Path to the Presidency

Trace how candidates move from state contests to the general election.

USG.C.5.3 "Trace the steps of the electoral process, including the roles of state caucuses and primaries, national conventions, and campaigns."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how people take part in primaries and caucuses, circle what delegates do at a national convention, and number the state contests, convention, and general-election campaign in the order they occur.

Maya Follows an Election

1. In January, a campaign volunteer named Maya watches two presidential hopefuls visit her town. Both want their party's nomination, but voters cannot choose the party's nominee in one nationwide primary. States hold separate contests under different rules. In a primary, voters cast ballots to express a preference among candidates. In a caucus, participants meet at a set time to take part in a party-run gathering where preferences are recorded. Results help determine which delegates will support candidates at the national convention. Parties and states set rules for awarding delegates, so a candidate's share of votes does not always match the share of delegates.

2. By spring, Maya compares headlines from several states. One candidate wins a primary but receives only some of that state's delegates, while another gains delegates through a caucus elsewhere. Neither state contest alone settles the nomination. Candidates track delegate totals because delegates, not a single national popular vote, decide the party's nominee at its national convention. At the convention, delegates formally vote on the nominee, and the party also adopts a platform stating its policy goals. A candidate who has secured enough delegate support becomes the nominee. The convention gives the party a public moment to present its ticket and message.

3. After the conventions, Maya hears the nominees debate and sees ads aimed at voters in competitive states. Campaign teams organize events, raise money, explain policies, and try to persuade people to vote in the general election. The nomination contests were choices within each party; now the parties' nominees compete for the presidency. In November, voters cast ballots in their states. Those results determine which presidential electors each state appoints under its rules. The electors later cast the votes that formally choose the president. Maya can trace the path from state contests to convention votes, then to a general-election campaign and the Electoral College.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do people take part differently in a primary and a caucus, and what do both contests help determine next?

2. Why might winning one primary not make a candidate the nominee? Trace what must happen next.

3. After the convention, how does the campaign's goal change from the goal of the state contests?

4. Trace the steps from voters casting general-election ballots to the formal choice of a president.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a fictional candidate's path to the presidency. In four or five sentences, trace a state primary or caucus, the national convention, and the general-election campaign through the electors' vote; include one choice the candidate or campaign makes at each of the first three stages.

ANSWER KEY

Path to the Presidency

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.5.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how people take part in primaries and caucuses, circle what delegates do at a national convention, and number the state contests, convention, and general-election campaign in the order they occur. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do people take part differently in a primary and a caucus, and what do both contests help determine next?	**Primary voters cast ballots, while caucus participants meet at a party-run gathering. Both results help determine which delegates support candidates at the national convention.**
2	Why might winning one primary not make a candidate the nominee? Trace what must happen next.	**One primary awards only some delegates. The candidate needs enough delegate support, and delegates formally vote on the nominee at the national convention.**
3	After the convention, how does the campaign's goal change from the goal of the state contests?	**In state contests, candidates seek their party's nomination. After the convention, nominees try to persuade voters to choose them in the general election.**
4	Trace the steps from voters casting general-election ballots to the formal choice of a president.	**Voters cast ballots in their states. The results determine which electors each state appoints, and those electors cast the votes that formally choose the president.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before a state primary, candidate Lee decides to hold local forums so party voters can compare candidates. After voters cast ballots, the results help determine which delegates support Lee at the national convention. At the convention, Lee decides to highlight a plan for safer roads, while delegates vote on the party's nominee. If nominated, Lee's team decides to hold town halls to persuade voters in the general election. After voters cast ballots in their states, the results determine which electors are appointed, and those electors cast the votes that formally choose the president.

Accept either a primary or a caucus in the open response. Look for the correct sequence, a distinct campaign choice at each of the first three stages, and electors casting the formal votes.