

THE ZERO GAME
SUGGESTED LANGUAGE ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES LESSONS
FOR GRADES NINE THROUGH TWELVE

BASED ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING NOVEL
THE ZERO GAME BY BRAD MELTZER

LESSON ONE: CONGRESSIONAL VOTING PREDICTION

Objectives: In the opening chapters of THE ZERO GAME, congressional staffers decide to add excitement to their work by gambling on the outcomes of votes from the United States Senate and House of Representatives. In this activity, students will become familiar with the outcomes of recent congressional votes and will predict and test the political climate of their own classroom.

Standards: NSS-C.9-12.3 – PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY – How is the national government organized and what do they do? NSS-C.9-12.2 – FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM – What are the distinctive characteristics of American society? What is American political culture? *

Procedure:

1. With a quick round of questioning, the teacher activates prior knowledge of THE ZERO GAME's premise and explains that students will be playing a similar game in which they will be voting on actual congressional measures and betting on the political climate of their own classroom.
2. The teacher explains the attached worksheet, completing and modeling the first example with the class. A very brief description of an actual congressional vote is read aloud. "On July 27, 2006, the Senate voted on *S.J.RES.12*, a bill to make the burning or desecration of the U.S. flag illegal." The teacher asks the class, "If you were a senator that day, how would you have voted?" Students silently record their vote – yea or nay – into the table.
3. The teacher asks the class to silently record how they imagine the majority of the classroom voted on the issue. Each student writes "PASSED" or "DEFEATED" in the second column.
4. Finally, in the third column, students record their prediction of the actual Senate vote. (If a star student has prior knowledge of the actual vote's outcome, they have full right to use their knowledge for their own benefit.)
5. The teacher explains the table's final two columns, taking an actual show of hands poll of the class for yeas, and then nays. The teacher then reveals the actual vote. "On June 27, 2006, the bill was defeated, 66-34. The nays have it."
6. Students silently cast their votes and predictions for the five remaining votes, leaving the last two columns open. (Students may use the honor system if writing with pencil. Some teachers may wish to pass out and collect red pens for the first round of voting if they fear students will change answers as the game proceeds.)
7. When finished, students caucus in groups of two and verbally answer the first set of discussion questions together.

* National Learning Standards from the Center for Civic Education and the National Council of Teachers of English

8. Before the teacher conducts the remaining class polling, the final piece of the game is explained. Each student receives a total of \$1,000 in theoretical money to gamble against a theoretical house. Partners keeping them honest, students place bets before each of the ten remaining votes.

Example: Before the classroom tally on Alaskan oil drilling, students write the amount they wish to risk inside the table. If they are correct, they double the amount. If they are incorrect, they lose the amount they wagered. The same is done before the congressional vote is revealed.

9. After all classroom and congressional votes are revealed, the student with the most earnings is declared the winner.
10. First in their pairs, and then with the class, students debrief with the final set of discussion questions.
11. Students complete the final writing prompt in class or as homework.

Possible extensions: Students conduct research on other key congressional votes with the help of sites like <http://projects.washingtonpost.com> and <http://thomas.loc.gov>. With five-vote lists, students can create additional rounds of play.

TEACHER VOTING KEY

	YOUR VOTE	PREDICTION OF VOTE IN CLASS	PREDICTION OF VOTE IN CONGRESS	ACTUAL CLASS VOTE	ACTUAL VOTE IN CONGRESS
EXAMPLE On June 27, 2006, the Senate voted on <i>S.J.RES.12</i> , a bill to make the burning or desecration of the U.S. flag illegal.					NAY Defeated 66-34
VOTE ONE On March 16, 2005, the Senate voted on a bill to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.					YEA Passed 51-49
VOTE TWO On January 10, 2007, the House voted on <i>H.R.2</i> , a bill to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour.					YEA Passed 315-116, with 4 not voting
VOTE THREE On October 5, 2005, the Senate voted on <i>H.R.2863</i> , a bill to ban torture during the questioning of military prisoners.					YEA Agreed to 91-9, with 1 not voting
VOTE FOUR On May 25, 2006, the Senate voted on <i>S.2611</i> , a bill to tighten border security, and to establish an immigrant guest worker program.					YEA Passed 62-36 with 2 not voting
VOTE FIVE On September 28, 2006, the House voted on <i>H.R.5825</i> , a bill to support President Bush's warrantless electronic surveillance of suspected terrorist communication.					YEA Passed 232-191, with 9 not voting

THE ZERO GAME

CONGRESSIONAL VOTING PREDICTION

	YOUR VOTE	PREDICTION OF VOTE IN CLASS	PREDICTION OF VOTE IN CONGRESS	ACTUAL CLASS VOTE	ACTUAL VOTE IN CONGRESS
EXAMPLE On June 27, 2006, the Senate voted on <i>S.J.RES.12</i> , a bill to make the burning or desecration of the U.S. flag illegal.					
VOTE ONE On March 16, 2005, the Senate voted on a bill to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.				\$ _____	\$ _____
VOTE TWO On January 10, 2007, the House voted on <i>H.R.2</i> , a bill to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour.				\$ _____	\$ _____
VOTE THREE On October 5, 2005, the Senate voted on <i>H.R.2863</i> , a bill to ban torture during the questioning of military prisoners.				\$ _____	\$ _____
VOTE FOUR On May 25, 2006, the Senate voted on <i>S.2611</i> , a bill to tighten border security, and to establish an immigrant guest worker program.				\$ _____	\$ _____
VOTE FIVE On September 28, 2006, the House voted on <i>H.R.5825</i> , a bill to support President Bush's warrantless electronic surveillance of suspected terrorist communication.				\$ _____	\$ _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOLLOWING YOUR PREDICTIONS

Why did you choose to vote the way you did? Explain each of your votes.

Do you think your votes will differ from the class votes? Explain why.

Do you think the class's votes will differ from Congress's vote? Explain why.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOLLOWING ACTUAL VOTING

Were your predictions correct?

Which votes from your class and Congress surprised you? Why?

Which votes from your class and Congress didn't surprise you? Why?

WRITING EXTENSION

Select one of the six votes from above. On the back of this page, write one paragraph defending the vote you made, then a second paragraph arguing the opposite vote. Why is this useful?

LESSON TWO: LOBBYING THE REPRESENTATIVE

TWO-DAY LESSON

Objectives: Characters Barry Holcomb and Bud Pasternak provide students with a window into the work done by lobbyists on Capitol Hill. In this lesson, students will become familiar with the effects that lobbying can have on congressional voting. Also in this lesson, students will make and listen to arguments in the roles of representatives and Washington lobbyists.

Standards: NSS-C.9-12.2 – FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM – What is American political culture? NSS-C.9-12.3 – PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY – How does the American political system provide for choice and opportunities for participation? NL-ENG.K-12.2 – APPLYING LANGUAGE SKILLS – Students use spoken language to persuade. NL-ENG.K-12.5 – COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES – Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Procedure:

1. A student reads aloud the following paragraph from chapter two, page twelve.

In the world of Capitol Hill, there're two kinds of lobbyists: those who swoop in from the top and those who burrow in from below. If you swoop in from the top, it's because you have direct connections to the Members. If you burrow from below, it's because you're connected to staff – or in this case, because you went to the same college, celebrated your last two birthdays together, and tend to see each other out at least once a month.

2. After the teacher asks the class what they learned from THE ZERO GAME about the work that lobbyists do, it's explained that over the next two days, students will have the opportunity to work in the roles of Members of Congress and as lobbyists. Each day will focus on a separate fictitious vote.
3. The opening vote. The teacher reads aloud the scenario for day one, revealing it to be written on the blackboard, behind a lowered map or screen.

THE SENATE IS VOTING ON A BILL TO ALLOW ENERGY COMPANIES TO DRILL FOR OIL ON LAND SET ASIDE AS WILDLIFE PRESERVE.

4. Students are asked to imagine how they would vote on the bill if they were a senator or when it came to the floor. The students may ask the teacher to elaborate on the prompt, but at this point, students should not discuss their yea or nay opinion.

5. The class is split into six groups. Three of these groups take on the role of Senators. Three of the groups take on the role of lobbyists.
 - The Senators take a seat in the center of the classroom. On a blank sheet of paper, these students write an initial vote of ye or nay and then have ten minutes to explain in a paragraph about why they feel this way. This first vote is not final.
 - Simultaneously, the three lobbying groups each take a separate corner of the classroom. Each lobbyist team is assigned an interest group and is given a card with a set of corresponding talking points. While the Senators write, the lobbyists have a chance to meet quietly with their group to build arguments from their talking points.
 - Some teachers may choose to devote additional class time – extending the total lesson to three or four days – to conduct web-based research to help the Senate teams better define their opinions and help the lobbyists fine-tune their arguments.
6. Each Senate group is assigned to a lobbying center in one of the room's corners. Lobbyists have six minutes to talk to the Senators – to try to sway their vote.
7. When the time has passed, the lobbyists stay in place as the Senate groups rotate into a new center. Another six-minute session begins.
8. After the Senators have visited all three lobbying centers, all students return to their seats. At the bottom of their page, Senators record their final vote.
9. As students answer discussion questions in their teams, the teacher tallies and reports the voting.
10. Students answer discussion questions as a class.

Day two:

1. Repeat the exercise, switching the students' roles. Those who were lobbyists are now Senators. Those who were Senators are now lobbyists.
2. In place of the day one drilling vote, use instead the prompt from the day two talking points.

THE NATION'S SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPON BAN HAS EXPIRED, MAKING IT LEGAL TO SELL AND PURCHASE SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. THE SENATE IS VOTING ON A BILL TO PUT THE BAN BACK IN PLACE.

Conclusion and Reflection: As homework or an in-class writing assignment, students write to compare and contrast their experience as a lobbyist and as a representative.

Optional Local Government Extension:

1. Select a local issue affecting your community. Each student is assigned a role as a special or public interest in a direct democracy. Roles should be created dependant on the selected issue. Certain local exercises may benefit from including a mayor, a police representative, and local business owners.
2. In this exercise, regardless of roles assigned, each student gets to vote. Like the previous activity, a pre-vote is taken to poll the room's opinion on the issue.
3. Each student is given two minutes to address the council and lobby for their interest. Teachers may choose to add an additional day to the extension to allow students greater time to research the issue and to prepare their two minutes.
4. When all speeches are completed, students are given an additional ten minutes to mingle and lobby voters informally.
5. A final vote is taken.
6. As a class, students discuss which arguments they found most compelling and discuss which lobbying technique was more effective, lobbying casually or addressing the group.

Local Government Writing Activities:

- Students write to compare and contrast their experiences as a lobbyist for local and federal government.
- By writing letters to their local representatives about the issue, students have the opportunity to explain their own position and what they want the issue's outcome to be.

ISSUE: THE SENATE IS VOTING ON A BILL TO ALLOW ENERGY COMPANIES TO DRILL FOR OIL ON LAND SET ASIDE AS WILDLIFE PRESERVE.

LOBBYING GROUP ONE – BIG ENERGY

- Lobbying on behalf of a large energy companies, you want the bill to pass in order to have the money generated by drilling.
- Tell the Senators that in today's complex world, a variety of energy sources must be explored to meet the needs of Americans.
- Remind the Senators that 95% of American industry runs on oil energy.

WHAT ELSE CAN BUILD YOUR ARGUMENT?

LOBBYING GROUP TWO – UNION REPRESENTATIVES

- Lobbying on behalf of workers, you want the bill to pass so that more jobs exist.
- Tell the Senators about drastic national unemployment rates.
- Tell the Senators about the skilled workers who are trained and ready for this work.

WHAT ELSE CAN BUILD YOUR ARGUMENT?

LOBBYING GROUP THREE – ENVIRONMENTALISTS

- Lobbying on behalf of environmental groups and planet earth, you do not want this bill to pass.
- With your opponents, you argue about the earth's limited resources – resources that are being depleted so quickly that they will not exist for future generations.
- You tell your opponents about the irreversible damage being done to natural animal habitats – damage that could result in the endangerment and extinction of many animal species.

WHAT ELSE CAN BUILD YOUR ARGUMENT?

LOBBYING THE REPRESENTATIVE – DAY TWO TALKING POINTS

ISSUE: THE NATION’S SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPON BAN HAS EXPIRED, MAKING IT LEGAL TO SELL AND PURCHASE SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. THE SENATE IS VOTING ON A BILL TO PUT THE BAN BACK IN PLACE.

LOBBYING GROUP ONE – THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

- Lobbying for gun owners across America, you don’t want the bill to pass. The responsible gun owners of the NRA believe they have the right to buy semi-automatic weapons.
- Tell the Senators that law abiding U.S. citizens have the constitutional right to bear arms to be able to protect themselves and their families.
- Remind the Senators that hunting is popular recreation and necessary for animal population control, that this bill could be a first step toward banning all hunting rifles.

WHAT ELSE CAN BUILD YOUR ARGUMENT?

LOBBYING GROUP TWO – THE BRADY CENTER TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

- Lobbying for stronger gun control laws, you very much want the bill to pass.
- Convince the Senators that if this bill passes, a step is taken to lessen gun violence. Semi-automatic weapons are designed to maximize lethal effects through a rapid rate of fire. Remind the Senators about the lives lost to gun violence.
- Remind the Senators about the importance of keeping these guns out of the hands of young gang members. When the ban was in place, it reduced gang violence and the overall use of assault weapons in crimes.

WHAT ELSE CAN BUILD YOUR ARGUMENT?

LOBBYING GROUP THREE – THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF POLICE OFFICERS

- Lobbying for the safety of police officers, you want the bill to pass.
- Tell the Senators about the lives of police officers lost to these guns.
- Remind the Senators that in recent tragic mass shootings, these weapons made much higher death tolls possible.

WHAT ELSE CAN BUILD YOUR ARGUMENT?

LOBBYING THE REPRESENTATIVE – DISCUSSION QUESTION CARDS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR LOBBYIST TEAMS

- Do you think you were able to effectively change the way your classmates voted? Why or why not?
- What was your most effective argument? Why was it effective?
- What was your weakest argument? How could you have made it stronger?
- Is there anything other than arguing that you did to try to persuade the Senators? Did it work?
- If you were to participate in this activity again, what would you do differently in your role as a lobbyist?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS

- Did your vote change from the beginning to the end?
- Which of the lobbyist groups made the most compelling arguments? Was there a single point that tipped the scale?
- Which arguments had the least effect on your decision? Why?
- Is there anything other than arguing effectively that anyone did to try to persuade you? Did it work?
- If you were to participate in this activity again, what would you do differently in your role as a Senator?

LESSON THREE: APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE SIMULATION

Objectives: In this activity, students become familiar with the congressional appropriations process and negotiate and compromise in the role of a congressional staffer.

Standards: NSS-C.9-12.3 – PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY – How are power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited in the government established by the United States Constitution? NSS-C.9-12.1 – CIVIC LIFE, POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT – What purposes should government serve? NL-ENG.K-12.2 – APPLYING LANGUAGE SKILLS – Students use spoken language to persuade. NL-ENG.K-12.1 – READING FOR PERSPECTIVE – Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the culture of the United States.

Procedure:

1. The teacher distributes a handout with four selected passages from chapter two of THE ZERO GAME. After students take turns reading the passages aloud to the class, the teacher explains that the class will be participating in an appropriations simulation, very similar to what happens in the passages. Student recall additional prior appropriations knowledge from their reading of the book and the teacher answers any remaining questions about the appropriations process.
2. Students are divided into groups of four, resembling the conference just read about. (If the number of students in the room isn't divisible by four, a few students may pair up and share a role on a team.)
3. Each student receives a meeting agenda and one conference role card describing their job and their motivation – the goals they want to achieve – during the coming negotiation. It is essential that no student see any card but his or her own.
4. After students have read their individual card, each group follows the agenda for their meeting. The teams must work together to successfully divide \$28,000,000 among the programs listed – an amount that does not cover the total. Students should carefully record the results to best answer their final discussion questions.

Reflection and Conclusion:

5. At the meeting's conclusion, the group discusses the reflection questions listed at the bottom of their agenda.
6. As each group reports back to the class about how their individual meetings went, the teacher facilitates discussion comparing and contrasting the different outcomes, solutions, and compromises that can still result from the same agenda.

Writing Extension: Students write a diary entry in the role of the congressional staffer that they became during the exercise. Entries may include details about compromises they made during their conference, the high and low points of their meeting and day, and whether or not they think the appropriations work they do on Capitol Hill is valuable. The following day, students share their writing with their group of four.

THE ZERO GAME

APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE SIMULATION – SELECTED PASSAGES

It's one of the dirtiest little secrets on Capitol Hill: Congressmen can pass a bill, but if it needs funding, it's not going anywhere without an Appropriator. Case in point: Last year, the President signed a bill that allows free immunizations for low-income children. But unless Appropriations sets aside money to pay for the vaccines, the President may've gotten a great media event, but no one's getting a single shot. And that, as the old joke goes, is why there're actually three parties in Congress. Democrats, Republicans, and Appropriators.

* * *

Each armed with an oversized redwell accordion file, they quickly head to different sides of the table. Ezra on my side, Georgia next to Trish. All four horsemen are here. When it comes to Conference, I represent the House majority; Ezra does the House minority. Across the table, Trish and Georgia do the respective same for the Senate. And regardless of the fact that Ezra and I are in different political parties, even House Republicans and Democrats can set aside their differences for our common enemy: the Senate.

* * *

"Cape Cod," Ezra says. Like speed-readers in a race, all four of us flip through the hundred-page documents in front of us that show the spending difference between the House and Senate bills. Last month, when the House passed its version of the bill, we allocated seven hundred thousand dollars to rehabilitate the Cape Cod Seashore; a week later, the Senate passed its version, which didn't allocate a dime. That's the point of Conference: finding the differences and reaching compromise – item by item by item. When two bills are merged, they go back to the House and Senate for final passage. When both bodies pass the same bill, that's when it goes to the White House to be signed into law.

"I'll give you three hundred and fifty thousand," Trish offers, hoping I'll be satisfied by half."

"Done," I tell her, grinning to myself. If she'd pushed, I would've settled for an even two hundred.

* * *

In quiet rooms around the Capitol, the scene is the same. Forget the image of fat-cat Congressmen horse-trading in cigar-smoke-filled backrooms. This is how the sausage is made, and this is how America's bank account is actually spent: By four staffers sitting around a well-lit conference table without a Congressman in sight. Your tax dollars at work.

THE ZERO GAME

APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE SIMULATION – CONFERENCE AGENDA

As your team discusses its way through the following agenda, prepare to compromise and negotiate wisely. Take careful note of the information on your card to best assume the role you will be playing. Work together to finish up these park services appropriations.

As a team, you have **\$28,000,000** to spend on the following appropriations, not nearly enough to cover every request. On a separate page, carefully record the results of your compromises to be able to best answer the discussion questions that follow.

- I. The House passed a bill to give \$700,000 to rehabilitate the seashore in Cape Cod. In the Senate's version of the bill, Congress gives Cape Cod nothing. Compromise.
- II. The Senate has passed a bill to give \$6,000,000 to stabilize Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. In the House's version, Chesapeake Bay is given nothing. Find a solution.
- III. The House has passed a bill to give Yellowstone National Park \$7,000,000 for upkeep and additional forestry staff. The Senate mandated only \$2,000,000 for the park. Make it happen.
- IV. The Senate has passed a bill to give Ellis Island \$5,000,000 to repair its seawall. In the House's version, Ellis Island receives \$1,000,000 for the repairs. Compromise.
- V. The Senate has passed a bill to give \$4,000,000 to restore the steps of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. The bill approved in the House gives the Jefferson Memorial nothing. Find common ground.
- VI. The Senate has passed a bill to set aside \$18,000,000 for a structural upgrade for the bicycle trail and recreation area next to San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. The House intends to only give \$5,000,000. Find a solution.
- VII. The House has passed a bill to give the White House \$7,000,000 for structural improvements. In the Senate's version of the bill, the White House gets nothing. Find a compromise.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Do you think you left the negotiations having achieved your goals? Did you compromise well?

Do you think your team members effectively achieved their goals? Why?

Were there any moments where you lost? How could you have negotiated these moments differently?

Will your boss be pleased with your work?

Please note that the simulation is based on fictional appropriation examples from THE ZERO GAME.

APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE SIMULATION – CONFERENCE ROLE CARDS

HOUSE MAJORITY

- Your boss, a Congresswoman, has told you to fight hard for the appropriations money for Cape Cod and the White House.
- Your boss also wants you to fight against funding for Chesapeake Bay and the Jefferson Memorial.
- Feel free to help negotiate for your teammate working for the House minority. You're working for the same people.

HOUSE MINORITY

- Your boss, a Congressman, has told you to fight hard for the appropriations money for Yellowstone National Park.
- Your boss also wants you to fight against funding for Ellis Island and the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Feel free to help negotiate for your teammate working for the House majority. You're working for the same people.

SENATE MAJORITY

- Your boss, a Senator, has told you to fight hard for the appropriations money for Chesapeake Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Your boss also wants you to fight against funding for Cape Cod and the White House.
- Feel free to help negotiate for your teammate working for the Senate minority. You're working for the same people.

SENATE MINORITY

- Your boss, a Senator, has told you to fight hard for the appropriations money for Ellis Island and the Jefferson Memorial.
- Your boss also wants you to fight against any funding for Yellowstone National Park.
- Feel free to help negotiate for your teammate working for the Senate majority. You're working for the same people.

THE ZERO GAME

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- What was your favorite moment in the book? Why?
 - What is the most interesting thing that you learned while reading it?
 - Who was your favorite character? Why?
 - Who was the character you most loved to hate? Why?
-
- What do lobbyists do? Are they necessary? Do you think they help or hurt the democratic process?
 - How might a lobbyist's job differ at the federal, state, or local level?
 - Why are some organizations considered "public interest groups" and others considered "special interest groups?" What is the difference? Is there a positive or negative connotation attached to either?
-
- Even though a piece of legislation *authorizes* money to be spent for a particular purpose, unless the money is *appropriated* for that purpose, it will not be spent. How does the distinction between *authorization* and *appropriation* of money affect the legislative process?
 - Why do legislators often wish to sit on the appropriations committees at the federal and state level?
 - When the versions of a bill from the House of Representatives and the Senate differ, it creates the need for a conference committee, where the differences between the bills are resolved, item by item. How should an elected representative – and their staff – decide which parts of the legislation should end up in the final version of a bill?
 - Have you heard of Jack Abramoff? Do you know to what crimes he pled guilty? How do crimes like his affect our political system?
-
- Federal campaign law states that Members of Congress cannot make fundraising phone calls from their government office or a government phone. Where do they go? Why do you think this law was enacted?
 - Have you ever received phone calls or mailings asking for campaign contributions?
 - In the story, Senator Stevens uses the code words "Proud American" for people who donate \$10,000 or more. Why does he do this?

- In the story, four speakers greet the new pages. Two give warnings, one gives advice, and Harris gives them a challenge. He says the first rule of politics is “Don’t count even the smallest person out.” Do you believe this is true? In what areas other than politics is this true?
 - One kind favor from a stranger changed Viv’s life – Senator Kalo in the dentist’s chair, a proponent of the page program. Is there someone who has changed your life in this way?
 - Viv’s mother said, “Always stand up for yourself.” Through the story, Viv realized that this also applies to standing up for others who need help. Is there someone in your life who needs someone to stand up for them?
-
- Is there a “Harris” in your life?
 - What would you do faced with the possibility that you could kill Janos and save Harris? How would you have reacted if you were in Viv’s place.
 - Viv had to lie to help Harris. Is there a time when you needed to lie to help a friend? Was it worth it?
-
- What was most interesting to you about the coal mining sequence?
 - Why do characters refer to plutonium as the new gold?
 - What was most interesting to you about the sequence in the basement of the Capitol?

What does each of the following quotes mean? Which has the most significant meaning to you?

- “...the real problem is that government is boring.” – P.J. O’Rourke
- “I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees.” – Harris Sandler and Dr. Seuss
- “The best thing in life you can do is make the right enemies.” – Harris Sandler
- “Political vision has nothing to do with eyesight.” – Barry Holcomb
- “The only time you get hurt is when you forget it’s all a game.” – Bud Pasternak