Lesson Plan: Clinton and Trump on the Big Issues

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Lesson opener

Discussion/quick write prompt: Think of an election issue that's important to you. What do you know about how Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump view this issue? Make two lists: one list of what you already know Hillary Clinton believes about the issue and one list of what Donald Trump believes.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia

Objectives

- Students will learn about nine major issues at play in this presidential election and analyze the differences between the positions of Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump.
- Students will write arguments in response to a candidate's position on an issue and support the argument with evidence.

Relevance

The views held by Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump have on major political issues help shed light on the kind of leaders and policymakers each would be as president. Although students have likely heard some of the well-publicized soundbites in this presidential race, they may be less familiar with each candidate's stance on the actual issues.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

Where do Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump stand on the issues? In this lesson, students examine the views held by Clinton and Trump on nine key policy issues, as detailed in this interactive Lowdown post.

Activity: "Talk back" to the candidate

- Before reading, go over the vocabulary infographic and briefly introduce political jargon as a code that readers need to learn to understand political writing. Find a more extensive list of political jargon by Scholastic here.
- Working in groups or individually, students choose 1-2 positions of the candidates included in the Lowdown post. Students then "talk back" to the candidate by responding to the direct quote. Students can choose a quote they agree with or one they disagree with.
    - **Sample "talk back" format:** _____(candidate name), we/I _____(agree/disagree) when you said, "_____" (direct quote taken from

the Lowdown post or other source). I/We (agree/disagree) because _____ (students support their argument with evidence)

- Students share their "talk backs" with the class orally, in writing or on a shared document.
- After the lesson, share your student talk backs and other comments and lesson modifications on the Lowdown Teacher Forum.

Discussion/class debate questions

- Why did you choose a particular issue? Why is this one important to you?
- Which candidate do you think has better ideas about an issue that's important to you or to the class? Explain using evidence.
- Who do you think would make a better president? Cite evidence to support your claim.

Extension activities

- **Class debate:** Students debate, using evidence they have gathered from this lesson and other sources, including this Lowdown post on political party platforms. Possible debate questions are listed above. Structured class debates are a valuable way to help students practice citing evidence, building arguments and learning to disagree respectfully. PBS Election Central's classroom debate toolkit helps teachers and students prepare.
- **Move the debate online:** Students comment on each other's "talk backs" using an annotation platform like Hypothes.is. Visit these sites for a quick teacher tutorial and further resources .
- **A national platform for your students' voices:** Students make their voices heard on issues they care about by participating in Letters to the Next President 2.0. This national initiative gives youth a platform to express their opinion about election issues that matter most to them. Teachers must sign up and get a group code that students can use to publish letters. For more resources and examples, see KQED's student video project, My Backyard Campaign.

Common Core reading/writing standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.