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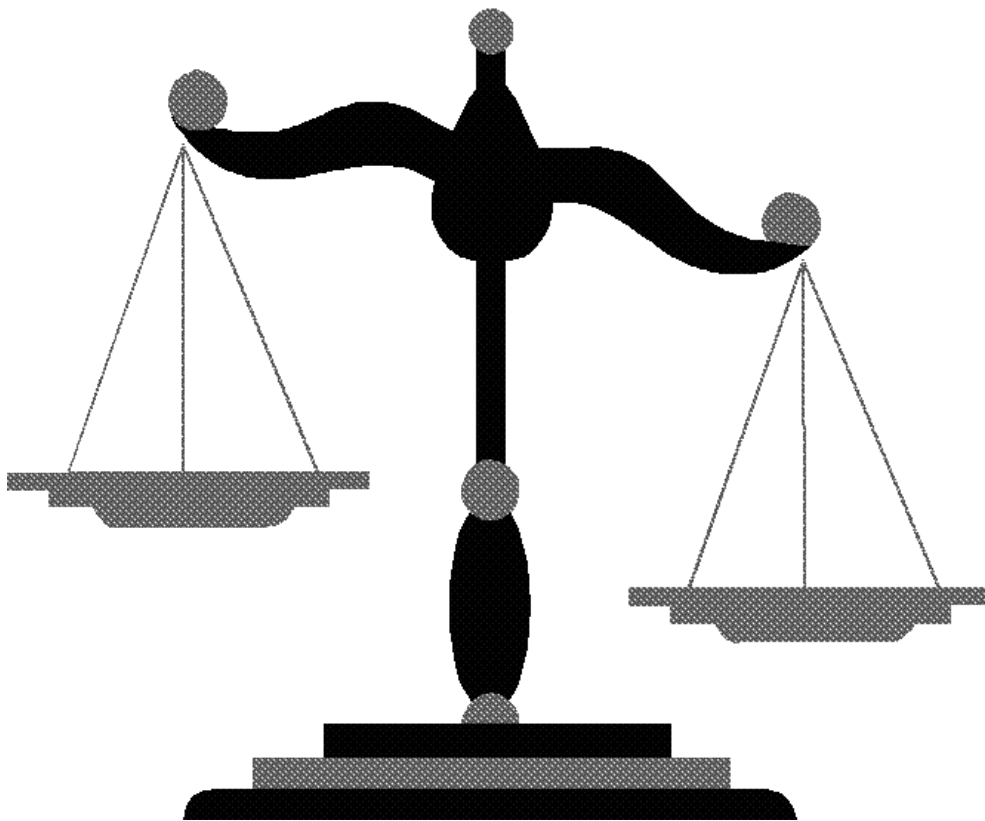
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i Think: Government

Civic Participation



by Sharon Coletti and
Dr. G. Dale Greenawald

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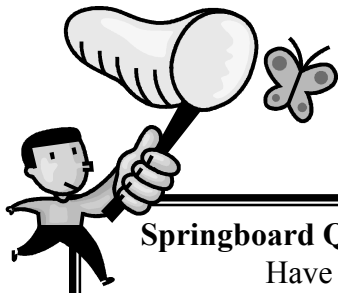
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Catch the Symbolism

Springboard Question:

Have students answer, “What animal BEST describes you?”

Objective: The student will be able to explain the symbols of the Democratic and Republican Parties and what those symbols reveal about each.

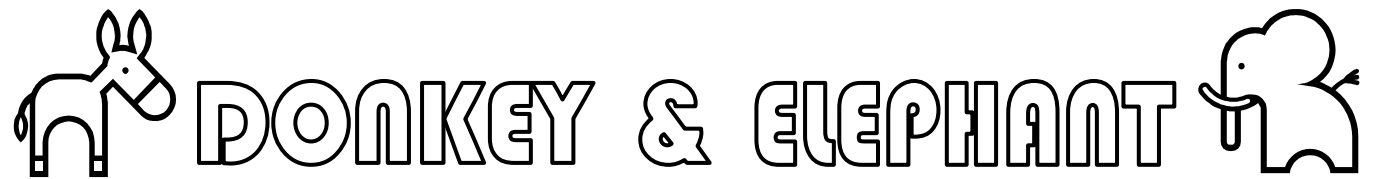
Materials: Donkey & Elephant (handout)
The Parties’ Symbols (handout)
The Third Term Panic (handout)

Terms to know:

- symbol** - a person, place, or thing that represents a quality or idea
- political party** - an established group organized to promote and support its principles and candidates for public office
- Democrat** - one of America’s main political parties
- Republican** - one of America’s main political parties
- opponent** - one who competes with another, as in a political race

Procedure:

- In discussing the Springboard, have the student(s) explain their animals or **for group instruction**, you can collect them and have others try to guess which animal represents each person. Then lead a short discussion of the words related to the various animals. *(Answers will vary, it should be understood that certain qualities are associated with specific animals.)* Explain that animals are often used as symbols for certain traits. For example, turtles symbolize things moving slowly, while rabbits are fast and jumpy. Go on to explain that symbols can express powerful ideas without the use of words.
- Hand out copies of “Donkey & Elephant.” The student(s) should work individually, in pairs, or in small groups to brainstorm a list of as many qualities or ideas associated with each as they can in about ten minutes. They should then go back and mark the words on their lists that have positive (+) or negative (-) connotations.
- Have the student(s) share their ideas and assessments of the words and briefly discuss. During the discussion, explain that the donkey and elephant are the symbols for America’s two largest political parties. Explain that often in cartoons and other visual forms, the donkey is used to represent the Democrats and the elephant the Republicans. Have the student(s) suggest why the animals might be symbols for the two parties.
- Distribute the “The Parties’ Symbols” and “The Third Term Panic” handouts. Have students read the information and highlight or underline words on their “Donkey and Elephant” handout that agree with Nast’s ideas. *(Answers may vary, but note that Nast was a Republican, at that time still the more liberal party of Abe Lincoln, and was very much against a third term for Ulysses Grant.)*

[illegible]

The Parties' Symbols

Thomas Nast, shown at right in one of his own sketches from 1876, was a famous political cartoonist. He published thousands of drawings in a magazine called Harper's Weekly and elsewhere but is perhaps best-known for his fat and jolly image of Santa Claus and his cartoon symbols for America's political parties. Though Nast is credited with linking the donkey and elephant with the Democrats and Republicans, he was not the first to use the symbols.



The donkey was first used when Andrew Jackson ran for president in 1828. His opponents used the donkey to label him a “jackass” for his views and his slogan, “Let the people rule.” Jackson, however, turned the insult around and used it to his favor in his campaign posters. The symbol first appeared in a political cartoon to represent the Democratic Party in 1837. Though Jackson was retired by then, he still viewed himself as the Party's leader. The cartoon made fun of his leadership, showing Jackson trying in vain to make a stubborn donkey go where he wanted it to go.

Thomas Nast first used the donkey to represent Democrats in 1870, and the symbol caught on. In 1874, he used the donkey to show the Democrat's concern over a possible third term for Ulysses S. Grant and included an elephant to represent the Republicans. Although the elephant had been linked with the Republican Party in cartoons in 1860 and 1872, it was Nast who made it the Republican's symbol. The 1874 election year cartoon, “The Third Term Panic,” showed animals representing various issues of the day. These animals were running away from a donkey, Grant, shown wearing a lion's skin labeled “Caesarism,” referring to the enormous power Julius Caesar held over Rome. The elephant representing the “The Republican Vote,” is shown running into a big pit of chaos. (Study the cartoon to try to figure out what Nast thought of the two political parties.)

Over the years, the donkey and the elephant have become common symbols for the Democratic and Republican parties. Although the Democrats have never officially adopted the donkey as their party symbol, they have often used donkey designs for posters and other purposes over the years. The Republicans did make the elephant their official symbol and have used it widely since.

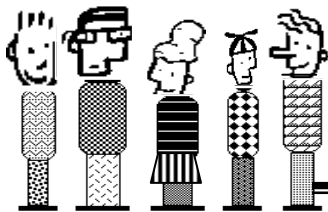
Democrats tend to view the elephant as bungling, stupid, and pompous, but the Republicans see it as dignified, strong and intelligent. As one Republican candidate put it: “The elephant has a thick skin, a head full of ivory, and as everyone who has seen a circus parade knows, proceeds best by grasping the tail of its predecessor.” On the other hand, the Republicans think of the donkey as stubborn, silly and ridiculous, but the Democrats claim it is humble, homely, smart, brave, and loveable.

Adapted from www.democrats.org/a/2005/06/history_of_the.php



"The Third-Term Panic," Thomas Nast, from Harper's Weekly, November 1874.

"An Ass, having put on the Lion's skin, roamed about in the Forest, and amused himself by frightening all the foolish Animals he met with in his wanderings."



Where Do You Stand?

Springboard Question:

What are some political issues you often hear about in the news? (*Answers will vary.*)

Objective: The student will be able to generally explain the views of liberals, moderates, and conservatives.

Materials: Check: What Do You Think? (teacher reading or handouts)
Scoring (teacher reading)
Who's What's What (handout or transparency)

Terms to know: **moderate** - in the middle, not favoring extreme views
social problems - difficulties faced in a society, such as poverty, hunger, homelessness, disease, etc.

Procedure:

- During discussion of the Springboard, have the student(s) tell what they know, if anything, about Democratic and Republican views on some of the issues mentioned. Then explain that this lesson examines some of the views that are typical of the Democratic and Republican parties and how they compare with students' own views on matters.
- NOTE:** Read the "Check: What Do You Think?" questions carefully; note that some are hot-button topics. Omit any you deem inappropriate for your student(s) based on age, religion, or other factors. Replace those with any questions about any relevant issues at the time.
- Explain that the media frequently uses the terms "liberal" and "conservative" to describe politicians and their views. Students will be answering a questionnaire to find out which of these two terms best describes their ideas.
- Read aloud (or hand out) the "Check: What Do You Think?" questionnaire, and have the student(s) record their answers.
- Guide them through scoring the questionnaire and discussion. Explain that while no hard and fast rules apply to politics, certain ideas are seen as generally liberal or conservative views. The scores indicate their views would tend to be described in this way:
 - 79 - 97 points - Liberal
 - 58 - 78 points - Moderate (and somewhat Liberal)
 - 37 - 57 points - Moderate (somewhat Conservative)
 - ≤ 36 points - Conservative
- Hand out or display "Who's What's What?" and discuss, having the students suggest or find one additional point for each. Make sure the student(s) understand that these statements do not represent ALL liberal and conservative views, nor do they represent the views of all people who consider themselves one or the other. Review the two viewpoints and discuss. Then ask the student(s) if they think their score and meaning represent their viewpoints or not, and have them explain their reasoning.



CHECK: What Do You Think?

1. Which of the following would you prefer?
☐ a. A government that provides more services even if it means higher taxes
☐ b. A government that provides fewer services, but taxes people less
2. Which national laws would you support? (*Check all that apply*)
☐ a. Allow voluntary prayer in school
☐ b. Ban the sale of handguns other than to the military and police
☐ c. Ban flag burning.
☐ d. Strengthen limits on immigration to the U.S.
3. Would you prefer a flat tax, in which all income is taxed at the same rate with simpler tax forms or a graduated tax, in which higher incomes are taxed at a higher rate and lower incomes at a lower rate?
☐ a. Flat tax ☐ b. Graduated tax
4. Should government policies such as tax breaks encourage companies to lay off fewer workers, even if it means the government collects less tax money?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No
5. If you saw a young child watching a gay wedding on TV, would you change the channel?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No
6. The most important goal of America's foreign policy should be
☐ a. to promote democracy and human rights in the world.
☐ b. to serve American economic interests around the world.
7. Do you object to religious displays such as nativity scenes at Christmas or menorahs at Hanukkah on government property?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No
8. Who should decide which books children are assigned to read in schools?
☐ a. Teachers ☐ b. Parents
9. Should tests for HIV, a blood-borne virus that causes AIDS, be required for professional athletes in contact sports such as football, boxing, or wrestling?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No
10. Do you support a system that would allow parents to send their children to the public or private school of their choice, paid for by the government?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No
11. Which level of government should be in charge of programs for the poor?
☐ a. Federal ☐ b. State
12. Should ballots for voting and tests for driver's license be offered only in English?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No
13. Should you be allowed to carry a concealed handgun?
☐ a. Yes ☐ b. No

14. Which of these changes in welfare would you support? *(check all that apply)*
- ☐ a. A two-year cut-off for people on welfare who do not find jobs
 - ☐ b. Job training and placement for people receiving welfare
 - ☐ c. No added benefits for welfare recipients with more than two children
 - ☐ d. Child care so welfare recipients with young children can work
15. Which of the following would you support in an effort to cut the U.S. debt?
- ☐ a. Cut programs for the poor and elderly.
 - ☐ b. Cut loans to college students.
 - ☐ c. Cut money for support of the arts.
 - ☐ d. Cut spending for the armed forces.
16. Should illegal immigrants be allowed to receive welfare benefits for their children?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
17. Do you support the “three strikes and you’re out” policy of sentencing anyone convicted of three felonies to prison for life without parole?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
18. What do you think of the Endangered Species Act to protect wildlife?
- ☐ a. I support it because it helps protect animals and their habitats.
 - ☐ b. I oppose it, because it can mean a loss of jobs for workers in the timber industry, and it violates people’s property rights.
19. Should the minimum wage paid to hourly workers be raised?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
20. Should sports teams whose mascots offend minorities change them?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
21. Do you support the death penalty for murder or other very serious crimes?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
22. Should the age for juvenile criminals to be judged as adults be lowered to 13?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
23. Should employers be able to permanently replace workers who go on strike?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
24. Should there be a cap on the amount juries can award injured parties?
- ☐ a. Yes
 - ☐ b. No
25. How should the government handle the issue of abortion? *(check all that apply)*
- ☐ a. Parents should be notified before a woman under 18 has an abortion.
 - ☐ b. There should be no government funding, as for low-income women.
 - ☐ c. It should only be allowed in cases of rape, incest, or if the mother’s life is in danger.
 - ☐ d. Abortion should be illegal in all cases.
 - ☐ e. Abortion should not be restricted in any way.

- SCORING -

Review and have students record their scores for each answer and total them

1. a = 3 b = 1

Liberals tend to favor an activist government and **conservatives** want less government.

2. a = 1 b = 2 c = 1 d = 1

Conservatives tend to support school prayer. **Liberals** support gun laws and oppose limits to First Amendment rights.

3. a = 1 b = 2

4. a = 1 b = 2

Conservatives tend to favor tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy; **liberals** don't.

5. a = 1 b = 2

6. a = 3 b = 1

7. a = 3 b = 1

Liberals tend to support separation of church and state. **Conservatives** disagree.

8. a = 2 b = 1

Conservatives tend to place more emphasis on the individual and family; **liberals** often place greater trust in government.

9. a = 1 b = 3

Liberals would tend to argue in support of privacy rights, while **conservatives** would tend to argue for the greatest good.

10. a = 1 b = 3

Conservatives overwhelmingly support a voucher program as promoting greater individual choice and free market forces, while **liberals** tend to support public education as a common citizenship experience for everyone.

11. a = 3 b = 1

Conservatives favor state governments over the federal government based on their opposition to large government.

12. a = 1 b = 3

Conservatives tend to favor "official English," believing that a common language holds society together, while **liberals** tend to support a multicultural approach in which society is sensitive to the needs of diverse individuals.

13. a = 1 b = 2

14. a = 1 b = 2 c = 1 d = 2

15. a = 1 b = 1 c = 1 d = 3

16. a = 2 b = 1

17. a = 1 b = 3

Liberals tend to believe in human goodness and emphasize rehabilitation, while **conservatives** favor punishment and tougher sentencing.

18. a = 3 b = 1

19. a = 2 b = 1

20. a = 2 b = 1

21. a = 1 b = 3

22. a = 1 b = 2

23. a = 1 b = 2

Liberals tend to favor the needs of workers over large corporations.

24. a = 1 b = 2

25. a = 1 b = 1 c = 1 d = 1 e = 3

This activity was adapted from USA Weekend, April 12-14, 1996, pp. 10-11.