# The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*

**1966 Western with Clint Eastwood*

American politics are as gripping as a Hollywood film. Full of scandal, intrigue, fighting, and featuring major roles from the stars of silver screen. Actors and directors and celebrities in general get involved in a variety of ways. Some just publicly back candidates, others appear at conventions, speak out in support of politicians and political parties, donate huge sums to campaigns or even become candidates or get elected. But do you really know what's going on and how the system works?

**Activity One** – With your partner, ask and answer the following questions to see what you know about American politics.

1. What is Obama's political party called?
2. What is the opposing political party called?
3. When are the next American elections?
4. Who is representing the each side?
5. Who is the vice president going to be on each side?
6. What are some of the main current issues in American politics?
7. Who are some of the most influential lobbies in American politics?
8. Where is the White House and who lives there?
9. Name the last five American presidents and their political parties.
10. What happened to JFK? What was his political party?

Activity Two – Let's discuss your answers.

**Activity Three** – **Regular and Irregular Past Participles**

When we are talking about the past, telling a story, talking about history, (the history of politics for example), we need to use a variety of past tenses.

- For the simple past, when an action is completed and not linked to the present we simply use the **past form of the verb**, which can be regular or irregular.
- For the present perfect, when an action is linked to the present, we use the **past participle** and an auxiliary verb because this is a compound tense.

*For both these tenses you will need to learn the irregular past forms and participles.*

For regular verbs, knowing the distinction between the simple past and past participle is unnecessary because both are identical. Check out these two sentences:

Everyone ***giggled*** as Chaplin walked on stage. ***giggled*** = simple past

The audience ***had giggled*** as Chaplin appeared on the screen but were now silent.

***had*** = auxiliary verb; ***giggled*** = past participle



When you choose an irregular verb for a sentence, however, the simple past and past participle are often different, so you must know the distinction. Here are two examples:

Obamas driver ***drove*** very fast towards the White House.

***drove*** = simple past

He ***might have driven*** slower if he wasn't late for a press conference.

***might***, ***have*** = auxiliary verbs; ***driven*** = past participle

In addition, past participles can function as **adjectives** and again you need to know the correct forms of irregular verbs.

The explanations ***given*** by Bush for starting the war in Irak were difficult to believe.

The Republicans ***stolen*** papers were exposed to the press.

The ***written*** report was submitted too late.

**So, all that to remind you, you have to learn the irregular verb table by heart!**

Let's see if you can find the correct answers to the quiz – in teams who can correctly change the verbs in capital letters into the past the fastest....

Before Kennedy BECOME(1)president he was already a well KNOW(2) politician and he KNOW(3) many influential people. His wife Jackie was a well KNOW(4) socialite and she FORGIVE (5) him for his infidelity even know she must have been HURT(6). She did not know what LAY(7) ahead of her when she agreed to marry him. Theirs is the story of true political stardom. Every time they DO(8) anything they READ(9) about it the next day in the papers and SEE(10) their faces on television every day. The day he got SHOOT(11) was a day people all over the world still remember. In fact many famous people have SING(12) songs or WRITE (13) books or films about this sad story.

We were all TEACH(14) to respect politicians but today it's a different story. On television debates in the last elections they really TEAR(15) each other apart and TELL(16) lies about each other and WEAVE (17) webs of lies to try to make their opponents unpopular. In the end they may have WIN(18) but they have also LOSE(19) the esteem of the population in the process. Furthermore the television and news journalists THRIVE(20) on the whole thing. The political scene has BECOME(21) a dangerous arena and even though some politicians always CLING(22) to the truth, others in the past have BEND(23) the truth more than a little and have DEAL(24) big blows to their campaigns by being exposed. All this has COST(25) a lot in terms of credibility and politics has now BECOME(26) a dirty game.

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. - | 6. - | 11. - | 16. - | 21. - |
| 2. - | 7. - | 12. - | 17. - | 22. - |
| 3. - | 8. - | 13. - | 18. - | 23. - |
| 4. - | 9. - | 14. - | 19. - | 24. - |
| 5. - | 10. - | 15. - | 20. - | |

Activity Four – Watch the first 15 minutes of this video presentation and answer the questions. Pre-read the questions so that you know what information to listen to. Remember you are NOT supposed to understand everything – just the main ideas:

http://fora.tv/2011/04/19/How_Movie_Stars_Shaped_American_Politics

## How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics

1. What questions are asked at the start of the presentation?
2. What have movie stars influenced for over a hundred years?
3. What did Marlon Brando say about influence?
4. Who has more influence in American politics, the Hollywood left or the Hollywood right?
5. How many different kinds of political activism have Hollywood activists engaged in?
6. What is visual politics?
7. Who started this new form of visual communication?
8. Who did he support and attack?
9. Who did he mock in his films?
10. Why did his films give people hope?
11. What did he expose?
12. When did audiences stop listening to him?
13. Who did studio heads give money to and why ?
14. Who pioneered the use of stardom for partisan ends?
15. What did he turn MGM into?
16. How did he please the leader or politician?
17. What affect did the photos have on people's political careers?
18. Who had a meeting with Hoover in Meyers beach house?
19. When was the power of Hollywood the clearest?
20. What was cinematic politics?



You could watch the rest of this film at home – it's very interesting and will help you to understand more about US politics.

Activity Five – With your partner; name the stars from this list that have played a role in American politics. Then pick one of them and explain to the class what their role in politics was, TELL THEIR STORY IN THE PAST TENSE.

- **Michael J. Fox**
- **Chevy Chase**
- **Clint Eastwood**
- **Steven Spielberg**
- **Jennifer Aniston**
- **Marilyn Monroe**
- **George Clooney**
- **Arnold Schwarzenegger**
- **Ronald Reagan**
- **Brad Pitt**
- **Kid Rock**
- **Hilary Duff**
- **Eva Longoria**
- **Jane Fonda**
- **Charlie Chaplin**
- **Pamela Anderson**



## Activity Six – **American Politics Explained**:

Each state elects a governor and politicians to sit in the Senate and House of Representatives - the two chambers of the legislature.

Federal power is divided into three separate branches of government - the president and his cabinet (the Executive), the two chambers of the US Congress (the Legislature) and the courts (Judiciary).

The United States holds elections every two years. Once every four years there is a presidential election, with congressional elections held at the same time.

Mid-term elections take place in-between presidential elections, in the middle of the presidential term.

Elections for the House of Representatives are held every two years. Senators have six-year terms, with one-third elected every two years.

State governors serve four-year terms with about half up for election every two years.

Voters also get to choose their party's candidate in the main election. Voters register which party they support, and can then participate in primary elections.

Primaries are sometimes quite close to the general election, and once they are over, candidates must turn quickly to the general election.

## Activity Seven – **Dirty Tricks Campaign**

With your partner invent a scandal and then 'breaking news' on CNN tell the story of a new outrage to 'rock' the political campaign of one of the following candidates. (Use the past tenses as much as you can).

1960 John F. Kennedy vs Richard Nixon

1964 Lyndon B. Johnson vs Barry Goldwater

1968 Richard Nixon vs Hubert Humphrey

1972 Richard Nixon vs George McGovern

1976 Jimmy Carter vs Gerald Ford

1980 Ronald Reagan vs Jimmy Carter

1984 Ronald Reagan vs Walter Mondale

1988 George H.W. Bush vs Michael Dukakis

1992 Bill Clinton vs George H.W. Bush

1996 Bill Clinton vs Bob Dole

2000 George W. Bush vs Al Gore

2004 George W. Bush vs John Kerry

2008 Barack Obama vs John McCain

