

## **Making a Choice: *William Makes a Choice***

William has never voted although he was born in the United States and is a citizen. He has never been interested in politics; that is, until he met a young woman who lives in Ecuador named Adelia. He and Adelia want to get married and live in Minnesota. However, Adelia does not have legal documents to live or work in the U.S. although she has been here for a year. Adelia fears she may be deported. Now, William is concerned about politics and about immigration laws.



William went on-line to learn how immigration laws are made. He learns that the U.S. government makes the decisions about immigration. Now William wants to vote in the upcoming election for President, his U.S. Senator and Representative. He also read that most candidates follow what their political party has decided about immigration and other issues.

William is taking a writing class to get his GED. In class, William talked about his research. “There are two major parties. One is the Democratic party, also called the DFL in Minnesota. The other major party is the Republican party, the GOP. Most candidates belong to one of the parties, and follow the goals, or platform of the party. The smaller political parties are the Independence Party, the Grassroots Party and the Green Party.

“The Democratic Party is the liberal party. Their web site says the Democratic Party believes that it is the government’s role to protect the health and welfare of all individuals in the country. The Republican Party is the conservative party. The Republican Party web site says that they believe that individuals can and should be able to take care of themselves with very little government participation or regulation.”

“So,” asked William, “if I know the party that the candidates are in and the party platform, do I need to learn about the individual candidates?”

“Yes,” said John, “It is important to learn more. You can go to the candidate’s web site. Some candidates have their own opinions and positions. You are interested in immigration. I suggest you go to all the political party web sites and find their platforms. It’s very easy to do.

“Two other ways to get more information are the League of Women Voters of Minnesota website [www.lwvmn.org](http://www.lwvmn.org). Also, there is the Voter’s Guide, published by the StarTribune newspaper [www.startribune.org](http://www.startribune.org). It is available just before the election. You can get this at the library.”

“I have another question,” said William. “What should I do if I don’t know anything about a candidate or an issue on the ballot?”

“You don’t have to vote for every thing on the ballot,” said John. “Vote for the candidates you know about and you trust. That is the best anyone can do. The most important thing is that you vote.”

Now William will make his decision. First, he will go on-line to the candidates’ web sites and political party website. Second, he will listen to a debate. And, he will talk to some friends who have studied the candidates and issues. He will ask for their opinions. Then, he will make his own choice

## Questions for Discussion: *William Makes a Choice*

1. What are the two major political parties? How are these parties different from one another? What are other parties?
2. What is William planning to do before he makes his choice? How can William get more information before he votes?
3. Do you think William should talk to other people about his choice before he makes his decision? Who are people you might talk to about candidates and issues?
4. Have you gone to candidates' websites or the websites for political parties? What did you learn? What differences between parties did you find?
5. What do you plan to do before you make your choice? Articles you might read? Websites you can check?

## Teacher Instructions: *Making a Choice*

### Teacher preparation:

1. If the election is within a month, get copies or on-line link to *Voter's Guide* for students. These are produced by the League of Women's Voters [www.lwvnmn.org](http://www.lwvnmn.org). The Star Tribune and other newspapers also publish a Voter's Guide that is available at no charge in libraries and other public places.
2. If the newspaper endorses candidates, bring this to class for students to look at as another way to get information.
3. Make copies of the following story and questions for all students.

**Review of previous lesson:** Write vocabulary words they learned in the previous lesson on the board for review. Ask students to reconstruct the story of the previous lesson, and then ask if they saw many bumper stickers, billboards, flyers, etc. about candidates. Do they have examples of candidate advertising? Did this give them important information? Have their opinions about any candidate changed?

**Warm up:** Write on the board this incomplete sentence and brainstorm with students what some of the things they can do before they make a choice, such as get information, talk to friends, etc. *Before I make a choice, I \_\_\_\_\_*

### Vocabulary

Endorse

Liberal

Conservative

Democratic Party (DFL)

Republican Party (GOP)

Party Platform

### Story and Questions: *William Makes a Choice*

**Activity:** Hand out sample voters' guides. Show students how the guide is organized and what information is available. Explain abbreviations that are used, such as DFL and GOP. Then have students work in pairs to get information about a candidate who is running for office in their city, state or nation. Have students report back, and when all have finished, have a mini-debate about the candidates. For homework, ask students to complete the sentence written above.

**Closure:** Review the vocabulary words they learned, and repeat the main themes of the lesson. Ask students to talk about one thing they learned today.

**Extension lesson:** Arrange for computers for students so they can go into websites of candidates by googling their names. They can look up their positions and platforms on issues of their interest. Encourage them to choose one issue to investigate so they can make a comparison between candidates.