

# IDEAS 62

**International Online Teachers Society  
Debate  
Educational Materials For  
Advance and Upper Intermediate  
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society  
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## RUNNING FOR OFFICE-A CONSCIOUS CHOICE

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In politics, there often arises a certain conflict between what the politician wants and what society seeks. We are given the right to vote for political officials and we exercise this right in order to enjoy what those officials promise during their campaign period. Most political candidates already have a clear picture of what people want in those who govern them. Most of them already have the people's weaknesses down pat. Campaigning has become more than just the ability to kiss babies; candidates need to be able to amuse their supporters with sing and dance routines. In addition, candidates need to impress people not just with their ability to deliver rousing speeches, but also in the ability of their other family members to rally support for them. Campaign sorties have become family affairs, where the candidates are accompanied by partners, children, grandchildren, etc. aside from non-family members.

Politics is a strange arena where enemies become instant friends, all for the sake of such "heavy" concepts as statesmanship and embracing political diversity. Even stranger is how the closest of friends instantly become sworn enemies, all because of different party affiliations or differing political platforms. Wondrously, staunch supporters and allies often become the worst political mudslingers, especially in cases where one of them gets caught red handed or most likely didn't get the fair end of a deal.

Politics is an arena of issues, not relationships. You build relationships based on how beneficial they will be to your political career, not on how you are able to sustain them with genuine concern and caring for the other. Once your political comrade becomes a detriment to your stable political standing, the best recourse is always to cut quick and cut clean. Better to mitigate your losses now than to contemplate having no gains of any kind in the future.

It's really funny how perfectly sane people want to get into politics. Yes, they wish to institute changes, yes, they believe they have the ability to lead, and yes, they have the machinery and a whole arsenal of support. Can't they just help society without being in position? Why bother to get a special license plate when your present one very well enables you to blend in and be with more people? Being in a political position only gives you perks, but that's all they are. Why should the choice to help always be accompanied by privileges? Is that the real spirit of helping?

A great political leader acknowledges that his loyalty lies in those that have catapulted him into office. It is not in those he owes political debts to nor in those he shares party affiliations with. He must never forget that being in a position is an opportunity to serve, not to be bowed down to.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the most common pitfalls of initially well-meaning politicians?
2. Is there a particular political figure you admire? Be able to talk about this person in class.
3. Would you run for political office, if given the chance? Why or why not?
4. Why is it often very difficult to remain honest in politics? Be as specific as you need to be.
5. Would you break up a long-standing friendship you share with somebody just because of political diversity? What would you do to maintain the friendship and still have a good image for yourself?



## POLITICS IN A NON-POLITICAL VIEW

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As I write this, the most powerful nation in the world is gearing up for its next presidential elections. In my own country, the next general elections are scheduled middle of next year. Interestingly, elections have always been an arena where both personality and ability come into play. Politics, after all, makes strange bedfellows, as they say. And in politics, there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies. There are only permanent interests.

I have never really found a genuine interest in politics, save for the practice of my right to vote that I religiously observe. We may not consider ourselves as huge contributors to society at large, but look at the way political candidates go to great lengths to win our approval and hope to get our votes come election time. Election periods are notable for the amount of spending they encourage for those running to get elected. And with the coming Christmas season, political candidates in my own country need to prepare themselves for the possible barrage of people asking for this or that donation or contribution. In my country, politicians need to have deep pockets and even deeper understanding for the constituents they serve. It's not uncommon for someone running for political office to have sponsored an educational scholarship or two (or even more) before running for office, or to have supported a charitable cause, all in the name of having easy recall for voters.

Although my country has often been perceived as having an unbelievable degree of political corruption at various levels of government, its citizens have still managed to exercise their right to vote. Unfortunately, citizens of my country do tend to forget easily. Many of us, perhaps jaded by the fact that whoever gets into position is still likely to become tainted, vote for political officials because: there's no one better; there's no one else; there's going to be another election in a few years' time, so why not give this one a(nother) chance? And then a couple of years down the road when the one in office has been doing their best (or worst), people complain, take to the streets and cry NO MORE! DOWN WITH SO-AND-SO! Yes, we easily forget that we voted for those people in the first place...maybe it's just like reaping what you sow, eh?

Politics has always been said to be dirty. One can get into politics all squeaky-clean and a paragon of virtue, while very few come out untarnished. Politicians can't claim to be forever untouched by all the grime and mudslinging. They will, sooner or later, experience numerous acid tests and moments of getting down and dirty. We can only hope that when they go through all that, they won't entirely forget those who empowered them to be in such a position.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define politics. What are your views on politics?
2. Have you ever wanted to be in politics? Why or why not?
3. Why is it never easy to remain perfectly "untouched" by all the dirtiness in politics?
4. What, to you, are the qualities of an ideal political candidate?
5. If you had the opportunity, would you run for political office? What position would that be and why?



## POLITICS MINUS THE COMPLICATIONS

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Politics connotes the ideal state in which society has to be. Although ultimate power is to be found in government, authority still lies in civil society. If politicians do not find favor in those that they lead, they will eventually be deemed unfit to rule. The power lies in the people, and it is this fact that has politicians perennially currying favor for themselves from their constituents.

However, though all of the above statements have been deemed true and correct, politicians must remember that they are put into office because those that they serve aspire to see peace and order in their organization. People also tend to be quite fickle about their choices: they want something the first time then change their minds the next. When people see that something is not working out the way they want it to, they are easily swayed to believe in something else that might work better.

To become a politician with fixed principles and steadfast goals is great, but in the face of changing political trends and conflicting interests, how firm can one manage to be? Organization and order comes in many forms, sometimes even in chaos. (Ever heard of organized chaos?) The ability to prioritize is a gift that doesn't come to everyone. The desire to serve is seldom genuine in all people. It is therefore the responsibility of politicians to discipline themselves in order to deliver reliable service to their constituents. If the only reason they want to be in office is to be in power, they need to have their head examined or something. Being in power is not going to last long. Intentions become oh-so-transparent in the long run. Regret can only come in the end.

It's also difficult to remain in power without being touched by the "ills" of politics. Many an honest politician has admitted so. However, it takes a certain sense of character to look out for the welfare of others. So far, only One Man has succeeded in doing that, and He wasn't even totally human in nature. He laid his life down so many others may find eternal life, and see how far-reaching His influence has been! He knew when to say YES and when to firmly say NO. He knew when others were just baiting Him, and He knew when they were being honest. He could have demanded that people bow down to Him and no one else without question, yet made a choice to remain as humble as His earthly origins.

In our day-to-day lives, let us remember the example of One Great Man who never forgot that He was on earth for a reason: to serve, not with great power and with fear in others' hearts, but with a genuine love for all mankind. That's politics without the complications.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it difficult to be engaged in politics?
2. How are people changed by politics?
3. How do you choose your political officials? What qualities do you want in a political official?
4. How can a political official remain true to his calling to serve?
5. Can service to the people only be attained through political office? Why or why not?



## Early and Modern Politics

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The art of politics can be divided into several points. Politics tackles on the realm of state affairs, psychology, physiology, the legal system, religion, science, economics and leadership. Generally, the concept of politics can be traced back to the behavior within v...

arious institutions. It involves the relationship behind power and authority. Of course, politics should value the power of the people and the voice of the public. Hence, it creates and makes decisions which are based on public welfare.

Politics can be traced back to Greek period; in fact the world politics came from a Greek word "Politika". During that time, politics was modeled after Aristotle's writings. Greek politics involves the meeting of favored middleclass individuals. Most of the members in Greek politics came from powerful families and famous aristocrats. The origins of politics started right after the creation of states. States were founded through violent warfare. Countries such as Japan and China created states after conquering various lands. Once the lands are conquered, emperors will be placing various individuals in order to rule the states. The individuals often came from a list of generals and several feudal lords. Of course, those favored by the emperor will also have the power to control various states.

Along with the divine right of the emperor, his council controlled most of the lands. The council of the emperors, which has started in 2100 BC, was the first types of politicians. They were the foundation of a constitutional government. The emperors stated several rules to his council in order to preserve traditional beliefs and in order to set the kingdoms into a rule of kingship based on heredity. The emperors also required councils to collect tithes and taxes in order to facilitate in the development of the country. Most of the wealth of the citizens were used to pay for war campaigns and for the creation of various infrastructures.

Many countries have practiced this kind of political setting. Kings ruled states through earls, counts, dukes and lords. Earls were considered as the favored in Scotland and in England. They are the ones who collect taxes for the king and they also protect the states from any crimes or any wars. The taxes which were collected in such states were considered as tributes for the king.

After various religious and political struggles, the powers of the emperors were limited and the people started a voting system in order to elect their leaders. Kings were still favored in most countries yet the only have minor powers compared to senators and appointed ministers. This is the start of a democratic based government. This is how the political setting is today and how most countries appoint their leaders.

### Questions:

- 1) What is the Greek word for politics?
- 2) The first council of emperors started when?
- 3) What are some countries which created states after conquest?
- 4) Are you in favor of the democracy? Why?
- 5) The taxes collected by kings were used in?



## POLITICAL SKILL - A SOCIAL SKILL

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Each individual possesses social skills and one of them is political skill. Even when we were still children, we have already experienced politics. That is very true when we vote for whoever we think can best do a particular job or official in our class or the school as a whole. We don't really vote for whose popular but we pretend to be like grown-ups and pretend to do what grown-ups do. We actually vote for who is the most popular or maybe for the prom king and queen. We even vote for the leaders of the student council. This is so because politics is a part of who we are.

Politics are inherent in all of us and if you negate this statement that would be a hoax. It would be fallacious to argue with the fact that a person is not political. There are some people who are very skilled in politics and their accomplishments that led to their success are pretty obvious and are also unquestionable. On the other hand, there are also those who are not really skilled in politics and their own demise can be traced back to this lack of skill in politics. Apparently, we can say that politics are the strategies that we can employ for us to accomplish and attain our goals in life.

Let us take the example of Julius Caesar who was profoundly a skilled general and tactician whose proclivity towards sharing his plunder proved him to be popular as a general. When he became the emperor, his lack of political skill ultimately killed him. Likewise, the simple acts of an individual like casting a vote or maybe supporting a cause clearly indicate one's participation in the political practice. Moreover, we could say that those leaders who are not politically skilled come up as leaders who are manipulative or self-serving. How then could we figure out a person or a leader who has political skills?

Political skill had much in common with the other social skills and emotional intelligence. Most probably it is the first social skill that focused on behavior at work. We can view these things in a leader and this only means that they are individuals with the ability to motivate and to encourage others through their words, ideas and behaviors. This only means that political skill can be also described as social competence or political savvy. Political skill is the ability to know what to do and knowing how to do it in a manner that was effective and convincing but not obvious.

Likewise, we could say that everyone take part in the practice of politics in one way or the other. Indeed all these things that define political skill as a social skill is very much predominant with all kinds of leaders in any field at any given organization in a society.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do you define a political skill?
2. How could you figure out if an individual has political skill? Explain your answer.
3. What is your understanding of a person who is a political savvy? Justify your answer.
4. Do you believe that everybody take part in politics? How?
5. Do you agree that lack of political skill will not pave the way to success? Why or why not?



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