

## 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 answers.

**the ARTICLE (for students)**

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.

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## STEP ONE

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

## STEP TWO

**Questions:** Read as much of the article as you can in two minutes. Guess the answers to the questions below, then listen to your teacher read the article. Try to confirm your answers.

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 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? |

## STEP THREE

**Fill in the Blanks:** Listen to your teacher read the article again. Fill in the blanks with the missing words.

## STEP FOUR

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

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

## STEP FIVE

**Discuss:** Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| a. | Which quality do you think is the most important for a politician?                             |
| b. | Would you vote for an honest politician if he didn't have a lot of experience? Why/not?        |
| c. | Do you agree or disagree? Politicians need to lie sometimes to protect their country. Why/not? |
| d. | What kinds of politicians typically get elected in your country? Is this good or bad?          |