Three Ballots, Three Systems

How election rules shape voting and determine winners

USG.3.8 "Explain the electoral process in terms of election laws and election systems on the national, state, and local level."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how the winner is chosen in each election. Label the presidential process N, the governor's process S, and the mayoral process L, including the runoff rule.

Maya's Election Day

1. At 7 a.m., Maya enters a polling place to vote for president. Federal law protects voting rights, while states set many election procedures, including registration deadlines and ways to cast a ballot. The president is not chosen by the nationwide popular vote. In most states, the presidential candidate with the most votes in that state receives all its electoral votes. Electors then cast votes for president. A candidate needs a majority of electoral votes, at least 270 of 538, to win. State vote totals therefore shape the result of a national election.

2. Maya also votes for governor. In her state, the governor is elected by a statewide popular vote: the candidate with the most votes wins, even without more than half. This is a plurality system. State law sets registration deadlines and may permit early or absentee voting. Those rules affect how people get and cast ballots, not how the winner is calculated. Suppose three candidates for governor receive 46, 39, and 15 percent of the vote. The candidate with 46 percent wins. Unlike the presidential election, no electoral votes stand between the state's voters and this result.

3. Maya's city uses a different system for mayor, as state law permits. If no candidate receives more than half the votes in the first election, the top two face each other in a runoff. The candidate with more votes in the runoff wins. If someone receives more than half in the first election, there is no runoff. The city also chooses, as state law allows, whether mayoral candidates appear with party labels; here, they do not. Federal voting protections still apply. Together, federal protections, state procedures, and local rules shape who can vote, how ballots are cast, and how winners are chosen.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do votes within states help determine the winner of the national presidential election?

2. Why would a governor candidate with 46 percent of the vote win in Maya's state, and how does that differ from choosing a president?

3. How does Maya's city choose a mayor if no candidate receives more than half the votes in the first election?

4. Give one federal, one state, and one local rule from the passage. Explain what each rule affects in an election.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Design a mock election for a national leader, a state leader, and a city leader. In five or six sentences, explain how each winner would be chosen using or adapting the passage's three systems, then add one voting-access rule and explain whether it changes how winners are calculated.

Three Ballots, Three Systems

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how the winner is chosen in each election. Label the presidential process N, the governor's process S, and the mayoral process L, including the runoff rule. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do votes within states help determine the winner of the national presidential election?	**In most states, the candidate with the most votes receives all that state's electoral votes. Electors cast votes, and a candidate needs at least 270 electoral votes to win.**
2	Why would a governor candidate with 46 percent of the vote win in Maya's state, and how does that differ from choosing a president?	**The governor wins by receiving the most votes statewide, even without a majority. The presidential winner is determined by electoral votes.**
3	How does Maya's city choose a mayor if no candidate receives more than half the votes in the first election?	**The top two candidates enter a runoff, and the candidate with more votes in the runoff wins.**
4	Give one federal, one state, and one local rule from the passage. Explain what each rule affects in an election.	**Federal law protects voting rights. State law sets registration deadlines, affecting how voters qualify to cast ballots. The city uses a runoff rule, affecting how its mayor is chosen.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my mock election, five homerooms each act as a state and award three electoral votes to their presidential candidate with the most votes. The national leader needs at least nine of the 15 electoral votes to win. The state leader is the candidate with the most votes counted across all five homerooms. For city leader, the top two candidates enter a runoff if no one receives more than half the votes at first. Students may vote before election day if they will be absent. That rule helps students participate, but it does not change how any winner is calculated.

Accept equivalent explanations that distinguish voting-access rules from winner-selection systems. For the mock election, accept coherent adaptations rather than requiring the sample's numbers or setting.