

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.

## Identify and Analyze Tone, Mood, Voice, Plot, and Setting – Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

*Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. Why did the writer call this story “My New President”?

- a. to show it was about Barack Obama
- b. to make it personal
- c. to help you understand the main idea
- d. to show it is current

3. What is the turning point of the story?

- a. The mother says to work on the election.
- b. The Obama worker gives the student a task.
- c. Barack Obama wins the election.
- d. He goes to a speech.

2. Why does the writer include dialogue in the story?

- a. to tell what happens
- b. to help you understand the people
- c. to show what people want
- d. to tell what the mother wants

4. Why does the narrator tell about failing the Constitution test?

- a. to tell about the Executive branch
- b. to show how she changed
- c. to tell you can succeed if you try
- d. to show how it is about the President

5. *Write your own answer to this question.* How does the writer help you understand what the narrator learns?

---

---

---

---

### TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students’ Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student’s achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	c	b	b	c

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

Answers may include that the writer shows how the student now thinks the executive branch is important.