

My New President

CCSSR1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Includes questions you can ask about any story.

I never liked learning U.S. history because I thought it was boring--lots of facts, lots of dates, lots of names, lots of maps. I liked the pictures, but the rest of it was uninteresting, I did not comprehend the reason to read about the past. I admit I was fairly uninformed about government.

We had to take a Constitution test, which requires knowledge about the structure of American government, and I failed it. I didn't know the responsibilities of the branches of government. I mixed up the executive branch and the legislative branch, the executive branch is the part that makes decisions and at the state level it's the governor who is responsible, at the national level it's the President. I figured out a way to recall what the judicial branch did because the root word has judge in it, it's about the courts. It took me three times to pass that exam.

Then this year I paid attention because I was involved in the election. I was proud that an individual who was like me was campaigning for the Presidency. I didn't expect that he would be elected, though, because I couldn't imagine that I could be President. There never was an African-American President in the more than 2 centuries of American history—I knew that much history. It was unprecedented.

My mother said, "Don't be too sure that it is impossible, it could happen. We once elected an African-American mayor of Chicago."

I thought about that, but I was not optimistic, I didn't expect Barack Obama would win, he had only recently gained national recognition when elected as a Senator. I did hope that he would overcome the obstacles and reach that office, the highest in the land. Suddenly the Constitution was more important to me.

My mother said, "Nothing happens if you do nothing. Why don't you help with the election?" I said, "How can I help? I am only 13."

"You can help get people registered to vote. You can help his campaign office. Go and ask."

So I did. I went to downtown Chicago that Saturday. The only other time I had been there was to go to museums on a field trip or to Niketown when we shopped for new shoes. This time I went to a building with many offices, and on the first floor there was the most exciting place I have been, even more exciting than Niketown. It was the campaign headquarters. There were many people working at desks, most of them were talking on the phone or inputting information into computers. I said, "Can I help—I want to volunteer."

A young man at the front desk said, "Definitely, we need volunteers, can you start immediately?" I said certainly, and right away I had an assignment, I would assist with the preparation of a mailing. I put letters into envelopes, and I must have stuffed at least one thousand envelopes by the end of that first volunteer day.

I traveled downtown every Saturday after that, and my tasks varied from contacting voters by phone to remind them to vote to using the Internet to log emails and create a database. The database I set up was a list of eligible voters and their responses to the phone calls.

I was so engaged in the election that instead of movies I watched the news and I actually read the newspaper to learn about the election. I read what Barack Obama said, and I made a speech about him to my class. My mother and I attended a speech he gave in Chicago, it was so inspiring. I figured out that the Executive Branch does a lot, they are in charge of the army and much more, the election of a President is the most important choice any citizen can make.

I gained hope as I talked with people on the phone and watched the news reports. I kept saying, "Yes we can" to myself. And we did. Now the head of the Executive Branch is my President. I am part of U.S. history.

Write your answers to these questions on another page.

1. Sequence: Which event happened first? Which happened last?
2. Character Traits: Name one character. What is one trait you infer that character has? Explain why you think that.
3. Motive: What is something that person does? Why do you think that person does that?
4. Summarize: Summarize the story in four sentences. Tell about the characters and what they do.
5. Main Idea: What do you think is the main idea of the story? Why?