

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN



Election Daze



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BOSTON

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Cast of Characters

Narrator

Keisha student

Ari student

Danny student

Class

Ms. Garcia teacher

Yuri student

Maya student

Mr. Jacob election worker

Setting Classroom and gym,
present day

**VOTING
POLLS**

Narrator There is excitement in the air today as two candidates for class president have a debate.

Keisha If you elect me, we will not have to play kickball every day. We will vote on games as a class.

Ari Keisha, that seems like a minor point to me. Fellow classmates, if you elect ME, I will get to the real meat of the issues...the lunchmeat in the cafeteria.

Danny What is that stuff, anyway?

Ari I don't know, but I plan to replace it with pizza.

Class (*clapping*) Yeah!

Ms. Garcia Ari, I'd be careful about making promises that you can't keep.

Keisha I will keep MY promises. I will work to update the class rules. The same ones are used every year. It's time for a change.

Yuri (*to Ms. Garcia*) Can she really do that?



Ms. Garcia I don't see why not. It seems like a reasonable request.

Maya If we're changing rules, these seating assignments have GOT to go.

Ms. Garcia Okay, okay, that's enough about the class rules. In fact, that's enough debating for today. Ari, Keisha, take your seats. As you all know, our class election takes place tomorrow.

(Danny is waving his hand wildly.)

Ms. Garcia Yes, Danny?

Danny Tomorrow is Election Day for the whole country.

Ms. Garcia It certainly is. Let's talk about that. What do you know about voting and the presidential election?

(All hands go up. Ms. Garcia points to Keisha.)

Keisha People will be voting here in our gym.

Maya You have to be 18 to vote. And voting is one of your duties as a citizen.

Ms. Garcia But before people vote, they need to pay attention to the issues that affect them.

Ari My mom said that a lot of people are worried about taxes being raised. But she said that some of those new taxes would go to schools.

Danny Maybe we could use the money for new computers. The ones in the lab are older than we are!

(Ms. Garcia picks up a stack of newspapers and passes them out.)

Ms. Garcia Everyone take a newspaper, please.

Ari Didn't we already have current events this week? Besides, this newspaper is two months old.

Ms. Garcia We are not doing current events, Ari. These are papers I've been collecting over the last few months. They are filled with information on the presidential campaign.



Danny (*worried*) Do we have to read ALL of these?

Ms. Garcia For tomorrow, I want you each to go through one paper and find information about the election that you didn't know before.

Narrator It is now Tuesday, Election Day. From their window, the students in Ms. Garcia's class have a clear view of the gym. They've been watching voters go in and out of the gym all morning.

Ms. Garcia Okay, okay. I know this is an exciting day, but let's try to focus.

Yuri There's just so much going on. I didn't realize how busy it would be.

Ms. Garcia Let's move on to our homework assignment. Who would like to start the discussion?

(Keisha waves her hand, and Ms. Garcia nods at her.)

Keisha I read an article about campaign issues. I didn't realize that the President made decisions about so many things. Jobs, the environment, even health care.

Maya My article said that many people don't vote, even though those issues affect them.

Danny Hmm. I wonder if election results would be different if everyone voted.

Ms. Garcia What else did you learn?

Keisha I read about absentee ballots.

Danny A *what* ballot?

Keisha Absentee, like absent. It's a way for people to vote when they can't make it to the polls. Instead of voting in person, they can mail their ballot in.

Maya *(raising hand)* May I go to the bathroom?

Keisha *(raising hand)* May I go, too?

Ms. Garcia Uh, sure girls.

(Maya and Keisha slowly walk past the window, watching the gym as they leave the classroom.)

Danny I read in my article that elections for Presidents only happen every four years.



Ms. Garcia That's true. (*Ari raises one hand and holds the other over his eye.*) Yes, Ari?

Ari Owwww! My eye! I think my contact is dirty. Can I go wash it out in the bathroom?

Ms. Garcia Of course! Hurry.

(*Ari rushes out of the room, but also glances at the gym.*)

Yuri (*raising hand*) Aren't our library books overdue? Can I return them?

Ms. Garcia What library books? We returned those last week.

(*Maya and Keisha return.*)

Maya (*passing Yuri and whispering*) We saw your dad coming out of the gym. He just voted!

Ms. Garcia Hmm. Maya...the gym isn't anywhere near the bathroom. What is going on?

Maya (*looking guilty*) Sorry, Ms. Garcia. Keisha and I are curious—EVERYONE in class is curious—about what it's like to vote in a presidential election.

(Ari comes back into the room and everyone stares at him.)

Ari What? Whatever it is, I'm innocent!

Ms. Garcia Ari, how ARE your contacts?

Ari Umm...yeah...they're okay. It was kind of a false alarm.

Ms. Garcia *(smiling)* There seems to be a lot of people being excused this morning!

Keisha We just want to see how people vote. We've read about how important elections are. Now one is happening right here! This is one of the biggest days of the year.

Ms. Garcia I have an idea. Let's visit the gym and talk to one of the election workers, if it's not too crowded.

Class *(talking all at once)* Yea!
All right!

Narrator In the gym, the class is gathered around Mr. Jacob, one of the election workers. They are asking him many questions about voting.



Mr. Jacob *(putting his hands up)* One at a time, please!
One at a time.

Ari What exactly would we do if we were voting here?

Mr. Jacob *(pointing to the sign-in area)* First, an election worker would help you sign in.

Keisha Why do we need to do that?

Mr. Jacob It helps us keep track of voters. People are only allowed to vote one time and in one place on election day.

Yuri What happens next?

Mr. Jacob You get a ballot, like this one. *(holds up a ballot)*
Next, you go into a voting booth.

Yuri Then what?

Mr. Jacob *(holding up a pencil-like object)* There are different ways to vote. In our town, you use this tool to punch a hole in the card next to the name of the candidate you've chosen.

Maya What are some other ways to vote?

Mr. Jacob In some polling places, you can touch a computer screen and cast your ballot.

Ms. Garcia In some cities you use a special pencil to make a mark next to your candidate.

Mr. Jacob Just like a multiple-choice test.

Class Ewwww! Tests!

Ari After voting, what do we do with the ballot?

Danny Show it around?

Maya Oh Danny... We put them in the ballot box so they can get counted, right?

Mr. Jacob That's right.

Keisha Then are we done?

Mr. Jacob (*putting a sticker on the shirt of each student*) Not yet! I would give you each an "I voted" sticker to wear.

Maya Please, Ms. Garcia, can we vote, too?



Ms. Garcia You can't vote here—you're not 18, remember? But don't forget. You've got your own election to vote in today.

Ari Believe me, I haven't forgotten.

Keisha Neither have I.

Ms. Garcia Thanks so much, Mr. Jacob.

Mr. Jacob You're very welcome.

Narrator Back in Ms. Garcia's classroom, there is only a little time left before the students will cast their votes for class president.

Danny Keisha's smart and she rocks! Vote for her at the ballot box!

Ms. Garcia Catchy slogan. It has quite a ring to it. (*turning to Yuri*) That's a great poster.

Yuri "Ari for Prez!" is what my poster says.

Ms. Garcia (*raising her voice*) Everyone to your seats. You've all done a great job campaigning. Let's hear the final speeches from Ari and Keisha.

Yuri Why can't we vote now?

Ms. Garcia Are there people who are still undecided?
(*Some of the students raise their hands.*) Not everyone has chosen a candidate. I want to give our two candidates a chance to win over the swing voters.

Danny Are swing voters people who like swings?

Ari No, Danny. Isn't a swing voter someone whose vote is up for grabs?

Ms. Garcia Exactly. It's someone who might vote for either candidate. Okay, Ari, you're up first.

(*Ari goes to the front of the classroom.*)

Ari I may not be running for the President of our country, but I want you all to know that I take this class election just as seriously. Being a president is a very important job. Please put your trust in me. Swing my way!

(*Students applaud Ari as he sits down.*)

Ms. Garcia Thank you, Ari. Ready, Keisha?

Keisha *(walking to the front of the classroom)* You bet! I hope you see that I am the best person for this job. I have made realistic promises that will benefit everyone. Vote for Keisha! Say it loud... Keisha, Keisha! I'll make you proud.

(Students applaud.)

Ms. Garcia I'm going to give you all a few minutes to think about your decision. Then, we're going to cast our votes.

Narrator Students sign in with Ms. Garcia and receive a ballot. She has set up a voting booth with a ballot box inside. Everyone goes into the booth to vote.

Maya I can't take the suspense any longer! When will we get the results?

Ms. Garcia *(counting ballots)* Patience, Maya. I have to count them more than once to be sure who wins.

Maya I'm sorry. I'm just all caught up in Election Day!



Yuri More like you're in an election daze!

Maya Daze?

Yuri Yeah, daze. You know, like you don't know what's going on around you.

Ms. Garcia (*standing up*) Settle down, everyone. I would like to introduce you to your new class president, Keisha Shanley!

(*Everyone claps.*)

Ari Congratulations, Keisha. You ran a very strong campaign.

Keisha Thanks, Ari. But this is a big job. I didn't realize how much hard work being a president can be. Do you think you'd like to be my vice president?

Ari Sure! If that's okay with Ms. Garcia...

Ms. Garcia That's a great idea. I think you two will make a terrific team. (*Students clap.*) Now, let's take out our math books and see if we can all get out of this election daze!



Glossary

absentee ballot a ballot filled out by someone who is unable to vote in person

campaign organized effort to get a candidate elected

daze a confused condition

debate a discussion in which people argue for the opposite sides of an issue

polls where people cast their vote in an election

swing voter a voter who hasn't decided on a candidate

**VOTING
POLLS**

Assignment Photography

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John Ceballos.

Bright Lights on Learning!

**Citizenship
Communities
Government**

**What happens when a school
election falls on the same
day as a national election?
Students find themselves
dazed by all the activity.**



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