C:\Documents and Settings\CastellaniD\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\WDHRGSHW\MC900056772[1].WMF National Political Convention 1848

The year is 1848, and we are gathered in Baltimore, Maryland for a political convention. The goal of political conventions is for a political party to nominate their candidate for President, as well as to adopt a set of party principles and goals known as a *Party Platform*.

A lot has changed in our country in the past 60 years since our government was created under the Constitution. Not only have our borders expanded, but so has our economy and our population. Many candidates have come to the table with various principles, all of which reflect the great diversity of the people in the convention hall today.

In light of the goal of choosing a nominee for President, the biggest issues on the table at today’s convention are the following.

FOUR GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *What changes and challenges is America facing due to our rapidly changing economy*  (industrialization) and what are the solutions?
2. *What changes and challenges are posed by the social and cultural issues of the day, including women’s rights, reform movements, etc. and what are the solutions?*
3. *What changes and challenges is America facing due to Westward Expansion, and what are the solutions?*
4. *What changes and challenges are occurring due to slavery, which was left unresolved in the Constitution in 1789, and what are the solutions?*

Each of you will be asked to research one character who will be present at this convention. You will not only need biographical information about your character, but you will also need to form a position paper on what your character thinks about the main issues of the day, as outlined above. Who would your character like to see as a presidential nominee? What principles do you most value at this crucial time in American history? What priorities would your character emphasize over others? What solutions do you have to the nation’s challenges?

**Step One: Biographical Research**

Your first goal is to do research on your character to find out basic information about your character’s background and beliefs. We will help you by discussing useful library resources and expectations.

* You will be taking research notes and creating a biographical profile of the character (see below)
* While the use of sources is emphasized, please be certain to paraphrase and cite where necessary so as not to cut and paste from original sources.
* Your goal is to seek out pertinent biographical information that may help you to answer the 4 guiding questions on page one.
* A properly formatted bibliography will be expected for this portion of your research.
* At least two sources must be used. NO FREE INTERNET is allowed for this portion of research. You must stick to books and online reference sources.

**Biographical Profile: National Convention Character**

Please answer the following questions about your character using your library sources. Answers should be typed and properly paraphrased.

1. What is the background of your character? Summarize his/her story.
2. What important events are relevant to your character? Be sure to look up background information about these events and explain them. For instance, if your character played an important role in the Mexican War, be sure to explain what this war was!
3. What issues of the day do you think most affect your character, and why?
4. What is significant about your character? In other words, why is he/she noteworthy?
5. What important vocabulary words can we associate with your character? (please define)

**Step Two: Historical Journaling**

As we move through the next weeks, we will be learning in class about different events that occur in the US in the years preceding our national convention. You will be responsible for writing journal entries that not only show how well you understand each event, but also help you to practice how your character would most likely respond to different historical events (given the biographical information you know now). Expectations for the journal entries will be given at a later date.

**Step Three: Position Paper for the National Convention**

The next step of the process is to write a position paper for your character explaining the kind of Presidential candidate your character would like to see, given your beliefs about the four guiding questions on page one. This step will piece together your biographical knowledge of your character with your historical knowledge of the events we have studied in class. Standards and expectations for this portion of the assignment will be distributed at a later date.

**Step Four: Participating at the National Convention**

The day of the National Convention, you will arrive as your assigned character ready to discuss and debate the issues of the day. Grading on this day will be based on the level and depth of your participation coupled with your ability to accurately represent your character’s point of view.

Possible activities for this day may include:

* Meeting with other characters to write a party platform and choose a candidate
* Reading example party platforms and deciding how your character feels about them
* Making speeches about the beliefs of your character
* Holding important votes

Stay tuned—some of this we are planning as we go and we want to be flexible given our time and resources. This project requires lots of independence and personal responsibility to meet the various steps. It also will require you to step up in terms of participation on an a daily basis. Good luck!