The Presidential Nominating System: Answer Key and Guide to Responding

Matching Exercise

_ G _ 1. Voting representative to party nominating convention where the candidate for president is chosen; usually pledged to a particular candidate. A) Nomination

_ A _ 2. The official endorsement of a candidate by a party. B) National party convention

_ H _ 3. A party leader, such as an elected official, who is given seats at a nominating convention. C) Open primary

_ B _ 4. Held in the summer before the general election, this is where the candidate is chosen by the delegates selected during the primaries and caucuses and the party platform is adopted. D) Closed primary

_ F _ 5. When the greatest number of states hold primary elections. E) Frontloading

_ D _ 6. Open only to those registered as party members. F) Super Tuesday

_ I _ 7. A primary whereby candidates are allocated the same proportion of a state’s delegates as they received votes. G) Delegate

_ K _ 8. A meeting open to voters registered with each party where candidates are discussed and delegates are selected. H) Superdelegate

_ J _ 9. A primary whereby the candidate receiving the most votes in a state receives all of that state’s delegates. I) Proportional system

_ E _ 10. The phenomenon of states moving their primary or caucus dates forward to try to increase their influence in the nominating process. J) Winner-take-all system

_ C _ 11. Open to all, regardless of party affiliation. K) Caucus
Short-Answer Questions

1. Think about the process of nominating a party's candidate for president. How has this process changed over the last forty years? Why? What impact have these changes had on nominating conventions?

The reforms of the 1970s fundamentally changed the structure of the nominating system. Under the old system, the drama of choosing the party's candidate occurred at the convention, where party leaders who controlled blocs of delegates would broker the choice of nominee. Reform redirected the suspense of the nomination contest to the states, where presidential candidates sought support directly from voters in primaries and caucuses.

Today, the presidential nominees of the major parties are generally determined before the convention takes place. The prevalence of state primaries, the increased power of social media as a source of political news, and the trend of early presidential campaigning almost ensure that each party's candidates are selected prior to the nominating convention. Therefore, the conventions are no longer geared toward selecting nominees, but staged to celebrate candidates and attract media coverage.

2. The phenomenon of “frontloading” has had a significant impact on the presidential nominating system over the past several decades. What special importance does the primary schedule give to states with earlier primaries? To candidates who organize and fundraise early? To “outsider” candidates? How could frontloading lead to depressed voter turnout?

States that hold their primaries and caucuses early in the season (January/February) have greater influence in the nominating process, and hence over the selection of a presidential candidate, than states that hold their contests later (April/May).

The rapid succession of contests can enable well-funded and organized candidates to marshal the resources needed to effectively compete.

The short time-frame could create a situation in which an outsider or long shot is able to pull a surprise showing in one or two early contests, and then ride a wave of good press through the crush of primaries without receiving a thorough examination from media and voters.

A frontloaded schedule has the potential to depress voter participation in later contests if there is a perception that the nominee has already been determined.