Votes Tell Stories

Read election data, test claims, and identify limits

MWH.P.3.1.B "Analyze information from visual, oral, digital, and interactive texts (e.g., maps, charts, images, political cartoons, videos, artwork) in order to draw conclusions and defend arguments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence that limits what the table can show. Circle the table headings, then number two pairs of figures you could compare to support a claim.

Two Ways to Count a Presidential Election

1 In the United States, voters choose a president through an Electoral College process, not a direct national popular vote. Each state awards electoral votes under its own rules, and a candidate needs a majority of electoral votes to win. The table reports official nationwide popular-vote totals and electoral votes received by two major candidates in each election.

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS, 2016 AND 2020

Year	Candidate	Popular votes	Electoral votes
2016	Hillary Clinton	65,853,514	227
2016	Donald Trump	62,984,828	304
2020	Joe Biden	81,268,924	306
2020	Donald Trump	74,216,154	232

2 The table includes only the two major-party candidates in each year. Other candidates also received popular votes, so the listed popular votes do not add up to every ballot cast. In 2016, seven electoral votes went to people other than the two candidates shown. The column headings distinguish votes cast by people from votes cast by electors.

3 Election totals can support different kinds of claims, but they cannot explain why an individual voted a certain way. A national vote total also does not show how votes were distributed across states. To investigate state-level patterns, a researcher would need results by state and information about each state's electoral votes. Nationwide figures answer a narrower question.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In 2016, did the candidate with more popular votes also receive more electoral votes? Support your conclusion with both columns.

2. In 2020, what conclusion can you draw about the popular-vote leader and the electoral-vote leader? Cite evidence.

3. Which election had the larger popular-vote gap between the two candidates shown? Use the table to defend your answer.

4. A student says this table proves which candidate won Georgia in 2020. Is that claim supported? Explain what evidence is missing.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence plan to study how often the national popular-vote leader wins the presidency. Name another election to investigate, identify the two types of totals to collect, explain how you would compare them, and state why this table alone cannot establish a long-term pattern.

ANSWER KEY

Votes Tell Stories

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.P.3.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence that limits what the table can show. Circle the table headings, then number two pairs of figures you could compare to support a claim. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In 2016, did the candidate with more popular votes also receive more electoral votes? Support your conclusion with both columns.	**No. Clinton received 65,853,514 popular votes to Trump's 62,984,828, but Trump received 304 electoral votes to Clinton's 227.**
2	In 2020, what conclusion can you draw about the popular-vote leader and the electoral-vote leader? Cite evidence.	**Biden led in both: 81,268,924 popular votes and 306 electoral votes, compared with Trump's 74,216,154 popular votes and 232 electoral votes.**
3	Which election had the larger popular-vote gap between the two candidates shown? Use the table to defend your answer.	**The 2020 gap was larger: 7,052,770 votes, compared with 2,868,686 votes in 2016.**
4	A student says this table proves which candidate won Georgia in 2020. Is that claim supported? Explain what evidence is missing.	**No. The table gives nationwide totals, not Georgia's results. The student would need Georgia's 2020 vote totals.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would investigate the 2000 presidential election. I would collect each candidate's national popular-vote total and electoral-vote total. I would compare the leader in each column, then add that result to the results for 2016 and 2020. Two elections are too few to establish how often the popular-vote leader wins over a longer period.

Accept another election year and a plan that compares national popular-vote and electoral-vote leaders. Responses should distinguish a pattern across many elections from a conclusion based on only two.