Who Chooses the President?

Read, mark, and evaluate the Electoral College.

USG.3.12 "Explain and evaluate the original purpose and role of the Electoral College and its relevance today."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons the framers created the Electoral College, circle two details about how it works today, and write 1 beside a possible benefit and 2 beside a possible drawback.

Electors Then and Now

1. In 1787, the framers had to decide who would choose the president. Some feared that members of Congress would gain too much power if they made the choice. Others worried that voters spread across a large country would know little about candidates from distant states. The framers created the Electoral College as an indirect method: each state would appoint electors, and electors would choose the president. This design gave states a formal role while keeping the choice separate from Congress.

2. Today, voters in each state vote for a presidential ticket, and their votes determine which slate of electors the state appoints. Each state gets electors equal to its total number of senators and representatives in Congress; Washington, D.C., gets three. Most states award all their electors to the statewide winner. Electors cast separate votes for president and vice president, and a candidate needs a majority of electoral votes to win.

3. Supporters argue that the system makes candidates seek support across multiple states, not just in one area. Critics point out that in most states, winning by one vote can bring the same electoral votes as winning by thousands. A candidate can therefore win the presidency without winning the most votes nationwide. Today's electors generally follow their state's results, unlike the framers' expectation that electors would exercise their own judgment. This change raises a question about how well the original design fits today.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the original design address concerns about Congress and voters?

2. How do the rules for assigning and awarding electors give states a role today?

3. How does the role of electors today differ from what the framers expected?

4. Using the passage, explain one argument for the system today and one argument against it.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Suppose your state is deciding whether to keep winner-take-all or divide its electors roughly in proportion to each candidate's votes. Write four sentences recommending one choice. Explain how it could affect voters, connect it to one original goal of the Electoral College, and name a trade-off.

ANSWER KEY

Who Chooses the President?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.3.12

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons the framers created the Electoral College, circle two details about how it works today, and write 1 beside a possible benefit and 2 beside a possible drawback. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the original design address concerns about Congress and voters?	**States appointed electors to choose the president. This kept the choice out of Congress and gave electors a role in judging candidates voters might not know.**
2	How do the rules for assigning and awarding electors give states a role today?	**A state's number of electors equals its senators plus representatives, and most states award all their electors to the statewide winner.**
3	How does the role of electors today differ from what the framers expected?	**The framers expected electors to use their own judgment. Today, electors generally follow their state's election results.**
4	Using the passage, explain one argument for the system today and one argument against it.	**Supporters say it encourages candidates to seek support across states. Critics say winner-take-all rules can let a candidate win without the most votes nationwide.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend dividing my state's electors roughly in proportion to each candidate's votes. This could let more voters' choices count toward electoral votes. The state would still appoint electors, preserving the framers' goal of giving states a role in choosing the president. However, dividing electoral votes could make it harder for any candidate to win a majority.

Accept either recommendation if the response explains an effect on voters, connects to an original goal, and identifies a plausible trade-off. For the marking job, accept the passage's stated supporter and critic arguments as the benefit and drawback.