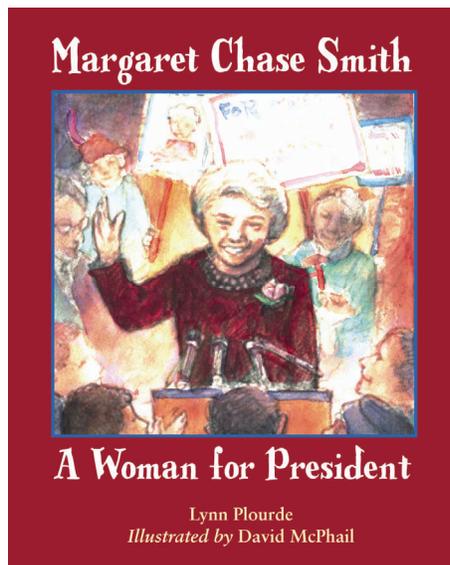


HOLD YOUR OWN ELECTION!



978-1-58089-234-6 • HC • \$16.95
978-1-58089-235-3 • PB • \$7.95
Ages 8–11

Margaret Chase Smith's humble beginnings did not stop her from becoming one of the longest-serving senators and the first woman to run for president on a major party ticket. Her feisty and independent nature made her a successful politician and gave her the endurance to run for president. While American citizens did not vote her into office, she continued to work for progress in the Senate until the age of seventy-two. The right to vote is the foundation of democracy. However, the process of electing officials can often be complicated and confusing. Use the guide below to hold a mock election in your classroom to help you understand your responsibility as an American citizen and the power that you hold through your own vote!

Easy Steps to Hold a Mock Election in Your Own Classroom

UNDERSTAND YOUR GOVERNMENT!

- **Vocabulary:** Define the following terms using a dictionary: democracy, veto, constitution, and equality.
- **Class Discussion:** Define the three branches of government: legislative, judicial, executive. What is each branch's purpose? How do they work together? For which branch did Margaret Chase Smith serve? How long was she in office? How long can one person serve as president? As congressman? As senator?
- **Group Research:** Margaret Chase Smith set the record for the number of consecutive votes in the Senate. Divide the class into four groups. Each group will choose one of the following records to research: longest term, shortest term, shortest inauguration speech, first president to live in the White House. Groups can then present their findings to the class.

CHOOSE A PARTY!

- **Vocabulary:** Define the following terms using a dictionary: campaign, platform, symbol, convention, third party, and bipartisan.
- **Class Discussion:** The following are some of the major U.S. political parties: Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, and Green. What do students know about each party? How do parties work, and why are they important? What does it mean to be an Independent? Do different parties always disagree with one another? How do parties work together?
- **Group Research:** Divide the class into four groups. Each group will pick one party and research that party's platform, symbol, history, and current candidates. Groups can then present their findings to the class. Groups can also make a poster board on which they list the key points of their party's platform and draw the symbol of the party. These can act as references for students when choosing a party and discussing the issues.
- **Class Activity:** In order to vote for a party, a person must be registered as a member of that party. Give each student an index card with the name of each party on it. Don't forget to include "independent" or "other." Students should place a checkmark next to the party of their choice and sign their name. Then, tally the results and share with the class how many people identify with each party.

DEBATE THE ISSUES!

• **Writing Exercise:** Margaret Chase Smith tackled many difficult issues while she was in the Senate, including war, women's rights, space exploration, and freedom of speech. Are these important issues today? Have students choose an issue and write an essay on why or why not it is still significant today.

• **Class Discussion:** The following are key causes that are important in the 2008 presidential election: the environment, unemployment, foreign relations, immigration, and health care. What current events are related to these issues? Which issues are important to the class? Are there other issues at stake in the election? Have each student rank the issues from most important to least important. Then, have students share their opinions with the class.

• **Class Activity:** Hold a debate. Divide the class in half.

Assign each half a political party. Next, take a class vote on which issue to debate. Give both groups time to recall their party's position on the issue and to compile their arguments and defenses. Begin the debate by having each side open with a speech outlining their stance. Open the debate, allowing one side to speak at a time.



CAMPAIGN FOR THE CANDIDATES!

• **Class Discussion:** Who are the candidates for each party? Who are their running mates (if known)? What do students like about the candidates? What do they not like? What kinds of qualities does America value in a president? Discuss students' opinions of the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.

• **Writing Exercise:** Ask students to write an essay about their favorite president from history or their favorite candidate running in the 2008 presidential campaign. What made or makes this person a good leader? Did/does he or she have any faults? What do students feel are the most important characteristics of a president?

• **Art Project:** Look at examples of campaign slogans, advertisements, and signs. What sorts of things are included in these campaign tools? Why do candidates put so much effort into their signs and advertisements? Students can create a campaign sign to promote themselves for president. Think about important elements to include, such as color, key words, pictures, and platform statements.

VOTE!

• It's time to make a decision. At the top of an index card write the names of all the presidential candidates and their running mates (if known). Each student must fill out the card and drop it in the ballot box. Tally up the votes and see who your class would elect as the president of the United States! Remember to keep the votes anonymous!

Website Resources

- ★ National Student/Parent Mock Election
www.nationalmockelection.org
- ★ Political Information.com
www.politicalinformation.com
- ★ Center for Civic Education
www.civiced.org
- ★ Project Vote Smart
www.vote-smart.org
- ★ White House Kids
www.whitehouse.gov/kids

Further Reading

- ★ *The Flag We Love* by Pam Muñoz Ryan
Charlesbridge
- ★ *A Woman for President: The Story of Victoria Woodhull*
by Kathleen Krull
Walker Books for Young Readers
- ★ *This is America* by Don Robb
Charlesbridge
- ★ *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution*
by Betsy Maestro
Harper Collins Publishing
- ★ *Madam President: The Extraordinary, True (and Evolving) Story of Women in Politics* by Catherine Thimmesh,
Houghton Mifflin