

Lesson Plan

Election Levels

Book: *Ilhan Omar*

Series: Groundbreaking Women in Politics

Level: Voyager

Objective

To help students develop understanding of the levels of government and the election process in the US political system.

Supplies

- *Ilhan Omar* book
- Whiteboard
- Paper and pencils
- Dictionary, such as Merriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

Before the Activity

Read the *Ilhan Omar* book as a class, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

Throughout her career, Ilhan Omar has been involved in several different levels of government. Three of these levels are mentioned in the book:

- Page 22 describes a race for the Minneapolis City Council. City councils make laws at the city level.
- Pages 23–26 describe several races for District 60B in the Minnesota House of Representatives. The House is part of the Minnesota Congress. It makes laws at the state level.
- Page 31 introduces the race to represent Minnesota’s Fifth District in the US House of Representatives, and pages 35–37 give more information about this race. The US House makes laws at the national level. It’s one of the two bodies of the US Congress. The other body is the US Senate.

Members of all these groups make laws, though the areas each lawmaker represents vary, as does the area the laws affect. Local lawmakers, such as city council members, represent a smaller group of people. The laws they make apply to a smaller area, too. But that doesn’t mean they are not important. In fact, individual citizens can often have a bigger impact at the local level. Like Omar and her grandfather, they can vote for candidates who support issues and values they believe are important.

To help students learn more about the election process and how citizens are involved, write the following list of terms on the whiteboard: *district, caucus, primary election, general election, candidate, campaign*.

Ask students to write out a definition for each term. Some words are defined in the book's glossary on page 47. For other terms, students will need to look for context clues in the main text. If they get stuck, they can also look up words in a dictionary. After students have defined each term, they should write a paragraph about the election process. The paragraph should have one sentence using each term.

Evaluation

Use the attached answer key to give students 1 point for each term defined correctly and 1 point for each step of the election process paragraph, or 12 points total.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational texts, grade 6 (RI 6.3, 6.4), and the National Council for Social Studies' Standards 6 and 10.

Answer Key

Award students 1 point for each correct definition. It's okay for wording to vary somewhat from the following examples:

- district: an area that votes to elect a representative.
- caucus: a meeting of party members to select that party's candidates for a general election.
- primary election: an election that decides a political party's nominee for a general election.
- general election: an election that decides which party's candidate will hold office.
- candidate: a person who is running for office.
- campaign: a series of actions and events designed to convince people to vote for a candidate.

Award up to 6 points for the paragraph describing the election process, using the following sample paragraph as a guide:

- First, each political party holds a caucus. There, people from the district gather together. They vote to help determine their party's candidates in the race. Next, the district has a primary election. At this stage, voters select one candidate to represent their party in the general election. After the primary, candidates from both parties campaign to build support. In the general election, voters cast their votes for one party's candidate. The person with the most votes wins the election.