

Barack Obama

"We are the ones we have been waiting for."

—Barack Obama



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What adjectives come to mind when you hear the name Barack Obama?
2. How does Obama compare to previous American presidents and the current president?
3. Did Obama accomplish any major goals in his presidency?

B. Chart

Write at least two items under each heading in the chart below.

Things I know about Obama	Things I want to know about Obama

Pre-Reading cont.

C. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many meanings and words as you can before you read.
 Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 3.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----|----------------------|----|---|
| ___ | 1. | maternal | a) | to take up permanent residence |
| ___ | 2. | settle | b) | the people who run an organization or business |
| ___ | 3. | law firm | c) | a business where one or more lawyers work |
| ___ | 4. | take off | d) | to completely change something |
| ___ | 5. | gain media attention | e) | to help another person or organization solve their problems |
| ___ | 6. | administration | f) | relating to the mother |
| ___ | 7. | reform | g) | to give someone acknowledgment for their work |
| ___ | 8. | bail out | h) | to become well known in the news |
| ___ | 9. | credit | i) | to attempt to persuade voters to choose a certain party or leader |
| ___ | 10. | campaign | j) | a situation in which opposing parties prevent progress |
| ___ | 11. | deadlock | k) | to suddenly grow or go |
| ___ | 12. | legacy | l) | something that one person leaves for future generations |

Reading

1. As a young child, Barack Obama was known as “Barry.” His mother was from Kansas, and his father was from Kenya. Obama’s parents met at the University of Hawaii, but divorced shortly after he was born. He spent a few years with his mother and stepfather in Indonesia. At the age of ten, he moved back to Hawaii to live with his **maternal** grandparents. After high school, Obama attended college in Los Angeles and New York City. He **settled** in Chicago, Illinois, and began working as a community organizer.
2. As a young graduate, Barack Obama helped rebuild communities. In 1988, he attended Harvard Law School and became the editor, and then the president, of the *Harvard Law Review*. In the summers, he worked at a **law firm** where he met his wife, Michelle. The couple married in 1992 and had two daughters, Malia and Natasha (Sasha).
3. Obama’s political career **took off** in 1996 when he was elected to the Illinois State Senate. His strong speaking skills helped him **gain media attention**, and he was elected to the United States Senate in 2004. In 2008, with only four years of national political experience, Obama ran for president and won. On January 20, 2009, at the age of 47, Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States. This was the first time an African American had ever become the leader of the United States.
4. From 2009 to 2012, Obama’s **administration reformed** the health care system and **bailed out** the American auto industry. Supporters also **credit** Obama for the death of al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and for bringing troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan.
5. When addressing his nation in the 2012 **campaign**, President Obama admitted that the American economy had not yet recovered. He still believed in his slogan “Yes We Can!” and asked Americans to believe in him and vote for him again, which they did.
6. At the beginning of his second term, Obama faced one of his most difficult challenges. Twenty children and six teachers were killed in a mass shooting at an elementary school in Connecticut. Despite his goal of being a changemaker, Obama faced **deadlocks** on several issues, including gun control legislation and immigration reform.
7. At the end of his presidency, Obama identified the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) as his most important accomplishment. His successor, Donald Trump, promised to erase Obama’s **legacy** as soon as he took over the presidency.

Comprehension

A. True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Write T if the statement is true. Write NM if the statement is not mentioned in the reading. If the statement is false, write F, and then correct the information in your notebook.

- _____ 1. Barack Obama was an only child.
- _____ 2. Barack Obama went to college on the mainland of the US.
- _____ 3. Natasha is also called "Sasha."
- _____ 4. Barack Obama was inaugurated in November 2008.
- _____ 5. The Obama administration rescued America's failing auto industry.

B. Matching

Create complete sentences by matching the text from both columns.

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ 1. Barack Obama met his wife... | a) of the <i>Harvard Law Review</i> . |
| _____ 2. Malia and Sasha are... | b) four years of national political experience. |
| _____ 3. Some people don't believe that... | c) to end the war in Iraq. |
| _____ 4. Barack Obama was once the editor... | d) the American economy had not yet recovered. |
| _____ 5. The Obama administration... | e) while working a summer job. |
| _____ 6. It was important to Barack Obama... | f) Barack and Michelle's daughters. |
| _____ 7. In 2008, Barack Obama only had... | g) Barack Obama was born in Hawaii. |
| _____ 8. In 2012, Barack Obama admitted that... | h) Obama's legacy. |
| _____ 9. There was a deadlock over... | i) worked hard to reform health care in America. |
| _____ 10. Donald Trump planned to erase... | j) gun control legislation. |

Idioms

Barack Obama ran against Mitt Romney in the 2012 election. The day before the election, headlines were calling this political race a “dead heat.” Find out what the following idioms mean.

#	Idiom	Meaning
1	dead heat	
2	down to the wire	
3	to win, hands down	

Vocabulary Review

Create six words or expressions by pairing the words that are commonly together in English. Write a sentence for each example.

Word List

- out • bail • media • maternal • off
- law • against • campaign • gain
- took • attention • grandparents • firm

#	Word/Expression	Sentence
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

The First or Not?

Guess whether Barack Obama was the first US president to do the following. Write “yes” or “no” as your teacher reads these statements out loud. Your teacher will share the real answers. Which student deserves to be class president?

- _____ 1. first to have a personal Facebook page
- _____ 2. first to have a Twitter account
- _____ 3. first to write a book
- _____ 4. first to sign a law into effect with an autopen
- _____ 5. first to win the Nobel Peace Prize
- _____ 6. first to appear on a daytime talk show and a late-night comedy show
- _____ 7. first African American president
- _____ 8. first US senator to be elected president of the US
- _____ 9. first to celebrate Diwali* at the White House
- _____ 10. first to brew his own beer in the White House

***Diwali**

Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights.

Research

How does the Democratic Party differ from the Republican Party? Do a little research for homework. Find at least three points to share with your class.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Discussion

A. Famous Quotes

Discuss these famous quotes by Barack Obama with a partner or your class. Which one is your favorite? Which ones do you agree with? Which ones do you disagree with? Look up any words or expressions that you don't know.

"It may make your blood boil and your mind may not be changed, but the practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship. It is essential for our democracy."

—University of Michigan Commencement, 2010

"I don't oppose all wars. What I am opposed to is a dumb war."

—Chicago Rally, 2002

"A good compromise, a good piece of legislation, is like a good sentence; or a good piece of music. Everybody can recognize it. They say, 'Huh. It works. It makes sense.'"

—The New Yorker, 2004

"Terrorism has long been a tactic, but modern technology allows a few small men with outsized rage to murder innocents on a horrific scale."

—Acceptance Speech for Nobel Peace Prize, 2009

B. Questions

Discuss a few of these questions as a class or choose one and write a paragraph about it.

1. Some people say Barack Obama has cross-party appeal. What do you think that means? Do you agree?
2. Politicians are known for delivering cheap shots during campaigns. What is a cheap shot? Did Barack Obama use this tactic?
3. How important is it for you to share the same religious beliefs as the leader of your country?
4. Should the leader of a country have experienced living in a foreign country?
5. In one of his books, Barack Obama admitted to doing drugs in his youth. Do you think this was a wise confession?
6. Elizabeth Cheney said this about Barack Obama: "A gift for reading from a teleprompter is not the same as leadership." What did she mean? Do you agree?
7. After signing the Affordable Health Care Act legislation, the government created an information website called "Reality Check." What is a reality check? Why do you think the administration used this term?
8. Donald Trump promised to erase Obama's legacy by repealing the Affordable Care Act. Do you think Donald Trump will do a better or worse job as president than Barack Obama?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read a brief bio about Barack Obama. They also practice distinguishing word forms and pronouncing years.

LEVEL: High Int – Adv

TIME: 1.5 hours

TAGS: Barack Obama, president, politics, American, US

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Answers will vary.

B. CHART

Answers will vary.

C. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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

Comprehension

A. TRUE, FALSE, OR NOT MENTIONED?

1. NM
2. T
3. T
4. F – He was inaugurated on January 20, 2009.
5. T

B. MATCHING

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

Idioms

1. an even race where neither person has the advantage
2. down to the very last minute
3. to win by a big margin

Vocabulary Review

Example sentences will vary.

- bail out
- maternal grandparents
- law firm
- campaign against
- gain media attention
- took off

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

The First or Not?

Consider giving a prize or “Class President” badge to the person who guesses the most answers correctly.

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. Yes | 3. No | 5. No | 7. Yes | 9. Yes |
| 2. Yes | 4. Yes | 6. Yes | 8. No | 10. Yes |

Tiebreaker: Malia Obama was born on an important day.

What day was she born on? (Answer: Fourth of July, 1988)

Research

Answers will vary.

Discussion

Answers will vary.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Favorite*.

Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Favourite*.

Also, *Acknowledgement* is another acceptable spelling of *Acknowledgment*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.