

the ARTICLE (for instructors)

Character Most Important in Politics

In politics, American voters care more about a candidate's character than about the issues. The simple fact, which many have suspected for a long time, has now been confirmed in a recent poll. In the survey, 55% of the voters agreed that honesty and other similar character traits are more important when deciding on a presidential candidate. Only one-third of voters first look at a candidate's opinions on hot issues. Even fewer voters think qualities of leadership, experience, or intelligence are of primary importance.

Take President Bush, for example. In the election of 2004, he easily won the popular vote. The U.S. army hadn't captured Osama bin Laden. The war in Iraq had become unpopular. Yet Bush portrayed himself as a strong and decisive leader. Since then, voters have begun to question his honesty and his ability to do the job. This comes after setbacks and failures in Iraq, and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Only 44% now believe Bush is honest. His approval ratings are low, too, because only 33% of the American people think he is doing an effective job.

The collapse in Bush's ratings and views on his character should serve as a red flag to the 2008 candidates. Voters are saying that character matters.

The next election is still two years away. The field of possible candidates is already shaping up, though. Of course, anything can happen between now and November, 2008. Hillary Rodham Clinton leads Barak Obama, but the gap between the two has shortened in recent months. Former New York mayor Rudy Guliani is actually ahead of John McCain. But neither Obama nor Guliani have the experience of Clinton and McCain. Obama has been a U.S. Senator for two years only, and Guliani has never been elected to Washington D.C. But their rise in the polls demonstrates just how important character can be.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in **red typeface** are the recommended vocabulary for this lesson.

WARM-UPS

Select one or all of the following warm-up activities.

1. **Define:** What does "politics" mean? Can you use it in a sentence? Can you give examples?

2. **Brainstorm:** Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "politics" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

3. **Title:** Speculate and/or discuss the contents of today's article from its title: "Character Most Important in Politics."

4. **Speculate:** Write in the missing words for today's article: "() Most () in Politics." Why did you choose these words for the blanks?

5. **Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

a.	Politics and politicians can't be trusted.
b.	When I vote, I choose the most intelligent person.
c.	Experience is more important than character for a politician.
d.	I want to become a politician someday.
e.	The next President of the U.S. will be Hillary Rodham Clinton.

VOCABULARY

Select one of the following vocabulary acquisition activities.

1. Vocabulary match: Individually or in pairs/groups, match the words in column A (from the article) with the best choice in column B.

a. suspect	q. downfall
b. primary	r. skilled
c. capture	s. believe
d. portray	t. catch
e. setback	u. be ahead
f. effective	v. warning
g. collapse	w. number one
h. red flag	x. show
i. lead	y. problem
j. demonstrate	z. represent

2. Fill in the Blanks: Fill in the blank with the correct word.

	effective	leads	demonstrates	red flag	captured
	primary	portrayed	collapse	suspected	setbacks
a.	The simple fact, which many have () for a long time, has now been confirmed in a recent poll.				
b.	Even fewer voters think qualities of leadership, experience, or intelligence are of () importance.				
c.	The U.S. army hadn't () Osama bin Laden.				
d.	Yet Bush () himself as a strong and decisive leader.				
e.	This comes after () and failures in Iraq, and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.				
f.	Only 33% of the American people think he is doing an () job.				
g.	There has been a () in Bush's ratings and views on his character.				
h.	This should serve as a () to the 2008 candidates.				
i.	Hillary Rodham Clinton () Barak Obama, but the gap between the two has shortened.				
j.	But their rise in the polls () just how important character can be.				

3. Define: Define each word, correctly pronounce it, explain the meaning and/or usage, and offer an example sentence to the class.

a. suspect	c. capture	e. setback	g. collapse	i. lead
b. primary	d. portray	f. effective	h. red flag	j. demonstrate

pre- or post-COMPREHENSION

1. Word Association: Brainstorm words associated with today's topic for two minutes. Present to the class.

2. Brainstorm Questions: Brainstorm questions that you would like to ask about today's topic. Answer the questions without looking at the article.

3. True or False?: Guess (before the article) or answer (after the article) whether the sentence is true or false. If false, correct the sentence.

a.	According to the article, voters care most about a candidate's character.	T / F
b.	Least important are qualities of leadership, experience, or intelligence.	T / F
c.	Bush isn't as popular because he hasn't caught Osama bin Laden.	T / F
d.	According to the article, anything can happen between now and the next election.	T / F
e.	Guliani has more experience than McCain, so he is leading in the polls.	T / F

4. Questions: Answer the questions to check comprehension.

a.	What have people interested in politics suspected for a long time?
b.	What do people look for in a candidate most often? How about 33% of the people?
c.	According to the article, why did Bush win the popular vote?
d.	What has happened to Bush's rating since the election? Why?
e.	What does this mean?: Anything can happen before November, 2008. How does it relate to the article?

5. Vocabulary: In pairs/groups, remember how the words were used in today's article.

a.	suspected	c.	captured	e.	setbacks	g.	collapse	i.	leads
b.	primary	d.	portrayed	f.	effective	h.	red flag	j.	demonstrates

6. Fragments: Remember how the fragments were used, and complete the sentence from today's article.

a.	Even fewer voters think qualities of
b.	Yet Bush portrayed himself as
c.	Since then, voters have begun
d.	Hillary Rodham Clinton leads Barak Obama, but the gap
e.	But their rise in the polls demonstrates just

post-COMPREHENSION

1. **Vocabulary:** Circle any additional unknown words/phrases in the article. In pairs/groups, use your dictionaries to understand the meanings. Present to the class.
2. **Class Questions:** Read through the article once more, and write down any questions that you would like to discuss in pairs/groups or as a class. Discuss.
3. **Summarize:** Work with a partner to summarize the article in your own words.

4. **Discuss (part I):** Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	Did you like this article?
b.	What was your general impression after reading this article?
c.	What are your opinions on politics and politicians? Are they positive or negative? Why?
d.	Which quality do you think is the most important for a politician?
e.	Would you vote for an honest politician if he didn't have a lot of experience? Why/not?
f.	Would you ever vote for a dishonest politician? Why?
g.	Do you agree or disagree? Politicians need to lie sometimes to protect their country. Why/not?
h.	What kinds of politicians typically get elected in your country? Is this good or bad?
i.	Would you ever consider running for office? Why/not?
j.	Who do you think the next U.S. President will be? Why?

5. **Discuss (part II):** Imagine you are a reporter preparing questions to ask U.S. political candidates. Think of five questions to ask, and then discuss as a pair or group.

Question 1:
Question 2:
Question 3:
Question 4:
Question 5:

6. **Google Search:** Type "U.S. election" into Google. Look at the websites, and /or read additional articles on this topic. Discuss or write an essay about your findings.

STUDENT HANDOUT (the article)

Character Most Important in Politics

In politics, American voters care more about a candidate's character than about the issues. The simple fact, which many have suspected for a long time, has now been confirmed in a recent poll. In the survey, 55% of the voters agreed that honesty and other similar character traits are more important when deciding on a presidential candidate. Only one-third of voters first look at a candidate's opinions on hot issues. Even fewer voters think qualities of leadership, experience, or intelligence are of primary importance.

Take President Bush, for example. In the election of 2004, he easily won the popular vote. The U.S. army hadn't captured Osama bin Laden. The war in Iraq had become unpopular. Yet Bush portrayed himself as a strong and decisive leader. Since then, voters have begun to question his honesty and his ability to do the job. This comes after setbacks and failures in Iraq, and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Only 44% now believe Bush is honest. His approval ratings are low, too, because only 33% of the American people think he is doing an effective job.

The collapse in Bush's ratings and views on his character should serve as a red flag to the 2008 candidates. Voters are saying that character matters.

The next election is still two years away. The field of possible candidates is already shaping up, though. Of course, anything can happen between now and November, 2008. Hillary Rodham Clinton leads Barak Obama, but the gap between the two has shortened in recent months. Former New York mayor Rudy Guliani is actually ahead of John McCain. But neither Obama nor Guliani have the experience of Clinton and McCain. Obama has been a U.S. Senator for two years only, and Guliani has never been elected to Washington D.C. But their rise in the polls demonstrates just how important character can be.

Notes:

STUDENT HANDOUT (fill in the blank)

Fill in the blank with the correct word.

portrayed	because	collapse	primary	recent
demonstrates	presidential	devastation	effective	leads
red flag	suspected	between	setbacks	captured

Character Most Important in Politics

In politics, American voters care more about a candidate's character than about the issues. The simple fact, which many have (a. _____) for a long time, has now been confirmed in a (b. _____) poll. In the survey, 55% of the voters agreed that honesty and other similar character traits are more important when deciding on a (c. _____) candidate. Only one-third of voters first look at a candidate's opinions on hot issues. Even fewer voters think qualities of leadership, experience, or intelligence are of (d. _____) importance.

Take President Bush, for example. In the election of 2004, he easily won the popular vote. The U.S. army hadn't (e. _____) Osama bin Laden. The war in Iraq had become unpopular. Yet Bush (f. _____) himself as a strong and decisive leader. Since then, voters have begun to question his honesty and his ability to do the job. This comes after (g. _____) and failures in Iraq, and the (h. _____) of Hurricane Katrina. Only 44% now believe Bush is honest. His approval ratings are low, too, (i. _____) only 33% of the American people think he is doing an (j. _____) job.

The (k. _____) in Bush's ratings and views on his character should serve as a (l. _____) to the 2008 candidates. Voters are saying that character matters.

The next election is still two years away. The field of possible candidates is already shaping up, though. Of course, anything can happen between now and November, 2008. Hillary Rodham Clinton (m. _____) Barak Obama, but the gap (n. _____) the two has shortened in recent months. Former New York mayor Rudy Guliani is actually ahead of John McCain. But neither Obama nor Guliani have the experience of Clinton and McCain. Obama has been a U.S. Senator for two years only, and Guliani has never been elected to Washington D.C. But their rise in the polls (o. _____) just how important character can be.

STUDENT HANDOUT (extended listening)

Listen and fill in the missing sentences. Compare answers with a partner, and then listen once more.

Character Most Important in Politics

In politics, a) _____ . The simple fact, which many have suspected for a long time, has now been confirmed in a recent poll. In the survey, 55% of the voters agreed that
b) _____. Only one-third of voters first look at a candidate's opinions on hot issues. Even fewer voters think qualities of leadership, experience, or intelligence are of primary importance.

Take President Bush, for example. In the election of 2004, he easily won the popular vote. The U.S. army hadn't captured Osama bin Laden. The war in Iraq had become unpopular. Yet Bush portrayed himself as a strong and decisive leader. Since then, voters have begun to question his honesty and his ability to do the job. This comes after setbacks and failures in Iraq, and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Only 44% now believe Bush is honest. His approval ratings are low, too, c) _____.

The collapse in Bush's ratings and views on his character d) _____.
Voters are saying that character matters.

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e) _____. Former New York mayor Rudy Guliani is actually ahead of John McCain. But neither Obama nor Guliani have the experience of Clinton and McCain. Obama has been a U.S. Senator for two years only, and Guliani has never been elected to Washington D.C. But their rise in the polls demonstrates just how important character can be.

STUDENT HANDOUT (activities)

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary

1. Vocabulary Match:

a.	s	f.	r
b.	w	g.	q
c.	t	h.	v
d.	z	i.	u
e.	y	j.	x

2. Fill in the Blanks:

a.	suspected	f.	effective
b.	primary	g.	collapse
c.	captured	h.	red flag
d.	portrayed	i.	leads
e.	setbacks	j.	demonstrates

pre- or post-Comprehension

1. True or False:

a.	T
b.	T
c.	F
d.	F
e.	T

2. Fragments:

a.	leadership, experience, or intelligence are of primary importance.
b.	a strong and decisive leader.
c.	to question his honesty and his ability to do the job.
d.	between the two has shortened in recent months.
e.	how important character can be.

Student Handout

1. Fill in the Blanks

a.	suspected	i.	<u>because</u>
b.	recent	j.	<u>effective</u>
c.	presidential	k.	<u>collapse</u>
d.	primary	l.	<u>red flag</u>
e.	captured	m.	<u>leads</u>
f.	portrayed	n.	between
g.	setbacks	o.	demonstrates
h.	devastation		

2. Extended Listening

a.	American voters care more about a candidate's character than about the issues
b.	honesty and other similar character traits are more important when deciding on a presidential candidate
c.	because only 33% of the American people think he is doing an effective job
d.	should serve as a red flag to the 2008 candidates
e.	the gap between the two has shortened in recent months