

The Almost Painless Guide



TO THE ELECTION PROCESS

TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE TO THE ELECTION PROCESS

Program Produced By...
Northwest Teleproductions/Chicago, Inc.

Executive Producer...
Richard Hawksworth

Teacher's Guide by...
Sharon Barton

Script of Narration by...
Harlan Hogan

Published & Distributed by...



AGC/United Learning
1560 Sherman Avenue
Suite 100
Evanston, Illinois 60201
(800) 323-9084, Fax (847) 328-6706
<http://www.agcunitedlearning.com>
e-mail: info@agcunited.com

This video is the exclusive property of the copyright holder. Copying, transmitting, or reproducing in any form, or by any means, without prior written permission from the copyright holder is prohibited (Title 17, U.S. Code Sections 501 and 506).

©MM Northwest Teleproductions

THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE TO THE ELECTION PROCESS

Teacher's Guide Table of Contents

General Description of the Program	1
Instructional Notes	2
<u>Suggested Instructional Procedures</u>	
Teacher Preparation	2
Student Preparation	2
Student Objectives.....	3
<u>Follow-Up Activities</u>	
Blackline Masters	3
Internet Resources	4
Answer Key	6
Script of Video Narration	12

 This video is closed captioned

The purchase of this video program entitles the user to the right to reproduce or duplicate, in whole or in part, this teacher's guide and the blackline master handouts that accompany it for the purpose of teaching in conjunction with this video, **The Almost Painless Guide to the Election Process**. This right is restricted only for use with this video program. Any reproduction or duplication in whole or in part of this guide and the blackline master handouts for any purpose other than for use with this video program is prohibited.

CLASSROOM/LIBRARY VIEWING CLEARANCE

This program is for instructional use. The cost of each program includes public performance rights as long as no admission charge is made. Public performance rights are defined as viewing of a video in the course of face-to-face teaching activities in a classroom, library, or similar setting devoted to instruction.

Closed Circuit Rights are included as a part of the public performance rights as long as closed-circuit transmission is restricted to a single campus. For multiple locations, call your AGC/United Learning representative.

Television/Cable/Satellite Rights are available. Call your AGC/United Learning representative for details.

Duplication Rights are available if requested in large quantities. Call your AGC/United Learning representative for details.

Quantity Discounts are available for large purchases. Call your AGC/United Learning representative for information and pricing. Discounts, and some special services, are not applicable outside the United States.

Your suggestions and recommendations are welcome. Feel free at any time to call AGC/United Learning at 1-800-323-9084.

**THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE
TO THE ELECTION PROCESS
Grades 5-Up
Running Time: 20 minutes**

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Almost Painless Guide to the Election Process uses contemporary video footage, archival video footage and photographs, original graphics, and dialog narration to provide students in grades five and up with information on the election process.

The program explores the qualifications needed to vote or become a candidate, including the concept of citizenship and how it applies to running for political office and voting eligibility.

It explains political parties and their diversity and usefulness in presenting candidates to the public.

Time is also spent detailing platforms that were significant in United States electoral history, such as suffrage. The 15th, 19th, and 26th amendments, and how they expanded voting rights, are explained in detail.

The significance of the different types of elections are covered – including general, primary, initiative, and recall elections. The purpose of the electoral college and its role in electing the president is also clarified.

Throughout, emphasis is placed on the involvement of citizens in each step of the process, such as grass roots campaigning and citizen involvement.

The program concludes with “The Almost Painless Review,” which offers an excellent synopsis of the entire program. Also, a Video Quiz is provided prior to the closing credits.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

It is suggested that you preview the video and read the related Suggested Instructional Procedures before involving your students in the lesson activities. By doing so, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the program to the needs of your class.

You will probably find it best to follow the video and lesson activities in the order in which they are presented in this Teacher's Guide, but this is not necessary.

It is also suggested that the video presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. The lesson activities focus on the content of the video.

As you review the instructional program outlined in the Teacher's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students.

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

Teacher Preparation

- Preview the video The Almost Painless Guide to the U.S. Election Process.
- Read the descriptions of the blackline masters.
- Duplicate any blackline masters you intend to use.

Student Preparation

The students should be supplied with the necessary copies of blackline masters required to complete the activities. By keeping students informed of current events, teachers can extend any of the lessons on the election process.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing the program The Almost Painless Guide to the Election Process and participating in the follow-up activities, students should be able to:

- Explain how political parties, campaigns, and elections provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process;
- Describe the role of political parties;
- Describe various kinds of elections, i.e., primary and general, local and state, congressional, presidential, recall;
- Explain ways individuals can participate in political parties, campaigns, and elections.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

BLACKLINE MASTERS

1. **Blackline Master #1: Pre-Test** is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the Objectives prior to the launching of the Almost Painless Guide to the Election Process lesson, which includes the video and the ensuing activities. The results of the Pre-Test may be contrasted with the results of the **Blackline Masters #2a-2c: Post-Test** to assess the efficacy of the lesson in achieving the Student Objectives.
2. **Blackline Masters #2a-2c: Post-Test** is an assessment tool to be administered after the lesson (Pre-Test, video, and follow-up activities) has been completed.
3. **Blackline Master #3: Video Quiz** is a printed copy of the questions that appear at the end of the video presentation. The Video Quiz is intended to reinforce the salient points of the video immediately following its completion and may be used for assessment or as a catalyst for discussion.
4. **Blackline Master #4: Discussion Questions** offers questions to spur conversation and to identify student comprehension and misunderstanding.

5. **Blackline Master #5: Design a Campaign Poster** challenges students to design a political campaign poster that accurately portrays a candidate.
6. **Blackline Master #6: Who Can Participate?** provides examples of different citizens and asks students to decide and explain if they can participate in the political process.
7. **Blackline Master #7: Learn the Terms** asks students to fill in the blanks by selecting from a list of *Election Process* terms.
8. **Blackline Masters #8a-8b: Word Search** prompts students to search for hidden words from the lessons.
9. **Blackline Master #9: Draw a Political Cartoon** instructs students to observe and collect political cartoons from newspapers and other sources and then to create their own.
10. **Blackline Master #10: Vocabulary** is a list of pertinent terms and definitions.

Internet Resources for Teachers and Students

For Teachers

- √ **Center for Civic Education**
www.civiced.org

This source offers links to various curriculum resources including the “We the People, Project Citizen” national civics program.

- √ **Political Cartoons**
Daryl Cagle’s Professional Cartoonists Index
www.cagle.com/teacher

This source offers many political cartoons, which can be used to show students how professionals translate an issue into a meaningful visual.

- √ **Editorials on File**
www.facts.com/eof.htm
www.4editorials.com

These sources offer many editorials, which can be tailored for use with older students.

For Students

Note: All sites should be previewed by teachers to be sure they are age-appropriate for their students.

Good sources for political news and issues written at an easy-to-read level for younger students are:

- √ ***Time for Kids* magazine**
www.pathfinder.com/TFK
- √ **Scholastic**
www.scholastic.com/scholasticnews

Other news sites that can be used with older students under a teacher's direction include:

- √ **CNN Interactive**
www.cnn.com
 - √ **USA Today**
www.usatoday.com
 - √ **The Associated Press**
www.apalert.com
 - √ **New York Times**
www.nytimes.com
 - √ **The Washington Post**
www.washington.post.com
- √ Check your local newspaper to see if they have a site for special activities and strategies for teaching students about local events.
- √ In addition, keep in mind that the president and members of Congress, as well as many state and local officeholders, can be reached by students through e-mail. Leading candidates for public office generally all have websites, too.

ANSWER KEY

Blackline Master #1: Pre-Test

1. **False** The U.S. Constitution does not mention political parties.
2. **False** The United States has had many political parties.
3. **False** Naturalized citizens can vote and run for any office but president.
4. **False** You can vote when you are 18.
5. **False** Women gained the right to vote with the 19th Amendment.
6. **False** African American men gained the right to vote with the 15th Amendment.
7. **False** U.S. presidents are officially elected by the electoral vote cast by the Electoral College.
8. **False** Initiative is a method citizens can use to pass legislation; recall is a method citizens can use to remove someone from office.
9. **True**
10. **False** Although students under 18 cannot vote, they can participate in other ways, for example, by expressing their views to their elected officials and by campaigning for the candidate of their choice.

Blackline Masters #2a-2c: Post Test

1. **True**
2. **False** Naturalized citizens can vote.
3. **False** Elections are usually held on a Tuesday.
4. **False** People under the age of 18 can participate.
5. **False** There have been many parties.
6. **False** The U.S. Constitution does not mention political parties.
7. **False** The elephant is a symbol of the Republican party.

8. **True**

9. **False** The place where citizens cast their vote is called a polling place.

10. **True**

11. (a)

12. (b)

13. (d)

14. (b)

15. (d)

16. (b)

17. (b)

18. (c)

19. (b)

20. (b)

21. Answers will vary. Possible answer: Citizens can campaign and, if they meet certain age and residency requirements, vote and run for office. They can also express their views in a variety of ways, including circulating petitions and communicating through letters to their elected officials.

22. Answers will vary. Possible answer: The number of voters has been expanded through three constitutional amendments. The 15th Amendment gave African American men the right to vote. The 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote. The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to those 18 years old.

Blackline Master #3: Video Quiz

1. **False** A citizen is anyone born in the United States (or whose parents are U.S. citizens) or naturalized.

2. **True**

3. **False** The 15th Amendment gave the vote to African American males.

4. **False** To be a senator, a person needs to be at least 30 years old.

5. **False** It is necessary to register.

- 6. **True**
- 7. **False** The two major U.S. political parties are the Republican party and the Democratic party.
- 8. **False** Women gained the vote with the 19th Amendment; African American men gained the vote with the 15th Amendment.
- 9. **False** Initiative is a method by which citizens can propose legislation.
- 10. **True**

Blackline Master #4: Discussion Questions

- 1. Answers will vary. Possible answers: They can vote, campaign for candidates, run for office, educate themselves, and express their views on important issues.
- 2. Answers will vary. Possible answer: They cannot vote or run for office, but they can campaign for candidates, learn about important issues, and express their views (for example, by writing letters to public officials or newspapers; by wearing campaign buttons; by making posters or banners for campaign rallies; and so forth).
- 3. Answers will vary. Possible answers: Political candidates try to get their message across to voters any way they can. They make speeches; give interviews; participate in debates, parades, and political rallies; visit citizens in schools, community centers, factories, nursing homes, and other places; put ads in newspapers, billboards, and on radio and television; create bumper stickers, buttons, hats, T-shirts, other campaign materials for voters; have their supporters make phone calls; get endorsements from anyone the voters might trust or believe: elected officials, movie stars, sports heroes.
- 4. Answers will vary. Possible answer: Citizens have a loyalty to the country.

5. Answers will vary. Possible answer: Political parties provide a way for candidates of similar views to present themselves to voters. Many minor political parties (third parties) have campaigned for issues such as women's right to vote that have later been adopted by the major parties.

6. Answers will vary. Possible answer: A democracy relies on interested and educated voters to succeed.

7. Answers will vary. Possible answer: Yes, it is fair because voters will still be able to express their views in the general election. No, it isn't fair because voters do not get to help select the candidate.

8. Answers will vary. Possible answer: These techniques give average citizens who vote the opportunity to pass a law the legislature wouldn't consider, approve a law already passed, or to remove someone from office.

9. Answers will vary. Possible answer: The Electoral College is made up of the people who actually vote to elect the president. Each state selects a number of members of the Electoral College, depending on the total number of the state's senators and representatives in Congress (also known as its electoral votes). In most states the presidential candidate who wins the general election gets all of that state's electoral votes.

10. Answers will vary. Possible answer: Each of these amendments has expanded the number of voters. The 15th Amendment gave the vote to African American males. The 19th Amendment gave the vote to women. The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to 18 years old.

Blackline Master #5: Design a Campaign Poster

Answers will vary. Campaign posters can be judged on 1) execution – how well the poster is drawn, and 2) content – how well the poster reflects a reason to vote for the candidate.

Blackline Master #6: Who Can Participate?

1. No, she can't because she is not 18 years old.
2. If he is at least 18 years old and registered, he can vote using an absentee ballot.
3. She can vote if she is a naturalized citizen, 18 or older, and registered to vote.
4. He can vote if he is 18 or older and registered to vote.
5. No, she cannot vote if she hasn't registered.
6. Yes, he can vote because an open primary means everyone can vote.
7. Yes, she can participate because there are no age requirements.
8. Yes, he can if his state permits the initiative.
9. Yes, they can start a new political party. However, there may be state requirements to fulfill to get a new political party listed on the ballot.
10. He cannot be a candidate because he is too young – he needs to be at least 25 years old to be a congressman.

Blackline Master #7: Learn the Terms

1. citizen, alien, naturalization
2. Democratic party, Republican party, to register
3. 15th Amendment, 19th Amendment
4. 26th Amendment
5. polling places
6. absentee ballot
7. third parties
8. primary, candidate, closed primary, open primary
9. initiative, recall

Blackline Masters #8a-8b: Word Search

D	E	M	O	C	R	A	T	I	C	P	A	R	T	Y	G
A	L	Z	M	N	Q	B	L	E	S	R	F	E	C	R	R
F	E	X	O	U	T	S	E	I	J	I	R	P	A	R	A
S	H	G	X	Y	R	E	I	T	D	A	R	U	C	M	S
A	T	K	L	P	R	N	J	I	C	R	I	C	A	P	S
W	O	M	E	N	H	T	B	A	C	A	N	L	A	S	S
P	R	I	Z	H	S	E	R	T	U	A	N	I	C	R	O
O	A	C	G	H	H	E	V	I	F	A	A	A	A	E	O
L	L	Q	H	O	B	C	R	V	M	E	M	E	A	R	O
I	C	I	T	J	K	Z	R	W	U	E	R	A	N	T	S
L	O	B	E	G	H	P	Q	N	C	N	R	P	N	C	T
I	N	D	E	I	K	M	N	P	R	E	I	A	N	V	R
G	L	C	N	E	G	Z	X	W	U	I	C	R	A	T	I
R	E	C	A	L	L	D	F	Y	B	O	A	R	T	J	L
C	G	H	Z	Q	O	M	N	B	U	N	A	Y	M	O	N
G	E	N	A	T	U	R	A	L	I	Z	A	T	I	O	N

Blackline Master #9: Draw a Political Cartoon

Answers will vary. Political cartoons can be judged on 1) execution – how well the drawing is made, and 2) content – how well the issue is addressed.

**The Almost Painless Guide to the Election Process
Script of Narration**

HARLAN:
That's it - I can not go on!

MARIE:
And just why would that be, Harlan?

HARLAN:
I can not tell a lie, Marie.

MARIE:
Hello? You are my friend Harlan, right? I don't recall that bending the truth a little bit was ever a problem for you.

HARLAN:
Well, knowing that we're going to discuss the election process got me thinking about our very first president, George Washington. You know what he's supposed to have said....

MARIE
"I cannot tell a lie." And?

HARLAN:
And, I know personally that elections can be very painful, so we have to change the title because it's a lie!

MARIE:
Oh, yeah, I remember how you lost out in the vote for captain of the football team. American tragedy, really.

HARLAN:
Not that...

MARIE:
Soccer captain? Field hockey? Baseball?

HARLAN:
No, no, no, and thanks for reminding me how many times I lost an election.

MARIE:
Sorry. Does this help?

HARLAN:

Well, at least it's a little more honest. Besides, there are worse things than *losing* an election.

MARIE:

That's right. Although I can't think of any.

HARLAN:

I can: winning.

MARIE:

You actually won an election?

HARLAN:

Yeah, kinda. I was elected Student Council president.

MARIE:

Wow!

HARLAN:

For a day.

MARIE:

One day?

HARLAN:

Longest day of my life. How did I know they wouldn't let me put big screen TVs in the cafeteria?

MARIE:

Well you're not the first candidate for political office who, try as he might, wasn't able to fulfill every campaign promise.

HARLAN:

I guess not.

MARIE:

And it certainly does show how the voters have the ultimate say! They, and only they, decide to elect or keep a candidate in public office.

HARLAN:

My compliments to your writers, Marie! That was a darn fine transition into the "educational" part of this program.

MARIE:

Why, I'd be nothing without the help of all the little people behind the scenes, Harlan! It's just nice to know you like me, you really, really like me!

HARLAN:

So when George Washington was running for office with that "Can't Lie - Don't Ask Me" slogan, did he have those nifty buttons and bumper stickers?

MARIE:

Our first president ran unopposed, Harlan.

HARLAN:

Wow, that's exactly how I got elected.

MARIE:

Figures. But most presidential candidates since then have had to campaign hard, and use lots of different forms of advertising, to convince voters to choose them.

HARLAN:

I suppose that's true for anyone running for almost any public office.

MARIE:

Right. Whether you're a candidate for mayor, Congress, or president, you have to get citizens to vote for you.

HARLAN:

Citizens. That's us right?

MARIE:

Yep. A citizen is anyone who was born in the United States, or subject to its jurisdiction, or whose parents are U.S. citizens. Although, I really do believe you're from Mars.

HARLAN:

That would make me an alien, Marie

MARIE:

Actually, that's correct. An alien is not only a mythical creature from another world, a person who is not a citizen of the United States is also called an alien, although many aliens do become citizens through a process called "naturalization."

HARLAN:

So, then, *citizens* can vote, and be elected to office.

MARIE:

Right, but...

HARLAN:

But what?

MARIE:

Well, you must also be at least 18 years of age to vote. (The 26th amendment to the Constitution lowered the voting age from 21.) And many elected offices do have age and residency requirements.

HARLAN:

That's simple.

MARIE:

And you have to register as a voter in advance of upcoming elections.

HARLAN:

A little less simple.

MARIE:

Well, you have to plan ahead a little. But the National Voter Registration Act has made registering a bit easier.

HARLAN:

How so?

MARIE:

It allows you to register to vote when you renew your driver's license!

HARLAN:

That's easy. Now when do I go stuff that ballot box?

MARIE:

Elections are traditionally held on a Tuesday at various public buildings.

HARLAN:

What if I'm working?

MARIE:

I'd be amazed. However, most polling places are open from seven in the morning 'till about eight at night, so you'll find the time. And, by the way, you can't *stuff* the ballot box. One person, one vote.

HARLAN:

What if I was out of town, like enrolled at Harvard for instance?

MARIE:

In that case, you can use what's called an "Absentee Ballot." You send for one, fill it in, and mail it back.

HARLAN:

Got it. But it seems unfair, if you're not eighteen you can't participate, and you can't go to the parties.

MARIE:

I know I'll regret asking this but, what parties?

HARLAN:

Those political parties I keep hearing about.

MARIE:

Wrong, Wrong, Wrong.

HARLAN:

Why, Why, Why?

MARIE:

Because, because, because... We have to stop talking like this.

HARLAN:

Into microphones?

MARIE:

In threes.

HARLAN:

Okay, okay, okay... Oops, sorry. You were saying.

MARIE:

Anyone can participate in elections Harlan, even if they can't actually cast a vote. For example, you can discuss candidates and issues and then try to persuade others to vote a certain way.

Or you can write letters to candidates or present office holders expressing your opinions. As a matter of fact, some U.S. Senators receive as many as ten thousand communications from people just like us, every week!

HARLAN:

Well, I'd prefer communicating my political views closer to home. Like slapping one of those impossible-to-remove-without-an-air-hammer bumper stickers on your Mom's car, or secretly pinning campaign buttons to the back of your Dad's suit coat.

MARIE:

You, and only you, would come up with that. But, in a sense you're right. You can make your opinion known, even if you aren't able to vote. You could also volunteer to help at a candidate's campaign headquarters. They need lots of people, of all ages, to distribute petitions, and literature, put up signs, and canvass neighborhoods. That means going door to door asking people to vote for their candidate.

HARLAN:

And go to parties!

MARIE:

Yes, and no.

HARLAN:

"Yes, and no." You sound just like the kids who elected me Student Council President.

MARIE:

Yes, candidates do have *parties*, to raise funds, and hopefully celebrate victory, but, no, a *political party* is something completely different.

HARLAN:

And I have the feeling you are about to explain that difference in minute detail.

MARIE:

And you would be right. You see, Harlan, although the U.S. Constitution doesn't mention political parties, they quickly developed. And political parties became the major way candidates for public offices are presented to the voters.

HARLAN:

You're talking about the Elephant and Donkey guys, right?

MARIE:

I'm talking about the two major American parties, Harlan: the Republicans and the Democrats, although there have been, and always will be, many other political parties as well. They are usually referred to as third parties.

HARLAN:

I never heard of any, name two.

MARIE:

The Federalists, Democratic Republicans, Whig, Copperheads, Union, Progressive, State's Rights, American Independent, Socialist, Libertarian, Populist, Prohibition, Anti-Mason, Liberty, Free-Soil, Peoples, National, Peace and Freedom, Reform, Constitutional Union, National Women's Party, Southern Democratic, American Party, also known as the know-nothings Among others.

HARLAN:

Enough, let it go already! Geez, ask for two examples, get a roll call! Look, you convinced me..

But the Donkey and Elephant guys are the biggies. Whigs! Copperheads! Talk about strange party names.

MARIE:

And you've convinced me to let it go. Now, even though third parties have never elected a president or controlled Congress, they have made a big difference in our lives.

HARLAN:

How could that be?

MARIE:

Many smaller parties have concentrated on a single political issue, often motivating the two major parties to react. The Prohibition and Populist parties for example, originally advocated our 19th amendment to the Constitution, giving women the right to vote.

HARLAN:

As if I haven't suffered enough.

MARIE:

What?

HARLAN:

I said, "Getting that amendment passed must have been tough."

MARIE:

It was. You see, Harlan, "suffrage" means "the right to vote." But, for the first 144 years of this country's existence, women couldn't vote. In 1848, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the first women's rights convention in America. She and Susan B. Anthony joined forces campaigning tirelessly year after year for Women's suffrage. Beginning in 1878, an amendment to give women that right was introduced in Congress, and promptly defeated. But finally, in 1918, Jeannette Rankin, the first woman Congresswoman, again proposed the amendment. Although it barely passed the House of Representatives by the required two-thirds vote, it *was* passed by two-thirds of the Senate and three-fourths of the States, and women finally got the vote.

HARLAN:

About time! Talk about unfair.

MARIE:

I agree. Originally the right to vote was a privilege given only to white men wealthy enough to own land. But amendments like the 15th, stating that the right to vote cannot be denied because of race, color, or previous condition of slavery, and the 19th, granting suffrage to women, have given all citizens...

HARLAN:

Eighteen and older (the 26th amendment, as I recall)...

MARIE:

You were listening! Eighteen and older... The right to vote. And not just in national elections Harlan. We can vote in local, state, general, and primary elections. And before you even say it, "primary" does not refer to kindergarten elections.

HARLAN:

A joke that childish would never cross my mind, Marie.

MARIE:

Oh, brother. A primary is an election where voters choose a party's candidate for the upcoming general election. A "closed" primary means only that party's registered voters can participate, and an "open" primary...

HARLAN:
Lets everyone vote!

MARIE:
Excellent grasp of the obvious.

HARLAN:
Thank you, I think. Can I vote on anything else?

MARIE:
I'm glad you asked that, and, yes, you can vote on important matters in addition to choosing candidates for public office. For example, many states have adopted the "initiative" as a way of passing laws that their legislature wouldn't consider.

HARLAN:
"Initiative," huh? That's what my teachers always said I didn't have. So, how does this "political initiative" work?

MARIE:
If citizens can collect a certain minimum number of signatures of qualified voters on a petition, then the proposed legislation is put on the ballot, for all the voters to decide on. Initiatives are often called "propositions" as well. By the way, collecting signatures on a petition you believe in is another great way to be involved in the political process on a "grass roots" level.

HARLAN:
I want you to know, Marie, I am not going to make any seedy jokes about the term "grass roots." I just don't understand what the heck it means.

MARIE:
It refers to political action on a local, person-to-person level, Harlan. And thanks for sparing us the "Lawn Ranger" and "grass is always greener" gags.

HARLAN:
Well, "Queen of Crabgrass," I figure this whole election thing is in your field, your turf, in your ballpark, so to speak. I am merely here to learn.

MARIE:
Speaking of learning ,do you know what a "referendum" is?

HARLAN:
No, and I can't spell it either, but I'm sure you'll fill me in.

MARIE:
I shall. You see, sometimes a state legislature will ask the voters to approve a law they have already passed if, for example, it involves spending large amounts of money, or issuing state bonds. And sometimes, voters are asked to consider a "recall." Sound familiar?

HARLAN:
Whatdayamean?

MARIE:
"Recall," as in *removing* someone from office.

HARLAN:
As in former Student Council President?

MARIE:
Exactly!

HARLAN:
Ouch, you sure know how to hurt a guy! All right, I think I've got this election thing down. Pretty simple really.

MARIE:
It is. There is one kind of complicated thing though, when it comes to electing a president.

HARLAN:
Well, why don't you just keep it to yourself? Life's hard enough, and I think I've learned all I need to know. You register, show up, cast your ballot, let's say for presidential candidate "A." He...

MARIE:
...Or she...

HARLAN:
...Or she...gets the most votes and, *voilà*, they're Mr....

MARIE:
...Or Ms....

HARLAN:
...President.

MARIE:

There is one small, but important-to-understand-complication, though.

HARLAN:

Explain this complication to me in short form, ok? I have a limited life span.

MARIE:

I'll explain it in just two words, Harlan: "Electoral College."

HARLAN:

Never heard of 'em. Do they have a football team?

MARIE:

Nope, but the Electoral College consists of the people who *actually* vote and elect the president, Harlan. You see, each state legislature appoints as many members as the total of its representatives and senators in congress to the electoral college. That way, each state is represented in the Electoral College in direct proportion to the size of its population. During a presidential election, the candidate that wins a state's popular vote gets all of the state's electoral votes. Whoever gets the most electoral votes nationwide, wins, even if they don't win the popular vote.

HARLAN:

But what if there's a tie?

MARIE:

Then the House of Representatives would decide.

HARLAN:

I liked my description better. It was so simple.

MARIE:

True, but remember that at the time the Constitution was being written, there were no computers, voting machines, or even telephones. It's generally felt that the Electoral College was instituted because the *mechanics* of counting actual, individual votes would have taken too long, cost too much, and at the time, been too complicated.

HARLAN:

Maybe we should modernize the system? We just saw that the Constitution can be changed through amendments.

MARIE:

Many people agree and many proposed amendments have been presented including one that President Jimmy Carter made in 1979, strongly recommending abolishment of the Electoral College, but it didn't receive enough votes. But in the future, who knows?

HARLAN:

You know all this talk about elections, voting, and political campaigns, I'm starting to get that strange urge I always seem....

MARIE:

....always seem to get about now.

HARLAN & MARIE:

FIELD TRIP!!!

MARIE:

Here we are, Harlan, the Museum of American Political Life in Hartford, Connecticut. This is going to be fascinating!

HARLAN:

This is going to be educational.

MARIE:

Walk over here.

HARLAN:

Wow, I've never seen so much political stuff! You're right, this is fascinating! And look at all the campaign buttons! I could put one on the back of every man, woman, and child in America!

MARIE:

Lovely thought. Do you know when the first campaign pinback buttons were made, Harlan?

HARLAN:

I don't even know when our *flight* back is Marie.

MARIE:

It was 1896! They're even older than you are, Harlan. Over the years, just about everything from Pipes and Cigars, to buttons and posters have helped elect candidates, or change public opinion. Check out this Christmas stocking from the women's suffrage movement.

HARLAN:

Hey, Marie, here's some of those "Donkey Guys" posters.

MARIE:

The Democrats, Harlan, the Democrats.

HARLAN:

And those Elephant Guys.

MARIE:

The Grand Old Party, Harlan, the Republicans.

HARLAN:

So, who are these "moose guys"?

MARIE:

They weren't the "moose guys," Harlan, but the Progressive Party is a good example of one of the many third parties we talked about. You know, maybe you should just sit in here for the rest of the visit.

HARLAN:

Neat old voting machine! I feel like I just stepped back in time and, speaking of time...

HARLAN & MARIE:

HOME!

MARIE:

That was fun, but I'm glad to be back, and I'm ready for one of our soon-to-be-famous painless reviews.

HARLAN:

I'll try to stay awake.

MARIE:

What?

HARLAN:

I said: "I can hardly wait."

MARIE:

Ready? I promise this won't hurt a bit. Citizens of the United States who are least 18 years old and have registered can vote in elections. Each voter has one vote, and can vote for candidates for

public office in general, national, primary and local elections as well as other issues, such as referendums, initiatives, and even amendments to the United States Constitution. Constitutional amendments concerning voting rights were the 15th, giving all men the right to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of slavery; the 19th, giving women the right to vote; and the 26th, lowering the minimum voting age from 21 to 18 years. The two major political parties in the United States are the Republican and Democratic parties, although there are many others, usually referred to as third parties. Voting in elections, communicating your beliefs to elected officials, and becoming involved with political parties and campaigns are a few of the ways each citizen can participate in the political process.

HARLAN:
Wow! Painless and fast!

MARIE:
Thank you, and I think pretty interesting as well.

HARLAN:
Particularly the field trip. I learned a lot!

MARIE:
Really?

HARLAN:
Yeah. For example, I never knew about that "moose guys party" or that president who had a city named after him.

MARIE:
What in the world are you talking about, Harlan?

HARLAN:
I distinctly remember seeing that poster, Marie. Grover. Cleveland. I wonder if he was actually from Ohio?

MARIE:
You, and only you, could go all the way to Connecticut, and learn nothing!

HARLAN:
What do you mean? I learned a lot, for example: "Win with Wilke", ridiculous slogan, almost as bad as "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too." What does that mean anyway? Marie? Marie? Marie?

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." – President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

"I shall not seek, and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term as your president." - President Lyndon Baines Johnson

"My name is Jimmy Carter and I'm running for president." – President Jimmy Carter

"Government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem." – President Ronald Reagan

"Some men see things as they are and say 'why' ? I dream of things that never were and say 'why not'?" – the words of Senator Robert F. Kennedy as eulogized by Senator Edward Kennedy.



AGC/United Learning, Inc.

1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 100
Evanston, Illinois 60201
(800) 323-9084, Fax (847) 328-6706
<http://www.agcunitedlearning.com>
e-mail: info@agcunited.com

**THE ALMOST PAINLESS GUIDE
TO THE ELECTION PROCESS**

Cat. No. 1823
ISBN No. 1-58443-131-8