

## Classroom Connection | Analyzing Debates

One of the key components of any election campaign are the debates. These events are sometimes televised and provide an opportunity for the media--and sometimes audience participants--to ask direct questions to candidates about important political issues.

These debates, however, are often governed by rules. Candidates have time limits on their answers. Each debate is usually focused on a particular set of themes such as domestic issues, foreign policy, or economics. Think critically about what you are hearing when you watch a debate. Does the candidate return to a central theme in their answers? Do they evade answering the question? Can you identify if someone "won" the debate?

### What Do You Think?

*Carefully watch the debate and then use the following questions to take notes about your impressions of the event.*

1. How many candidates are participating in this debate?
2. How does the number of debate participants affect the quality of the debate experience?
3. Does one of the participants seem to have a style that is better suited to the structure of this debate? Explain your answer with specific descriptions.

### Dig Deeper

Examine the moderator of the debate. How would you rate their performance? Are they maintaining the established rules of the debate agreement? Are the candidates taking advantage of the moderator?

Write down information about the setting or staging of the debate area. Include information about how participatory the audience is allowed to be. How does the audience react to debate answers?

Does the debate performance affect your view of any of the candidates? Does it change whether you would vote for that candidate? Summarize your overall reaction to the debate experience.