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Polls put Obama ahead in U.S. election

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24th October, 2008

THE ARTICLE

The U.S. Presidential election is reaching its final stages and a new poll puts Barack Obama ahead. The recent Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll puts the Democrat candidate ten points ahead of his Republican rival John McCain. Pollsters say Obama leads McCain by 52 per cent to 42 per cent in the race for the White House. Not only do the statistics say Obama is ahead, they also suggest his lead is getting bigger every day. Pollster John Zogby said: "Obama just keeps growing. He has expanded his lead among almost every major voting group. McCain seems to be out of steam for the moment." Polls are not always accurate and there is still no way of knowing for sure who is in the lead, and by how much. Americans vote on November 4th in one of the most exciting elections ever.

Recent events have helped Obama's campaign. Perhaps the biggest boost was Colin Powell giving his support for Obama. Powell, who served under George W. Bush as Secretary of State, said he did not like McCain's negativity. He praised Obama for his intelligence and said he could be a "transformational president". Powell also cast doubts on Sara Palin's readiness to serve as vice-president. Ms Palin has hit the headlines in recent days and created negative publicity. The Republican Party revealed it spent \$150,000 on clothes for Palin. Many Americans are questioning this type of spending, especially in the present economic climate. John McCain claims he likes nothing more than being the underdog. From the recent polls and events, he needs to use all his political skills in the run-up to election day.

WARM-UPS

1. U.S. ELECTION: Walk around the class and talk to other students about the U.S. election. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

elections / final stages / polls / candidates / rivals / statistics / leads / voting / steam / campaigns / big boosts / negativity / doubts / publicity / economic climate / underdog

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. THE ISSUES: How much do you care about America's election issues? Give your thoughts and complete the table below. Share what you wrote with your partner(s).

Issue	I care....	because....
Credit crisis		
Jobs		
Obama's experience		
Palin's ability		
Iraq / Afghanistan		
Healthcare		

4. CANDIDATES: Students A **strongly** believe Barack Obama would be the best president; Students B **strongly** believe John McCain would be the best president. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

5. PERSONALITIES: With your partner(s), discuss and create a personality profile for some of the (vice) presidential candidates and their spouses. Share your profiles with other students and see if you agree. Agree on a class profile for each person below.

Barack Obama	Sarah Palin
Michelle Obama	Todd Palin
John McCain	Joe Biden
Cindy McCain	Jill Biden

6. PRESIDENT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'president'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A new poll says Barack Obama is leading John McCain by ten points. | T / F |
| b. The polls say McCain is closing the gap on his Democrat rival. | T / F |
| c. The article says polls are usually extremely accurate. | T / F |
| d. A pollster said John McCain seemed to be running out of energy. | T / F |
| e. Colin Powell, who served in the Bush government, endorsed Obama. | T / F |
| f. Powell suggested Sarah Palin was not ready to be vice-president. | T / F |
| g. Americans are happy Sarah Palin got \$150,000 to spend on clothes. | T / F |
| h. John McCain says he hates being the underdog. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. final | a. opponent |
| 2. poll | b. made public |
| 3. rival | c. weaker one |
| 4. statistics | d. worked |
| 5. accurate | e. survey |
| 6. boost | f. current |
| 7. served | g. correct |
| 8. revealed | h. shot in the arm |
| 9. present | i. last |
| 10. underdog | j. figures |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. reaching its final | a. climate |
| 2. ten points ahead | b. of steam |
| 3. his lead is getting | c. readiness to serve |
| 4. McCain seems to be out | d. his intelligence |
| 5. there is still no way | e. of his Republican rival |
| 6. He praised Obama for | f. than being the underdog |
| 7. Powell cast doubts on Sara Palin's | g. the headlines in recent days |
| 8. Ms Palin has hit | h. stages |
| 9. the present economic | i. of knowing for sure |
| 10. he likes nothing more | j. bigger every day |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The U.S. Presidential election is reaching its final _____ and a new poll puts Barack Obama ahead. The _____ Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll puts the Democrat candidate ten points ahead of his Republican _____ John McCain. Pollsters say Obama leads McCain by 52 per cent to 42 per cent in the _____ for the White House. Not only do the statistics say Obama is ahead, they also suggest his _____ is getting bigger every day. Pollster John Zogby said: "Obama just keeps growing. He has expanded his lead among almost every major voting group. McCain seems to be out of _____ for the moment." Polls are not always accurate and there is still no way of _____ for sure who is in the lead, and by how much. Americans vote on November 4th in one of the most exciting elections _____.

Recent _____ have helped Obama's campaign. Perhaps the biggest boost was Colin Powell giving his _____ for Obama. Powell, who served under George W. Bush as Secretary of State, said he did not like McCain's negativity. He _____ Obama for his intelligence and said he could be a "transformational president". Powell also cast doubts on Sara Palin's readiness to _____ as vice-president. Ms Palin has _____ the headlines in recent days and created _____ publicity. The Republican Party revealed it spent \$150,000 on clothes for Palin. Many Americans are _____ this type of spending, especially in the present economic climate. John McCain claims he likes nothing more than being the _____. From the recent polls and events, he needs to use all his political skills in the run-up to election day.

steam
recent
ever
race
stages
knowing
lead
rival

questioning
praised
hit
events
underdog
negative
support
serve

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

The U.S. Presidential election is reaching _____ and a new poll puts Barack Obama ahead. The recent Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll puts the Democrat candidate ten _____ his Republican rival John McCain. Pollsters say Obama leads McCain by 52 per _____ the race for the White House. Not only do the statistics say Obama is ahead, they also _____ is getting bigger every day. Pollster John Zogby said: "Obama just keeps growing. He has expanded his lead among _____ voting group. McCain seems to be out of steam for the moment." Polls are not always accurate and there is still _____ for sure who is in the lead, and by how much. Americans vote on November 4th _____ exciting elections ever.

Recent events have helped Obama's campaign. Perhaps _____ was Colin Powell giving his support for Obama. Powell, _____ George W. Bush as Secretary of State, said he did not like McCain's negativity. He praised Obama for his intelligence and said he could be a "transformational president". Powell _____ Sara Palin's readiness to serve as vice-president. Ms Palin has _____ in recent days and created negative publicity. The Republican Party revealed it spent \$150,000 on clothes for Palin. Many Americans are questioning this type of spending, especially _____ economic climate. John McCain claims he likes nothing more than _____. From the recent polls and events, he needs to use all his political skills _____ election day.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'final' and 'stage'.

final	stage
--------------	--------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reaching• ten• 42• bigger• major• steam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• boost• praised• hit• climate• nothing• skills
--	--

STUDENT U.S. ELECTION SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about the U.S. election in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

U.S. ELECTION DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'election'?
- c) How interested are you in the U.S. election?
- d) Do you think your life will be different depending on who gets in?
- e) Do you want Obama or McCain to win?
- f) Are you excited by elections in your country?
- g) Why do you think McCain seems to be running out of steam?
- h) Do you like listening to Obama or McCain?
- i) What are the differences between the two candidates?
- j) Do you think polls are accurate?

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U.S. ELECTION DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think Colin Powell's support of Obama hurt McCain?
- c) What do you think of McCain's negativity? How is he negative?
- d) What do you hope a "transformational president" might do for America?
- e) Do you have any doubts about Sarah Palin's ability to lead?
- f) Do you think it was necessary for the Republican Party to spend \$150,000 on clothes for Sarah Palin when Americans are losing their jobs and homes?
- g) Have you ever been the underdog? What happened?
- h) Is this election important?
- i) What questions would you like to ask Barack Obama?
- j) What questions would you like to ask John McCain?

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LANGUAGE

The U.S. Presidential election is reaching its (1) ____ stages and a new poll puts Barack Obama ahead. The (2) ____ Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll puts the Democrat candidate ten points ahead of his Republican (3) ____ John McCain. Pollsters say Obama leads McCain by 52 per cent to 42 per cent in the race for the White House. Not only do the (4) ____ say Obama is ahead, they also suggest his lead is getting bigger every day. Pollster John Zogby said: "Obama just keeps growing. He has expanded his lead among almost every major voting group. McCain seems to be out of (5) ____ for the moment." Polls are not always accurate and there is still no way of knowing for sure who is in the lead, and (6) ____ how much. Americans vote on November 4th in one of the most exciting elections ever.

Recent events have helped Obama's campaign. Perhaps the biggest boost was Colin Powell giving his support for Obama. Powell, who (7) ____ under George W. Bush as Secretary of State, said he did not like McCain's negativity. He praised Obama (8) ____ his intelligence and said he could be a "transformational president". Powell also (9) ____ doubts on Sara Palin's readiness to serve as vice-president. Ms Palin has hit the headlines in recent days and created negative publicity. The Republican Party revealed it spent \$150,000 (10) ____ clothes for Palin. Many Americans are questioning this type of spending, especially in the (11) ____ economic climate. John McCain claims he likes nothing more than being the underdog. From the recent polls and events, he needs to use (12) ____ his political skills in the run-up to election day.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. | (a) final | (b) finally | (c) finals | (d) finalise |
| 2. | (a) recentness | (b) recently | (c) recent | (d) recess |
| 3. | (a) rivalling | (b) rivals | (c) rivalry | (d) rival |
| 4. | (a) statistic | (b) statistics | (c) statistically | (d) statistician |
| 5. | (a) haze | (b) vapour | (c) mist | (d) steam |
| 6. | (a) at | (b) for | (c) by | (d) from |
| 7. | (a) serviced | (b) served | (c) serving | (d) server |
| 8. | (a) for | (b) by | (c) with | (d) because |
| 9. | (a) cast | (b) cast iron | (c) caste | (d) casting |
| 10. | (a) an | (b) in | (c) on | (d) into |
| 11. | (a) moment | (b) gift | (c) currant | (d) present |
| 12. | (a) every | (b) all | (c) everything | (d) whole |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about U.S. elections. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. VOTE FOR ME: Make a campaign poster about Barack Obama or John McCain. Make sure you include all the things that will get people's votes. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. DEBATE: Write a magazine article about a debate between Barack Obama and John McCain. Include imaginary interviews with the two candidates.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. DIARY / JOURNAL: You are one of the election candidates. Write about one day in your life of campaigning. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

6. LETTER: Write a letter to Barack Obama or John McCain. Ask him three questions about his vision for the future. Give him three suggestions on what issues he should focus on. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | | | |
|-----|------------|----|-----------------|
| 1. | final | a. | last |
| 2. | poll | b. | survey |
| 3. | rival | c. | opponent |
| 4. | statistics | d. | figures |
| 5. | accurate | e. | correct |
| 6. | boost | f. | shot in the arm |
| 7. | served | g. | worked |
| 8. | revealed | h. | made public |
| 9. | present | i. | current |
| 10. | underdog | j. | weaker one |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 1. | reaching its final | a. | stages |
| 2. | ten points ahead | b. | of his Republican rival |
| 3. | his lead is getting | c. | bigger every day |
| 4. | McCain seems to be out | d. | of steam |
| 5. | there is still no way | e. | of knowing for sure |
| 6. | He praised Obama for | f. | his intelligence |
| 7. | Powell cast doubts on Sara Palin's | g. | readiness to serve |
| 8. | Ms Palin has hit | h. | the headlines in recent days |
| 9. | the present economic | i. | climate |
| 10. | he likes nothing more | j. | than being the underdog |

GAP FILL:

Polls put Obama ahead in U.S. election

The U.S. Presidential election is reaching its final **stages** and a new poll puts Barack Obama ahead. The **recent** Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll puts the Democrat candidate ten points ahead of his Republican **rival** John McCain. Pollsters say Obama leads McCain by 52 per cent to 42 per cent in the **race** for the White House. Not only do the statistics say Obama is ahead, they also suggest his **lead** is getting bigger every day. Pollster John Zogby said: "Obama just keeps growing. He has expanded his lead among almost every major voting group. McCain seems to be out of **steam** for the moment." Polls are not always accurate and there is still no way of **knowing** for sure who is in the lead, and by how much. Americans vote on November 4th in one of the most exciting elections **ever**.

Recent **events** have helped Obama's campaign. Perhaps the biggest boost was Colin Powell giving his **support** for Obama. Powell, who served under George W. Bush as Secretary of State, said he did not like McCain's negativity. He **praised** Obama for his intelligence and said he could be a "transformational president". Powell also cast doubts on Sara Palin's readiness to **serve** as vice-president. Ms Palin has **hit** the headlines in recent days and created **negative** publicity. The Republican Party revealed it spent \$150,000 on clothes for Palin. Many Americans are **questioning** this type of spending, especially in the present economic climate. John McCain claims he likes nothing more than being the **underdog**. From the recent polls and events, he needs to use all his political skills in the run-up to election day.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - c 3 - d 4 - b 5 - d 6 - c 7 - b 8 - a 9 - a 10 - c 11 - d 12 - b