



# And the Winner Is(n't)...?



by  
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In this activity, students will calculate hypothetical election results in a country that uses the same electoral system as the United States. The purpose is to show students presidential elections are decided, how a candidate can win the popular vote yet lose the election, and to stimulate critical thinking about the US election system. This lesson is intended partly to serve as a springboard into a debate about the Electoral College.

**Audience:** grades 4-12.

**Time Needed:** 20-30 minutes.

## Materials Needed

- Class set of Handout 1: Hypothetical Election of 2008.
- Calculators (optional) – for relatively simply 4 place addition.
- Scratch paper (optional) – for students to calculate overall results.

## Procedures

1. Tell students that, today, they are going to analyze a hypothetical election in which two candidates are running for the office of President of the *United States of Obamacain*. The Constitution of the *United States of Obamacain* stipulates that the candidate who receives the most popular votes in any state receives all of that state's electoral votes. The candidate who wins the most electoral votes is elected President.
2. Project a copy of Handout 1 to the students. Point out where the data may be found in each state (e.g. number of electoral votes that state has, number of popular votes each candidate received). Also, show them where to record their calculation (bottom of page).
3. Distribute copies of Handout 1 - Hypothetical Election of 2008.
4. Tell students that their task is to calculate:
  - a. how many popular votes each candidate won.
  - b. how many electoral votes each candidate won.
  - c. how many states each candidate won.
5. Once students have completed their calculations, record the overall results on the board. Ask students...
  - a. who got the most popular votes?
  - b. which candidate won the most states?
  - c. which candidate received the most electoral votes?
  - d. who won the election?

6. Debrief

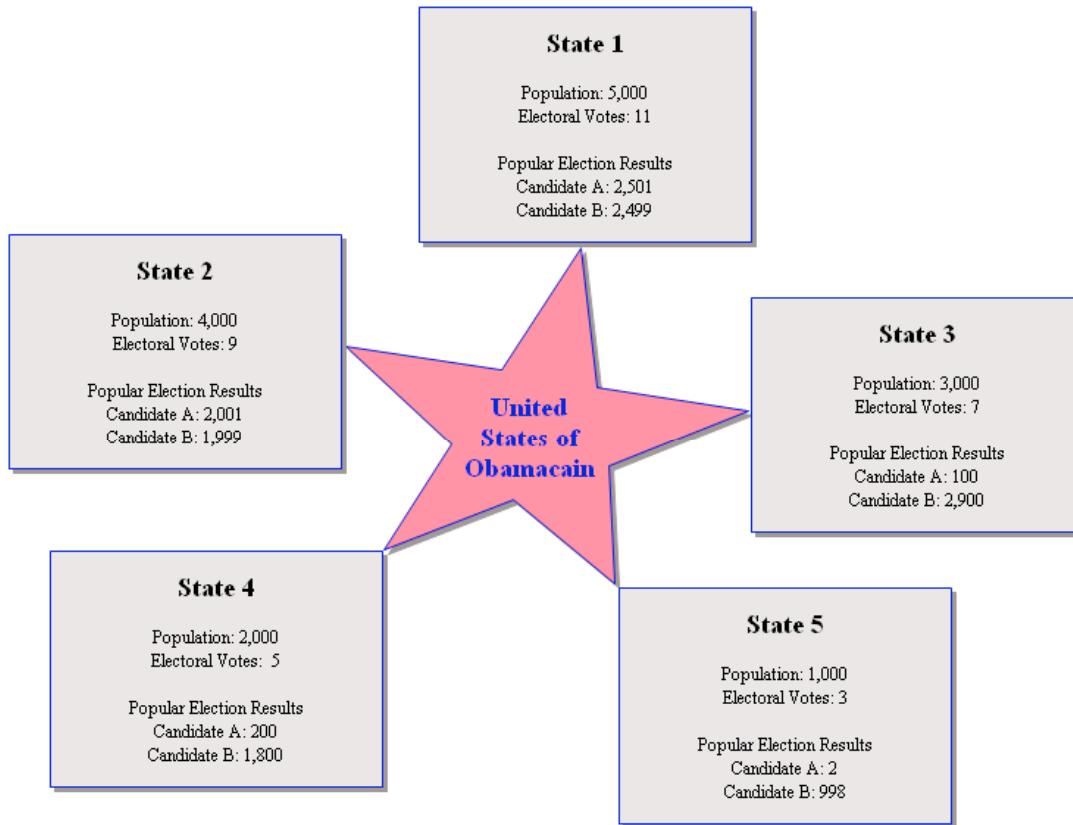
Ask the following questions...

- a. was the outcome of Obamacain's election fair?
- b. why would any country adopt this method for choosing its President? (Civics 4b, 4-5)
- c. what are some of the benefits of the election system used in the United States? What are some of the costs or disadvantages of such a system? (civics 4b, 4-5)
- d. are the results of this election consistent with the principle of majority rule? Explain. (Civics 2, 6-8)
- e. whose interests is the winning candidate (Candidate A) expected to represent – the minority who voted for him or the majority who voted for Candidate B? (Civics 1, K-3)
- f. are the citizens of the United States of Obamacain who voted for Candidate B responsible for upholding the policies adopted by the new President? (Civics 3, 6-8 and 9-12)

# Handout 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Hypothetical Election of 2008



Candidate A

Popular Votes = \_\_\_\_\_  
States Won = \_\_\_\_\_  
Electoral Votes = \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate B

Popular Votes = \_\_\_\_\_  
States Won = \_\_\_\_\_  
Electoral Votes = \_\_\_\_\_

Winner is \_\_\_\_\_