



Case 9

Your ballot is more local than your feed.

What's actually on your ballot, and where do you find out?

National races dominate feeds, but many decisions that shape students' lives, like school boards, judges and local measures, appear lower on the ballot. Knowing how to find your own official ballot and deadlines matters whether you're voting soon or learning how the system works before you can.

In the real world

NPR, 2023 Some states are trying to boost youth voter registration. Here's what they're doing

Ballotpedia News, 2025 Most states allow teenagers to pre-register to vote before turning 18, and some let them vote in primaries

Mateo

Dec doesn't need us picking for him. He needs his own ballot and a registration check before November. Honestly, so do I.

You'll make

Explainer, 250—350 words

Time

About 50 minutes

Level

Grades 9—10



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Illustrative sample ballot, November general election

Federal: U.S. Representative. State: State Senator; Superior Court judge (retention). Local: Board of Education, District 3 (vote for two); City Council, Ward 5. Measures: Measure T, transit improvements bond.



Which contests are below the headline race? Which one touches Dec's school, and which touches his bus?

Fictional case material

2

Creator's voter guide, posted three weeks before the election

"Everything you need for November!! Registration closes the 14th. School board: vote Candidate B, the only one who actually cares about students. Measure T: yes, obviously."



Which lines are facts you can check, and which are picks? Whose deadline is "the 14th"?

Fictional case material

3

Gia's group-chat reminder draft, Sunday 6:30 p.m.

"Check your registration and your own sample ballot at vote.gov. Deadlines depend on your state. Please don't post your address here."



What information should stay out of a group chat, and what does Gia share instead?

Fictional case material

4

"I turn 18 in October. I don't need someone picking for me. I need to know what's on my ballot and whether I'm registered in time for November."

Dec, 17, theatre crew



What two things does Dec need to find out, and which official source answers each?

Fictional case material

5

"Dec's feed is all the big race. Then you flip the sample ballot: school board, city council, a transit bond. Nobody's posting about Measure T."

Mateo, 22, moved from New Bedford for college

Which contests does Mateo find below the headline race, and how would he separate the guide's facts from its picks?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Dec's own state, registration status and deadline, the actual sample ballot for his address, what each local office is responsible for where he lives, and who wrote and funds the creator's guide.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Vote.gov, Preparing to vote: age 18 and under

Summary, not a quotation: Vote.gov explains that in most states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories people can preregister before turning 18, that you must be 18 to vote, that several states let 17-year-olds vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the general election, and that each person should check their own state's rules.



Real source

U.S. Constitution, Twenty-Sixth Amendment, Section 1 (text as published by the National Constitution Center)

"The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age."



article

Some states are trying to boost youth voter registration. Here's what they're doing [NPR, 2023-08-06](#)

Explains preregistration and other state steps that let teens sign up before they turn 18.

Discuss before deciding

- Which item did you trust first, and why?
- What would you need to see before repeating the strongest claim?
- Who is missing from these documents?

Who actually gets to decide?

Separate the two questions Dec has: what is on his ballot, and can he vote. Which rules and offices answer each, and which source should he check first?

Which contests and measures appear on Dec's ballot

Who decides

His address and district lines, drawn through redistricting

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Vote.gov, which links to his state or local election office

Whether Dec can register and vote in November

Who decides

Under which rule

Twenty-Sixth Amendment: the vote at 18 cannot be denied on account of age

State rules on preregistration, deadlines and 17-year-old primary voting

Who lives with it

Your way in

Vote.gov, which links to his state or local election office

Words that do the work

Sample ballot

Papeleta de muestra

A preview of the contests and measures for your specific address and election.

Dec finds a school board race and a transit measure below the headline race.

Voter guide

Guía para votantes

A publication explaining or recommending choices; it may be neutral or take positions.

A creator's guide explains some races and recommends others. Mateo separates the facts from the picks.

Registration

Inscripción electoral

Signing up to vote where required; rules and deadlines vary by state.

Gia tells friends to check their own state's deadline, not hers.

Preregistration

Preinscripción

In many states, signing up at 16 or 17 so you're registered when eligible.

Anika, 16, checks whether her state lets her preregister.

One student's draft

Write a nonpartisan explainer on one local contest: what the office does, what's on the ballot and where to verify it. Compare how two guides describe the race.

School Board, District 3 What the office does: The school board sets the district budget, hires the superintendent and approves policies like the school calendar. It doesn't run individual classrooms.¹ What's on the ballot: Two seats are open, with four candidates. There's also a transit measure, but that's a city question, not a school board one². Where to verify: Look up your own sample ballot through vote.gov, which sends you to your state's election office. The creator guide says Candidate B is the only one who cares about students, so you should probably vote for her³. Comparing guides: The county guide prints each candidate's statement in their own words.⁴ The creator guide adds opinions about who is best.

- 1 Good: saying what the office does not control keeps readers from asking it for the wrong things.
- 2 Strong jurisdiction thinking: the writer separates two contests on the same ballot.
- 3 Revise: an explainer must stay nonpartisan. Report what the guide claims as the guide's opinion and leave the choice to the reader.
- 4 Good comparison: the writer identifies how the two guides differ in purpose.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~The creator guide says Candidate B is the only one who cares about students, so you should probably vote for her.~~

After

One creator guide recommends a candidate; that is the guide's opinion, so check each candidate's own statement in the county guide.

The revision keeps the explainer nonpartisan while still teaching readers to tell a recommendation from a fact.

Teacher commentary

The explainer describes the office accurately, including its limits, separates the school board from the city measure and compares the two guides by purpose. One sentence slips from explaining into recommending a candidate, which the task rules out. Replacing it with a clearly labeled description of the guide's opinion moves the response to Advanced on Audience.

Teach it in one period

Grades 9—10

Write a nonpartisan explainer on one local contest: what the office does, what’s on the ballot, and where to verify.

Sources

Illustrative sample ballot, office descriptions and USA.gov page.

Objective

Students explain a local office accurately, point readers to official verification and compare how two guides describe the same measure.

Product

Explainer, 250—350 words

Assessed by

The explainer is scored for an accurate office description, neutral language, official sources and a fair comparison of the two guides.

45 minutes	You	Students	Check for
5 min Your feed vs. your ballot	Show a feed full of one national race. Ask: what else might be on the ballot?	List guesses.	Lists include local offices.
10 min Read a sample ballot	Hand out an illustrative sample ballot with federal, state and local contests.	Circle one local office and one measure.	Students find the school board race and a local measure.
8 min What does the office do?	Model looking up an office’s responsibilities.	Match three offices to three issues students care about.	Matches are accurate (e.g., school board → school budgets).
10 min Guide vs. ballot	Show a creator’s voter guide.	Highlight checkable facts in one color, recommendations in another.	Students separate facts from picks.
9 min Official checklist	Show Vote.gov and the age guide; emphasize rules vary.	Write a personal checklist: election office, registration, deadlines, sample ballot.	Checklist uses official sources only.
3 min Exit	Ask: if you can’t vote yet, what’s one way to take part?	Write one.	Answer names a real route.

Before class

Prepare the case documents, one set per pair:

- ✓ Illustrative sample ballot, November general election
- ✓ Creator’s voter guide, posted three weeks before the election
- ✓ Gia’s group-chat reminder draft, Sunday 6:30 p.m.
- ✓ Dec, 17, theatre crew

Every document is fictional case material, printable from the online field guide.

Questions to keep asking



Nexo

Your address decides your ballot. A friend two districts over sees different local races.



Pauta

The voting age is 18, but some states let 17-year-olds vote in primaries. Check yours.

Support every student, then assess

Success looks like

- ✓ Accurate office description
- ✓ Neutral language
- ✓ Official sources cited
- ✓ Compares two guides fairly

Supports at this level

- Explainer template
- Fact vs. opinion checklist

Access

- Provide an illustrated sample ballot with offices color-coded
- Read office descriptions aloud
- Spanish vocabulary: papeleta, inscripción, elección, medida
- Many election offices provide Spanish materials; show where
- Reduce to matching two offices

Stretch

- Find your county's sample ballot for the next election
- Research the history of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Challenge: Compare how two guides describe the same measure.

Rubric	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	Copies one person's deadlines.	Mentions official sources vaguely.	Points to official sources for each person's state.	Points to official sources and explains why rules differ.
Reasoning	Treats a guide as the ballot.	Mentions the ballot but not local contests.	Separates ballot, guide and registration.	Explains why local offices matter to the audience.
Audience & purpose	Collects private info.	Generic hype.	Useful, private, nonpartisan.	Includes people not yet eligible.
Revision	No change.	Adds a link.	Replaces copied deadlines with official routes.	Explains how each change helps friends in different situations.

Standards this can show

RI.9-10.6 Common Core 9–10

RH.9-10.6 Common Core 9–10

W.9-10.2 Common Core 9–10

RI.11-12.7 Common Core 11–12

RH.11-12.6 Common Core 11–12

SL.11-12.2 Common Core 11–12

Grades 6—8

Match offices on a sample ballot to the everyday things they decide, then make a poster for families about finding their own ballot.

Use

An illustrative sample ballot and one-line office descriptions.

You'll make

Matching sheet plus a poster

Show it your way
Write it

Write 3 sentences with the frame "The __ decides __. To find your ballot, __."

Say it

Explain to a partner which office on the sample ballot decides something about your school, and how a family can find its own ballot.

Show it

Make the family poster: three offices, each with a picture of what it decides, plus the steps to find your own ballot.

Done when

- ☐ Matches at least three offices accurately
- ☐ Points to official sources
- ☐ Nonpartisan
- ☐ Explains address-based differences

Who decides Role and the rule behind it

Who can influence them How?

Who lives with it Who wasn't in the room?

Need a boost?

- Office-to-issue matching cards
- Frames: "The __ decides __. To find your ballot, __."
- Vocabulary: ballot, office, measure, register
- Group work

The best place to push Which person or process, and what you'd ask



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Grades 9—10

Write a nonpartisan explainer on one local contest: what the office does, what's on the ballot, and where to verify.

Use

Illustrative sample ballot, office descriptions and USA.gov page.

You'll make

Explainer, 250—350 words

Version A What it says or shows

Version B Same moment, told differently

Done when

- ☐ Accurate office description
- ☐ Neutral language
- ☐ Official sources cited
- ☐ Compares two guides fairly

Need a boost?

- Explainer template
- Fact vs. opinion checklist

The difference that matters What does one version leave out, add or frame differently?

Who would react differently, and why



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Honors**Argue whether the voting age for local elections should be lowered to 16.****Use**

Case materials plus one teacher-selected article on cities that allow 16-year-olds to vote locally.

You'll make

Argument, 600—700 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Done when

- ☐ Clear, qualified thesis
- ☐ Accurate facts about existing examples
- ☐ Addresses counterarguments
- ☐ Considers implementation

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Need a boost?

- Claim/counterclaim chart

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Pre-AP

Closely observe an illustrative sample ballot's structure and write an evidence-based explanation of what Dec will actually be deciding.

Use

The illustrative sample ballot and one-line office descriptions.

You'll make

Observation grid plus explanation (200 words)

Item 1: what it shows, and what it doesn't

[illegible]

Item 2: what it shows, and what it doesn't

[illegible]

Item 3: what it shows, and what it doesn't

[illegible]

What I can actually claim

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The paper has rounded corners and a dark blue border. There are ten visible horizontal lines across the page.

Done when

- ☐ Accurate reading of the ballot
- ☐ Office descriptions are correct
- ☐ Nonpartisan
- ☐ Defended with evidence

Need a boost?

- Ballot observation grid: level, office, term, what it controls
- Question stems: “Which office affects Dec’s school?”
- Explanation frame



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

AP English Language

Rhetorically analyze a voter guide aimed at young people.

Use

A teacher-selected nonpartisan or advocacy guide.

You'll make

Analysis, about 500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case

Done when

- ☐ Thesis on purpose and strategy
- ☐ Analyzes specific choices
- ☐ Identifies the inform/persuade shift
- ☐ Commentary explains effect

Need a boost?

- Rhetorical situation grid
- Commentary stems



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

AP U.S. Government

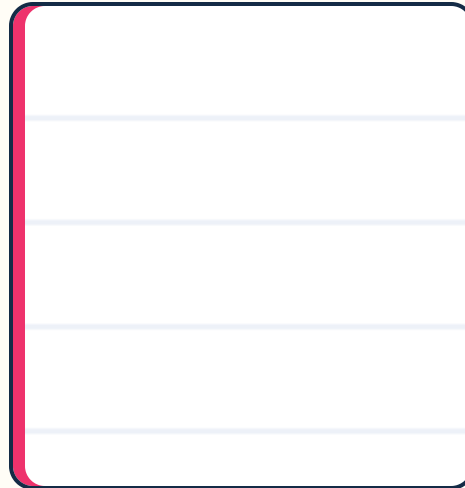
SCOTUS comparison: compare Baker v. Carr (1962) with Reynolds v. Sims (1964). Explain how each shaped the “one person, one vote” principle and why district lines help determine which contests appear on a person’s ballot.

Use

Oyez summaries of both cases and the case’s sample ballot.

You’ll make

SCOTUS comparison response, about 350 words

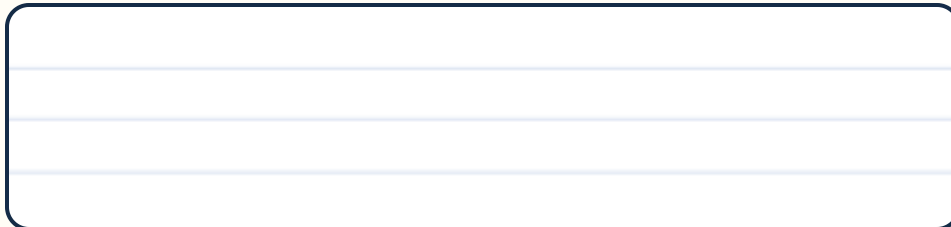
Version A What it says or shows**Version B** Same moment, told differently**Done when**

- ☐ Accurate facts and holdings
- ☐ Explains the relationship between the cases
- ☐ Connects to ballots and districts
- ☐ Nonpartisan

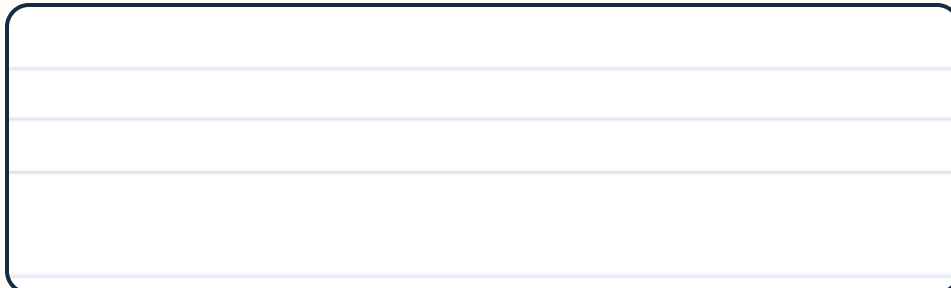
Need a boost?

- SCOTUS comparison template
- Vocabulary: justiciable, apportionment, redistricting

The difference that matters What does one version leave out, add or frame differently?



Who would react differently, and why



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Why do young people vote less in local elections, and what would change that?” Members research turnout data, registration rules, civic education and youth-led efforts, then present to student council.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved sources on youth turnout.

You'll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment
What you'll say
Slide 2: The question
What you'll say
Slide 3: The evidence
What you'll say
Slide 4: Your ask
What you'll say
Done when

- ☐ Accurate data
- ☐ Several perspectives
- ☐ Synthesized, nonpartisan recommendations
- ☐ Feasible for students

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Data tracker
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Pre-IB

Write a comparative analysis of how the official sample ballot and a creator's voter guide present the same election: what each includes, leaves out and asks the reader to do. Then write a reflection on the question: how can a voter know what a candidate or measure will actually do?

Use

The illustrative sample ballot, the creator's voter guide, Vote.gov and one official description of a local office.

You'll make

Comparative analysis (450—550 words) plus a 250-word reflection

Version A What it says or shows

Version B Same moment, told differently

Done when

- ☐ Compares the two texts by purpose and effect
- ☐ Separates checkable facts from recommendations
- ☐ Stays nonpartisan throughout
- ☐ Reflection names the limits of predicting what officials will do

Need a boost?

- Comparison grid: purpose, author, what is included, what is recommended
- Fact-versus-pick highlighter key
- Reflection stems on prediction and evidence

The difference that matters What does one version leave out, add or frame differently?

Who would react differently, and why



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

IB MYP

Investigate “How do local elections shape daily life?” and create an infographic for classmates.

Use

Case materials; global context: Fairness and development.

You'll make

Infographic plus reflection

Frame 1

What we see and hear

Frame 2

What we see and hear

Frame 3

What we see and hear

Frame 4

What we see and hear

Done when

- ☐ Focused question
- ☐ Accurate content
- ☐ Thoughtful comparison
- ☐ Nonpartisan

Need a boost?

- Statement of inquiry frame
- Infographic template

Why this order works What does the viewer know by the last frame that they didn't at the first?



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

IB DP Language and Literature

Write a guided textual analysis of a teacher-selected voter guide aimed at young or first-time voters, responding to the guiding question.

Use

One teacher-selected voter guide aimed at young people, balanced across the class with guides from different organizations, and the case's sample ballot for context.

You'll make

Guided analysis, 600–800 words, written in 75 minutes

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case

Done when

- ☐ Responds directly to the guiding question
- ☐ Analyzes language and design with precise references
- ☐ Locates and explains the shift from informing to persuading
- ☐ Sustains an organized line of analysis in clear academic language

Need a boost?

- Guiding question printed above the text
- Annotation layers: address to the reader, layout and hierarchy, the move from fact to recommendation
- Checklist of conventions for voter guides as a text type



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

IB DP Global Politics

Rehearse an engagement project on youth participation in local elections: frame a nonpartisan political issue, such as why young people vote less in local contests, map the actors (election office, schools, parties, youth organizations, candidates), plan ethical, nonpartisan engagement with an election office or youth civic group, and analyze how turnout affects the legitimacy of local decisions, comparing voting age or registration in one other country.

Use

The sample ballot, Vote.gov's guidance for people 18 and under, one source on local turnout and one official source on voting rules in another country.

You'll make

Engagement-project proposal, 600—800 words, with an actor map

Who decides Role and the rule behind it

Who can influence them How?

Who lives with it Who wasn't in the room?

Done when

- ☐ Frames a nonpartisan political issue about participation
- ☐ Maps actors and their sources of power accurately
- ☐ Plans ethical, nonpartisan engagement
- ☐ Uses legitimacy precisely and compares fairly with another country

Need a boost?

- Actor map: formal authority, resources, influence, voice
- Nonpartisan engagement plan with consent and safety notes
- Legitimacy prompts: does turnout change whether a decision is accepted?

The best place to push Which person or process, and what you'd ask



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.