters. There were many people working at desks, most of them were talking on the phone or inputting information into computers. I said, Can I help? I want to volunteer.

A young man at the front desk said, Definitely, we need volunteers, can you start immediately? I said, certainly, and right away I had an assignment, I would assist with the preparation of a mailing. I put letters into envelopes, and I must have stuffed at least one thousand envelopes by the end of that first volunteer day.

I traveled downtown every Saturday after that, and my tasks varied from contacting voters by phone to remind them to vote to using the Internet to log emails and create a database. The database I set up was a list of eligible voters and their responses to the phone calls.

I was so engaged in the election that instead of movies I watched the news and I actually read the newspaper to learn about the election. I read what Barack Obama said, and I made a speech about him to my class. My mother and I attended a speech he gave in Chicago, it was so inspiring. I figured out that the Executive Branch does a lot, they are in charge of the army and much more, the election of a President is the most important choice any citizen can make.

I gained hope as I talked with people on the phone and watched the news reports. I kept saying, Yes we can to myself. And we did. Now the head of the Executive Branch is my President. I am part of U.S. history.

Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: Comprehend **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: When the author states, "I did not comprehend the reason to read about the past." What does the word "comprehend" mean in this sentence?

- A: Obtain
- B: Forget
- C: Understand
- D: Love

Question: Which one of these sentences uses the word "comprehend" correctly?

- A: In order to comprehend the meaning of Shakespeare, it is recommended to translate all of the unknown words found throughout the plays.
- B: I comprehend my boyfriend.
- C: I did not comprehend to take the trash out last night.
- D: She comprehended the address to that restaurant we wanted to try out.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: Campaign **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: When the author's mother said "You can help his campaign office." what did the word "campaign" mean in this sentence?

- A: A desired plan or action to obtain or achieve a specific outcome.
- B: A location that represents the headquarters for a political candidate.
- C: A community park.
- D: A specific goal.

Question: Chose the correct usage of the word "campaign" in one of the following phrases, based on its meaning in the above question.

- A: The general campaigned for a cease fire on air strikes.
- B: Candidates campaign all across the country, sometimes for several months before election day.
- C: Office workers have been known to campaign for causal wear Fridays.
- D: The mayor's campaign is located right along the river.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: Register **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: When the mother suggested that the author could "help get people registered to vote." What did the word "register" mean in this sentence?

- A: Document included on ships to show their country's origin.
- B: Adding one's name to an official list.
- C: The vocal range of a musician.
- D: A thing that holds money.

Question: Choose the correct sentence that uses the word "register" correctly based on its meaning in the above story.

- A: The musician's vocal register was quite impeccable.
- B: The captain discovered that the registration aboard the new vessel was incorrect, they were not from Spain, but Portugal.
- C: She went around her neighborhood to get people registered.
- D: The register opened, allowing the teller to get the correct changed for the customer.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: Legislative **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In the story, the author "mixed up the executive branch and the legislative branch..." What does the word "legislative" mean in this sentence?

- A: The head of an institution, domain or region.
- B: Upholding the laws.
- C: Reporter of the facts.
- D: Having the power to make the laws.

Question: Chose the sentence that correctly uses the word "legislative" based on its meaning within the previous text.

- A: The legislative branch of our government is in charge of introducing and then voting on bills to become law.
- B: It is the President of the United States that has legislative power in our country.
- C: A reporter's job is to legislate the information to the public.
- D: The judge's legislative responsibilities was to create the law, not uphold it.

Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - Past Dictating the Future?

Why would the 13 year old author of the story still think that an African-American being elected President was impossible, if as the mother stated we once elected an African American Mayor of Chicago? Why might the election of a Mayor versus a President be different for the author? Why would past elections shape the image this young man has in regards to who can become the President of the United States???

2 - "Constitution was more important to me"

When the author says Suddenly the Constitution was more important to me, would the student still have felt this way if the candidate was from Chicago but white? Explain why or why not with examples from the text.?

3 - "President.. the most important choice"

At the end of the story, the author states the election of a President is the most important choice any citizen can make, what does the author mean by this? How has his recent experience with the Obama campaign altered his outlook on this matter? Explain your response using examples from the text, as well as any personal opinions on the importance of Presidential elections.?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here a 500 word?essay recalling a time where a specific experience you were engaged in, helped to ignite an interest in a subject, or topic that before then you were either not too interested in learning or did not understand. Provide specific examples of this experience to showcase how it created an interest in?the subject for you. Also include a sentence or two to communicate to your audience, why you think that experience changed your opinion on the subject or helped you to understand the subject better. ?If appropriate, relate your experience to that of the author's by including examples of the experience expresses in the story - to include such text though, it must be relevant and pertinent to telling your story.??

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