



Who's the most powerful person in the world? A lot of people would say the president of the United States. Why? Because in many ways, the U.S. is the world's **superpower** – and the American president is that nation's leader. So, it's no surprise that when there's a U.S. presidential election, citizens in most other countries – not just Americans – are interested in the process and the results.

ELECTION YEAR

Under the **American Constitution**, presidential elections must be held every four years and the president can serve a maximum of two four-year terms.

The next presidential election is scheduled for November 8. Democratic President Barack Obama, who made history in 2008 as the first African American ever elected to the top position in the U.S., will step aside two months after the vote is held. Who is seeking to replace him?

HILLARY CLINTON

Democrat Hillary Clinton is one of two main candidates and the first woman to run for the office of U.S. president.

A lawyer and one-time law teacher, Ms Clinton served as **first lady** when her husband Bill was president of the U.S. from 1992 to 2000. She was a **senator** representing New York state from 2001 to 2009, and served as President Obama's **secretary of state** during his first term in office. Over the course of four years in that role she traveled to 112 countries and was involved in multiple crises.

Ms Clinton's running mate, who will become **vice president** if she is elected, is Tim Kaine, a U.S. senator from Virginia. Together, they promise to push for social programs like paid leave for new mothers, increases to the minimum wage, and job creation through **infrastructure** investments if they are elected. They believe that

A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Since the 1860s, the Republicans and the Democrats have dominated electoral politics in the U.S. The difference between these two political parties? The Republicans have a more conservative **platform**. They believe in less government control, a strong military, and less taxes. The symbol of the Republican Party is the elephant.

The Democrats are more **progressive**. They emphasize the military less, but the environment and social programs more. Their symbol is the donkey.

Smaller parties and independent candidates also play a small role in American politics. However, these 'third parties' usually receive little attention and few votes because they don't have a realistic chance of winning.

DEFINITIONS

AMERICAN CONSTITUTION: the fundamental law of the U.S.

FIRST LADY: the wife of the U.S. president

INFRASTRUCTURE: the set of systems within a place or organization that affects how well it operates, for example, the telephone and transportation systems in a country

PLATFORM: a political party's statement of principles and goals

PROGRESSIVE: favouring progress, improvement and reform

SECRETARY OF STATE: the head of the State Department in the U.S., responsible for foreign affairs

SENATOR: a person elected to the U.S. Senate, the upper branch of the U.S. legislature

SUPERPOWER: an extremely powerful nation, especially one capable of influencing international events

VICE PRESIDENT: the assistant to the president



these initiatives should be paid for by tax increases on the wealthy.

DONALD TRUMP

Ms Clinton's challenger is Republican Donald Trump, a wealthy businessman and former reality TV star who chose the **governor** of Indiana, Mike Pence, as his running mate. Lacking political experience, Mr. Trump surprised many when he announced he would seek the Republican nomination, and surprised even more when, at the party's convention in July, he won.

If elected, Mr. Trump says he will "make America great again." Among other measures, he will cut taxes drastically, eliminate the expansion to America's health care system brought in by President Obama, and dramatically reduce **free trade** between his nation and others.

CONTROVERSY GALORE

However, his platform isn't what has been making headlines. Instead, the spotlight has been on the many controversial statements and promises he has made since launching his bid for president in January 2016.

When announcing his candidacy, Mr. Trump stated that some Mexican immigrants are criminals and that if elected, he would build a wall to keep them from crossing the border into the U.S. He has also proposed temporarily banning all Muslims from entering America, and said he supports the use of torture.

Furthermore, Mr. Trump has made degrading comments about women and various outrageous and provocative statements on multiple topics, ranging from calling Ms Clinton "the devil" to suggesting that President Obama and Hillary Clinton "co-founded ISIS."

WARNING!

The Republican candidate's **unorthodox** views have divided the American public and his own party. Many people have grave concerns about whether he is fit to lead, and have spoken out against his candidacy. Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate in 2012, regularly criticizes him. Editorial boards at newspapers that usually support Republicans are refusing to throw their weight behind him, while 50 Republican foreign policy experts had this to declare in an open letter:

"Donald Trump lacks the character, values and experience [to be president] and would put at risk our country's national security and well-being."

WHO WILL WIN?

Meanwhile, about two-thirds of American voters say they don't trust Ms Clinton either. Why? A long career of public votes on controversial issues is one reason. Concerns regarding her judgement is another. For example, the **FBI** investigated her unprecedented use of a private email server during her time as secretary of state, and in July, concluded that she had been "extremely careless."

HOW THE U.S. ELECTORAL SYSTEM WORKS

In the U.S., voters don't elect the president and vice president directly. Instead, these leaders are chosen by the **Electoral College**.

Here's how the system works: Each of the 50 U.S. states has a number of electoral votes. The more people in a state, the more electoral votes the state gets. For example, California, the most populated state, has 55 electoral votes. Alaska, also a large state but with a much smaller population, has only three electoral votes.

Voters in each state cast a ballot for their choice of president. The candidate who wins the **popular vote** in each state usually wins all of that state's electoral votes too.

There are 538 electoral votes in total. The candidate who wins the most electoral votes – 270 or more – wins the presidency, even if he or she doesn't win the popular vote across the country.

Still, by late August, polls indicated that about 45 percent of voters supported her, compared to 35 to 40 percent for Mr. Trump. Will she be able to hang on to this strong lead and win the presidency? Stay tuned. The only thing that's for sure is that there's more to come in this unusual U.S. election campaign. ★

DEFINITIONS

ELECTORAL COLLEGE: the group of electors who formally elect the U.S. president and vice president

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation – a U.S. federal law enforcement agency that is the principal investigative arm of the Department of Justice

FREE TRADE: international trade left to its natural course without tariffs, quotas, or other restrictions

GOVERNOR: the chief executive of a state in the U.S., equivalent to a premier in Canada

ISIS: a fundamentalist Islamic militant group fighting to establish an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

POPULAR VOTE: votes calculated across an entire region

UNORTHODOX: independent in behavior or thought; breaking with convention or tradition



ON THE LINES

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. Explain what the Electoral College is and how it works.

2. What is the maximum number of years that a U.S. president can serve in office?

3. When will the next U.S. presidential election occur?

4. Name the two main U.S. political parties.

5. Briefly describe what the Democratic Party believes in.

6. Name and briefly describe the presidential candidate for this party.

7. Who did she choose as her vice-presidential running mate?

8. Briefly describe what the Republican Party believes in.

9. Name and briefly describe the presidential candidate for this party.

10. Who did he choose as his vice-presidential running mate?



INTERNATIONAL

THE 2016 U.S. ELECTION

BEYOND THE LINES

Create a concept map using symbols, words and phrases to show how the U.S. president and vice president are elected. A good concept map contains all key facts and clearly shows the relationship among these facts.

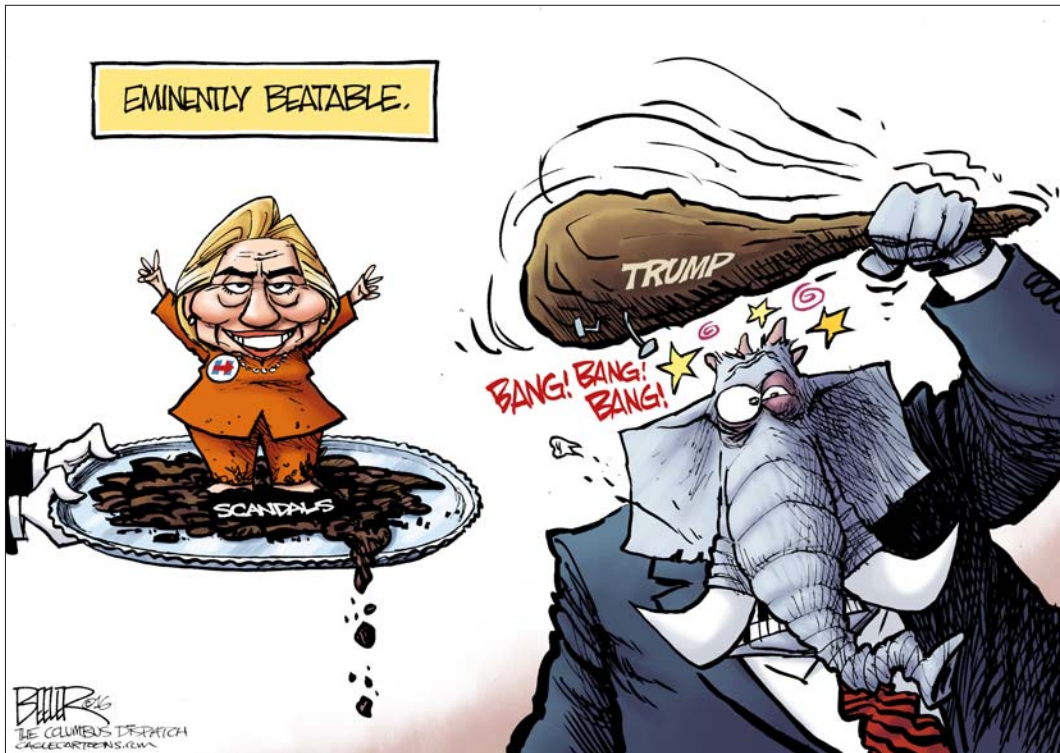
JUST TALK ABOUT IT

1. As you see it, what might be some advantages of limiting a president's time in office to eight years? What might some disadvantages be?
2. What reasons can you suggest to explain why, despite his many divisive and hateful comments, many Americans say they plan to vote for Donald Trump?
3. *What if...* Donald Trump wins the election? Explain.
4. *"I will have trouble sleeping at night if Donald Trump is elected. I will also have trouble sleeping at night if Hillary Clinton is elected."* - Jill Stein, U.S. Green Party leader
 - a) What is your understanding of this quote?
 - b) Respond to this quote. For what reasons do you support the speaker's views? For what reasons do you disagree with her views? Explain.
 - c) If you were able to vote in the upcoming U.S. election, for whom would you cast your ballot? Why? Explain.

ONLINE

Note: The links below are listed at www.lesplan.com/en/links for easy access.

1. Tour the Democratic and Republican candidates' websites at <http://www.donaldjtrump.com> and <http://www.hillaryclinton.com>
2. Keep up with the latest polls by visiting the CBC poll tracker for the U.S. election at <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/uspolltracker/>
3. Watch a video about the sources of power https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Eutci7ack ★



YOUR TASK:

Examine the editorial cartoon. Then, use the questions below to help you decode the cartoon’s message. Be specific and include as many details as possible in your answers. *Note:* Background information on what editorial cartoons are and what techniques cartoonists use is available for download at www.lesplan.com/en/subscribers

INITIAL READING: What can an initial look reveal?

1. Glance quickly at the cartoon. What is your first impression – your “gut response”?
2. Consider your background knowledge. What do you already know about the context of the cartoon – the time, place or situation? (List key facts.)

CLOSER LOOK: What’s happening in the cartoon?

3. Find labels. How do the words (or numbers) in the drawing express ideas or identify people or objects? What message do the labels send?
4. Examine the relative size of figures or objects in the cartoon. What can you infer about the figures or objects from their size? How does the relative size add to the message of the cartoon?
5. Notice the caricature. How do the exaggerated, oversimplified or distorted features of the figures or objects add to the effect of the cartoon? What message does this send the reader?
6. Look at the composition. Where are figures or objects located or arranged in the cartoon? What message does this send about their importance?
7. Identify the symbols. What do these signs or images represent? How do they add to the message of the cartoon?

DRAW CONCLUSIONS: What overall impression can you draw?

8. Identify possible biases. Whose perspective or point of view is expressed in the cartoon?
9. Explain the overall message of the cartoon in a paragraph. (Remember, a good interpretation is *specific* and *detailed*.) ★

Prepared with assistance from TC², The Critical Thinking Consortium. © 2016