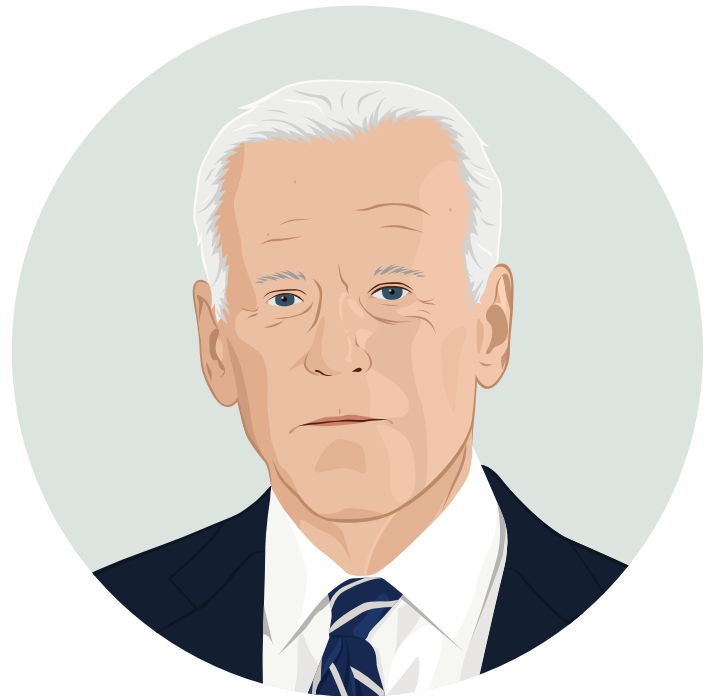


Joe Biden



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Why is Joe Biden famous?
2. Which political party is Biden a member of?
3. What do you know about Biden's family life?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. stutter | a) to officially enroll |
| _____ 2. draft | b) to choose a person to become a political leader |
| _____ 3. qualify | c) a candidate running for the lesser of two positions |
| _____ 4. register | d) to end something |
| _____ 5. senator | e) to step down, to quit |
| _____ 6. elect | f) talking with involuntary repeated sounds |
| _____ 7. devastated | g) to select for military service |
| _____ 8. resign | h) to give life to something again |
| _____ 9. renew | i) to make bigger |
| _____ 10. running mate | j) a person who is elected to represent a state in the Senate |
| _____ 11. abolish | k) feeling extremely upset or distraught |
| _____ 12. increase | l) to be eligible, to fit the requirements |

Reading

1. Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, on November 20, 1942. As a child, Biden had a **stutter**, which he learned to overcome by reciting poetry for hours in front of a mirror. In 1953, his family moved to Delaware. During his high school years, Biden was an excellent football and baseball player. In 1965, he graduated from the University of Delaware, where he studied history, political science, and English.
2. After his undergraduate studies, Biden attended law school. While in law school, he married a woman named Neilia Hunter. Also during this time, he was almost **drafted** to fight in the Vietnam War; however, he did not **qualify** for military service because he had asthma. After finishing law school, he and Neilia had their first child, Beau, in 1969. Beau was soon followed by two more children—Robert and Naomi.
3. 1969 was also the year that Biden was elected to represent a district in northern Delaware. He had been working at the law firm of a local Republican before starting his own law firm. He first thought of himself as a Republican, but later **registered** as a member of the Independent Party, and then finally as a Democrat.
4. Biden dreamed of becoming a **senator** by the age of 30. His dream came true when he was **elected** to the Senate in 1972. A few weeks after the election, Neilia and their one-year-old daughter, Naomi, were killed in a car accident. Biden was **devastated**. He considered **resigning** from politics to care for his two surviving sons, but his colleagues convinced him not to. Years later in 2015, his firstborn son, Beau, also died. The cause was brain cancer.
5. In 1977, Biden married his second wife, a highly educated woman named Jill Tracy Jacobs. Together, they had a daughter named Ashley. According to Biden, Jill **renewed** his interest in life and politics.
6. Joe Biden ran for president in 1988, but dropped out of the race before it was over. Later that year, he had to have brain surgery. In 2008, Barack Obama selected Biden to be his **running mate** for his presidential campaign. They won, making Biden vice president. Obama and Biden were re-elected in 2012.
7. Biden was the Democratic candidate in the 2020 US presidential election. His running mate was Kamala Harris, a senator from California and daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants. Biden's opponent was Republican president Donald Trump. Some of Biden's campaign promises included **abolishing** the death penalty, raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, raising teachers' salaries, imposing background checks for people buying guns, fighting climate change, and **increasing** corporate taxes.
8. The 2020 election had record voter turnout, and Joe Biden received more votes than any other president in US history. Four days after the election, Joe Biden became president-elect and Kamala Harris became the first female vice president-elect. In his victory speech, Biden vowed to focus on uniting the divided nation.

“All our differences hardly measure up to the values we hold in common.”

—Joe Biden

Comprehension

A. True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Read the statements below. Write T if the statement is true. Write F if the statement is false and correct the information in your notebook. Write NM if the fact is not mentioned.

- _____ 1. Jill Tracy Jacobs is Joe Biden's first wife.
- _____ 2. Joe Biden has two living children.
- _____ 3. Joe Biden lived with his parents and grandparents as a child.
- _____ 4. Biden does not work on December 18, the anniversary of his first wife's and daughter's deaths.
- _____ 5. Biden was vice president under Barack Obama in 1988.
- _____ 6. Joe Biden and Donald Trump represent the same political party.
- _____ 7. Biden identified as a Republican before he became a Democrat.
- _____ 8. Biden has one daughter with his second wife.

B. Timeline

Place the following in chronological order (1-10). One item is not mentioned in the reading. Place a star beside it and guess where it belongs.

- _____ Joe Biden began law school.
- _____ Biden ran for president of the United States, but he dropped out of the race.
- _____ Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election.
- _____ Joe Biden was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania.
- _____ Biden worked at the law firm of a local Republican.
- _____ Biden was not a good student in high school, but he was a natural leader.
- _____ Barack Obama chose Joe Biden as his running mate in the 2008 election.
- _____ Biden's first wife and daughter were killed in a car crash.
- _____ Joe Biden married Jill Tracy Jacobs.
- _____ Joe Biden married Neilia Hunter.

Vocabulary Review

A. Choose the Correct Word

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1. He wants to <u>abolish</u> the death penalty.</p> <p>a) increase
b) get rid of
c) modify</p> | <p>3. I was <u>devastated</u> when Lisa broke up with me.</p> <p>a) heartbroken
b) unimpressed
c) angry</p> | <p>5. Are you <u>qualified</u> to teach German?</p> <p>a) excited
b) trained
c) willing</p> |
| <p>2. I hope they will <u>elect</u> a better candidate this time.</p> <p>a) choose
b) dismiss
c) notify</p> | <p>4. Each state in the United States gets two <u>senators</u>, regardless of its population.</p> <p>a) presidents
b) laws
c) representatives</p> | <p>6. He was almost <u>drafted</u> by the military.</p> <p>a) insulted
b) abandoned
c) recruited</p> |

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1. You may need to change the word forms.

1. Joe Biden chose Kamala Harris as his _____ .
2. My recent trip to Mexico _____ my interest in learning Spanish.
3. Biden wants to _____ teachers' salaries.
4. Many children bullied Biden when he was young because he had a _____ .
5. Have you _____ with a political party?
6. The company president _____ from his position after he was caught stealing.

The Biden Foundation

In 2017, Joe and Jill Biden launched the Biden Foundation,* an organization that works on seven key issues. Write “yes” beside the issues you think the foundation focuses on. Write “no” beside the ones you don’t think are part of the foundation’s goals. Your teacher will share the real answers.

- _____ 1. fighting poverty in third-world countries
- _____ 2. strengthening the middle class
- _____ 3. protecting children
- _____ 4. ending violence against women
- _____ 5. improving race relations
- _____ 6. ensuring equal rights for all
- _____ 7. advancing cancer initiatives
- _____ 8. supporting community colleges and military families
- _____ 9. legalizing marijuana
- _____ 10. shaping foreign policy

***Note:**

The Biden Foundation suspended its operations after Joe Biden entered the 2020 presidential election.

Discussion

1. Describe some of the responsibilities that a US president has.
2. Are you interested in the personal lives of political candidates? Why or why not?
3. Is it important for politicians to have empathy? Why or why not?
4. Which political issues do you care about the most?
5. Do you think Joe Biden will be a good president? Why or why not?

Research

Before choosing Kamala Harris as his running mate, Biden clashed with her on a civil rights issue at a Democratic debate. Do some research to find out what happened. Share your findings with your class. How do you think Biden and Harris resolved this conflict? Do you think they will work well together?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students learn about Joe Biden, the Democratic candidate in the 2020 US presidential election. They read a short biography and discuss the role of empathy in politics.

LEVEL: Int – High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: Joe Biden, Biden, president, presidents, US, American, politics, election, Democrat, democracy

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Discuss these questions with your students and find out what they already know about Joe Biden.

1. Answers will vary.
2. Biden is a member of the Democratic party.
3. Biden has been married twice and has had four children. His first wife and two of his children died.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. f | 3. l | 5. j | 7. k | 9. h | 11. d |
| 2. g | 4. a | 6. b | 8. e | 10. c | 12. i |

Comprehension

A. TRUE, FALSE, OR NOT MENTIONED?

1. F – Jill Tracy Jacobs is Joe Biden’s second wife.
2. T
3. NM
4. NM
5. F – Biden was vice president from 2009 until 2017.
6. F – Biden represents the Democratic Party, and Trump represents the Republican Party.
7. T
8. T

B. TIMELINE

- 3 Joe Biden began law school.
- 8 Biden ran for president of the United States, but he dropped out of the race.
- 10 Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election.
- 1 Joe Biden was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania.
- 5 Biden worked at the law firm of a local Republican.
- 2* Biden was not a good student in high school, but he was a natural leader.
- 9 Barack Obama chose Joe Biden as his running mate in the 2008 election.
- 6 Biden’s first wife and daughter were killed in a car crash.
- 7 Joe Biden married Jill Tracy Jacobs.
- 4 Joe Biden married Neilia Hunter.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

A. CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD

1. b 2. a 3. a 4. c 5. b 6. c

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

1. running mate 3. increase 5. registered
2. renewed 4. stutter 6. resigned

The Biden Foundation

1. no 3. yes 5. no 7. yes 9. no
2. yes 4. yes 6. yes 8. yes 10. yes

Discussion

Answers will vary.

Research

You may need to give your students a hint. Tell them to look up “busing” and “segregation.” The debate took place in June 2019 and the conflict carried over onto Twitter where Kamala Harris posted a picture of herself as a little girl who was bused to school every day. She accused Joe Biden of working with segregationist lawmakers and opposing busing. You may also want to talk about grudges. Joe Biden has been described as someone who does not hold grudges. Ask students why this is an important character trait for a politician. Answers and opinions will vary.