

What Is Politics?

Candidate #1 Speech: Politics is hard work. It requires us to meet those we disagree with as equals and to take their concerns and their perspectives seriously. This is something we all owe to each other because we all share something essential in common—we're all Americans. We may look different, live differently, worship differently (or not at all), love different kinds of people, but we are all united by our shared love of this country. Because we share this country in common, we all have to be willing to give a little bit—to tolerate something that we maybe don't like very much—in order to build a country that we can all share. It's a hard truth that politics requires us to make tough choices. When we come together and make a political deal, we all won't get everything we want and may have to give up something we think is important. But so long as we deal with each other fairly, we'll have found a way to live together peacefully despite our differences and disagreements. That's how we respect each other as Americans.

Candidate #2 Speech: We have seen the face of the enemy and we know who they are. We know all the ways they're trying to destroy this country and we are not going to let them. True patriots are seeing what's happening to our country and they're getting mad. They're not just going to stand around and let the other side have it all their way—they're going to fight! We've had enough of weak leaders who get elected and go to Washington and just give everything away to the other side. We've had enough backroom deals and corrupt compromises. We need strong leaders who will stand up to the other side. We need leaders who stand up for true Americans like us, against the enemies, both foreign and domestic, of everything our country holds dear. We understand that the stakes have never been higher for our country. We know what time it is. Real American patriots won't stop until we've saved the country from all those who would betray what's best about it. And if that means the gloves need to come off, then so be it.

Candidate #3 Speech: We don't need another politician. We need someone who can solve the problems facing ordinary Americans. If you send me to Washington, I'll set aside poisonous and destructive partisanship and get to work fixing America's problems. The problems we face don't care if you're a Democrat or a Republican; they don't care whether you're white, black, brown, or purple; they affect everybody. I'll work with anyone interested in making public policies that aren't liberal or conservative but that work for all Americans. I've thought a lot about the policies that would fix America's problems and I've talked to all the experts, both left and right, and come up with some commonsense solutions. I'll be talking about them in the weeks and months to come and you can look at my plans now on my campaign's website. The policies I would enact would save the taxpayers money while also doing more for the biggest challenges Americans say they're facing today. These policies won't always be popular and some will require tough sacrifices. But we've solved tough problems before as a country and I believe we can do it again.

Questions

After reading your speaker's speech, please consider the following the questions.

1. What are the basic building blocks of politics according to your speaker? As in, who are the characters that politics involves—classes, groups, individuals or what? If groups, what kind of groups? Big, small? What characteristics do they have?
2. What is the aim of politics as your speaker presents it?
3. If you had to sum up what politics is all about in a word or two according to your speaker, what would it be?

After considering these questions, please read the other two passages.

4. Are the approaches to politics these passages discuss compatible with each other? If so, how? If not, why not?