



COVER STORY: Experience: What Kind Is Best? (pp. 6-7)

► **NCSS STANDARD**
Power, authority, & governance

The day of reckoning is almost here: After more than a year of comparing presidential candidates, Americans will cast their votes on November 4. How much weight will they give to each candidate's experience? This article discusses that question, and what experience means in a political context.

■ Word's Worth

● **experience:** from the Latin word *experientia*, meaning "knowledge gained by repeated attempts or trials." The words *experiment*, *expert*, and *expertise* have the same Latin root.

■ Content-Area Questions

SOCIAL STUDIES/MATH

- Research/Trivia:** Who was the oldest person to ever serve as U.S. President? (Ronald Reagan) Who was the youngest person sworn in as President? (Theodore Roosevelt, when he took over from assassinated President William McKinley) Who was the youngest elected President? (John F. Kennedy) Compare these facts (*see chart below*) to the ages that the current candidates will be in January 2009: John McCain, 72; Barack Obama, 47.

PRESIDENT	YEARS IN OFFICE	AGE WHEN SWORN IN
Theodore Roosevelt (youngest to take office)	1901-1909	42
John F. Kennedy (youngest elected)	1961-1963	43
Ronald Reagan (oldest to take office)	1981-1989	69

- Is John McCain too old to be President? Is Barack Obama too young to be President? Give

at least one pro answer and one con answer to each question.

- Create a chronology of U.S. Vice Presidents who took office after the death or resignation of a President. Use icons or color-coding to distinguish natural death, death by assassination, and resignation. (*Natural death:* 1841, John Tyler for William Henry Harrison; 1850, Millard Fillmore for Zachary Taylor; 1923, Calvin Coolidge for Warren G. Harding; 1945, Harry Truman for Franklin D. Roosevelt. *Assassination:* 1865, Andrew Johnson for Abraham Lincoln; 1881, Chester Alan Arthur for James A. Garfield; 1901, Theodore Roosevelt for William McKinley; 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson for John F. Kennedy. *Resignation:* 1974, Gerald R. Ford for Richard M. Nixon.)

GEOGRAPHY

- Research:** Which state does each of the top-four candidates currently represent or serve? Where was each candidate born and raised? (*Biden:* represents Delaware; born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. *McCain:* represents Arizona; born in the Panama Canal Zone, grew up on various U.S. Naval bases, attended high school in Arlington, Virginia. *Obama:* represents Illinois; born in Hawaii, grew up there after living briefly in Indonesia. *Palin:* serves Alaska; born in Idaho, raised in Alaska)
- Could a candidate's geographic roots have any bearing on his or her political perspective or shape how he or she would govern? Why or why not? Give examples to support your answer.

LANGUAGE ARTS

- What are the differences in meaning (and skill sets) between *executive* and *legislative*? Give examples to support your answer.
- For further exploration of the language of politics, refer students to "ElectionSpeak" (pp. 10-11).

■ Talk Time

Which do you think is more important in choosing a President: the candidate's life experience or position on the issues? Explain. Do any factors hold more weight than these two?



Election 2008: Stretching the Truth (pp. 8-9)

► **NCSS STANDARD**
Civic ideals & practices

The closer it gets to a major election, the more campaign ads appear and, often, the more dramatic they get. How is a viewer to know what's real and what isn't? This article helps students understand what to look for, what to question, and how to look beyond the surface of political (and other) ads.

■ Adding Up Ads

In each of the following exercises, encourage students to watch for the three ad techniques highlighted in the article: words that can mean anything, exaggeration and repetition, and visual association.

(1) In the days before the election, have students keep a pad and

pencil handy when they watch TV. Ask them to tally how many ads they see from the McCain campaign, how many from the Obama campaign, and how many from other groups. (The candidates' own ads usually end with "I'm [name], and I approve this message.") Which used one or more of the techniques most effectively? Which seemed to be stretching or evading the truth?

(2) Encourage students to look for use of the three techniques in product ads, in print as well as on TV. Have them pick one ad to examine more closely. Replace words that could mean anything with precise words; strip away exaggerations

and repetitions; and choose visuals that are a truer match. Is the resultant ad more or less effective than the original? Explain.

WEB LINKS

- **FactCheck.org** is associated with the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center. factcheck.org
- **Issues-0-Meter**: the candidates' positions on "the big issues": nydailynews.com/news/politics/election2008/issuesometer
- Check out the campaign ad "Truth-0-Meter" of *The St. Petersburg Times* and *CQ* at politifact.com



Election 2008: "ElectionSpeak" (pp. 10-11)

► **NCSS STANDARD**
Culture

Like every other field of endeavor, politics has its own insider lingo. This feature defines and puts into context some of the terms commonly heard during the 2008 presidential campaign.

■ Rapid Review

After students have read and discussed the article, check their grasp of key terms by using one or more of the following exercises.

- **In Your Own Words:** Call out a term from this glossary and ask who can define it in his or her own words, with or without the magazine open to the article.
- **Jargon Jeopardy:** Have a quizmaster read or paraphrase a

term's definition and see which contestants are able to "phrase the answer in the form of a question," as is done on the TV game show *Jeopardy*. (Example: Quizmaster: "Voters who may or may not be registered as Democrats or Republicans but may be persuaded to vote for either party." Contestant: "What are swing voters?")

• **Seek and Speak:** For a homework or extra-credit project, invite students to search newspapers (in print or online) for as many of these terms as they can find. Then have them bring one of the articles to class to share how that term was used in the context of the article.

■ Furthermore . . .

Ask students to take note of other terms used by the candidates and/or political pundits and reporters. Then have students research to find out what the terms mean and, in a class discussion or as a written homework assignment, share those terms and definitions.

WEB LINKS

- For more election-related and political terms, visit politicalgrassroots.org/terms.html
- For other relevant links, go to scholastic.com/juniorscholastic/urls