

## 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 may be vocabulary unfamiliar to the students.

**the ARTICLE (for students)**

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**Notes:**

## STEP ONE

**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.

## STEP TWO

**Discuss:** 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.

## STEP THREE

**The Article:** Read the article, and work with a partner to understand it. Lastly, summarize in your own words.

## STEP FOUR

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

a.	What are your opinions on politics and politicians? Are they positive or negative? Why?
b.	Which quality do you think is the most important for a politician?
c.	Would you vote for an honest politician if he didn't have a lot of experience? Why/not?
d.	Would you ever vote for a dishonest politician? Why?
e.	What kinds of politicians typically get elected in your country? Is this good or bad?
f.	Would you ever consider running for office? Why/not?

## STEP FIVE

**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: