The Race for President

How does the Electoral College work?

1 You might be just old enough to remember some of the controversy that surrounded the presidential election of 2000. In one of the closest political races in United States history, more people voted for Vice-President Al Gore than Texas governor George W. Bush. How did Bush become President then? It is because he received a larger number of electoral votes.

2 The person with the most votes in the race for President of the United States is not necessarily the winner. Instead, the United States has a system called the *Electoral College* in which candidates are awarded a set number of votes for each state they win. For example, the candidate who receives the most votes in Florida earns 25 electoral votes and in Nebraska earns 5. This is partly because more people live in Florida than in Nebraska.

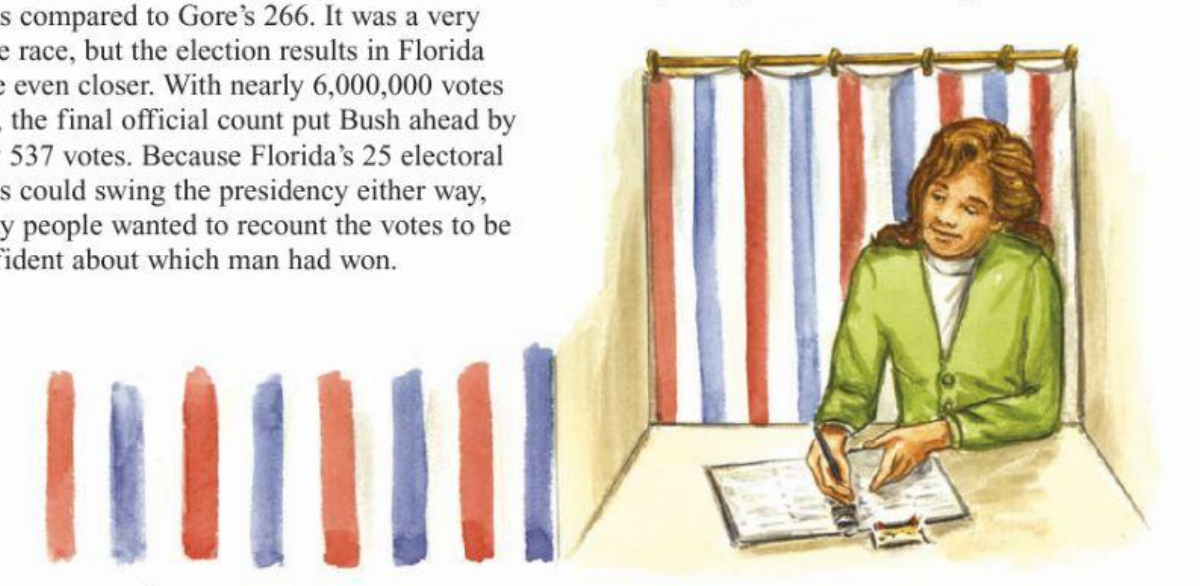
3 There are a total of 538 electoral votes available from all of the states, including three votes from the District of Columbia. To become President, the candidate must receive at least half of the electoral votes, or a minimum of 270 votes.

4 In the 2000 election, Al Gore actually received 500,000 more votes than George W. Bush. However, Bush received 271 electoral votes compared to Gore's 266. It was a very close race, but the election results in Florida were even closer. With nearly 6,000,000 votes cast, the final official count put Bush ahead by only 537 votes. Because Florida's 25 electoral votes could swing the presidency either way, many people wanted to recount the votes to be confident about which man had won.

5 For more than a month, people recounted votes, and the candidates and their supporters waited anxiously for the results. Finally, on December 12, 2000, the Supreme Court of the United States decided that enough recounting had been done. The accepted totals meant that George W. Bush would be President. Even though Al Gore was not happy about this decision, he conceded the election. He said that his supporters should put all of their energy into respecting the new President.

6 Some people believe that the Electoral College system is not a fair way to elect our Presidents. They feel that when a candidate wins the election in a state, the votes for the other candidate do not count. The winner receives all of the electoral votes, no matter how close the race might have been.

7 Supporters of the Electoral College system believe that it helps smaller, less populated states have a voice in the election. They feel that if the winner was simply the person with the most votes, candidates would campaign only in big cities and in states like California, Texas, and Florida. The Electoral College ensures that every part of the United States has a voice in an election. As the 2000 presidential election proved, even the three electoral votes available in Wyoming would have changed the final result.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

NAME _____

Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the passage that have the meanings below.

1. a public event or issue about which two sides have different views

_____ Par. 1

2. the least

_____ Par. 3

3. feeling nervous and uncertain

_____ Par. 5

4. gave up or gave in

_____ Par. 5

5. lived in; occupied by

_____ Par. 7

6. makes sure

_____ Par. 7

Read each word below. Then, write the letter of its abbreviation in the space beside it.

7.	_____ Wyoming	**a.**	CA
8.	_____ Florida	**b.**	D.C.
9.	_____ California	**c.**	TX
10.	_____ Texas	**d.**	WY
11.	_____ District of Columbia	**e.**	FL

12. Check the sentence in which *swing* has the same meaning as it does in paragraph 4.

_____ Dad installed a new swing in the backyard.

_____ The candidate hoped to swing the crowd's opinion.

Reading Skills

1. Check the line beside the word that best describes what type of selection this is.

_____ informational

_____ persuasive

_____ fiction

2. What is the smallest number of electoral votes a candidate must receive to win the presidency?

_____

3. Why do some states have more electoral votes than others?

_____

_____

4. Why do some people feel that the Electoral College is not a fair way to elect the president?

_____

_____

_____

5. Why do some people believe that the Electoral College is a good system to elect the president?

_____

_____

_____

6. Why did people want the votes in Florida to be recounted?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS