

# FANTASY POLITICS

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## LEVEL

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Low-Intermediate to Advanced

## LANGUAGE FOCUS

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Reading, writing (primary focus); speaking (secondary focus)

## GOALS

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Students will increase their reading and writing abilities through engagement with news articles and current events. Students will also practice speaking as they report their news stories in class.

## MATERIALS

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- Teacher: whiteboard/chalkboard, markers or chalk, world map, a timing device, a small box/hat/container for drawing numbers randomly.
- Students: pencils or pens, notebooks or writing paper.

## PREPARATION

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One way to incorporate world affairs into classroom practice is through classroom games centered on world news and current events.

This week's Teacher's Corner is about fantasy politics.\* In this game, students select countries to be on their team. Each week, students will need to check English language news websites or newspapers to find stories that feature their countries. Each time one of a student's countries is featured in the news, he/she receives points. At the end of each week, students will report their scores to the class. The student with the most points wins!

1. Read through all the materials carefully.
2. Hang a map of the world in the classroom, or bring a map to class each time fantasy politics is played.
3. This activity encourages students to pay attention to and read news stories. Prior to using the activity in class, it is recommended that you compile a list of possible sources to be used in the activity. For lower level students, the activity could be focused on a specific news website such as [Voice of America's Learning English](#).
4. In the game, students will be creating lists of countries that they will follow on the news. Decide how many countries you would like to make available to students. Make sure the number of countries is divisible by the number of students. For example, in a class of 10 students, you can offer a list of 60 countries or 5 per student or per team and 10 countries that are kept in reserve. These reserve countries will allow students to remove countries from their list and add new countries at the end of each week. This option (to remove/add teams) adds an element of strategy to the game and can allow poorly performing teams to make changes to their list.
5. For large classes, consider having students work in pairs or small groups. To encourage speaking and communication, having students work in pairs or small groups is recommended.

6. Create small slips of papers with letters on them. There should be enough slips of paper for the total number of players or teams that will play. These slips of paper will be used for a random drawing.
7. If possible, hang a large sheet of paper on the classroom wall. This sheet should list the students (or pairs/small groups) with their countries and the number of weeks in the game. For an example score sheet, see Appendix 1.
8. To prevent teams from being imbalanced, such as one team having many nations from the same region, create different rules. For example: teams are **not allowed** to have more than two nations from: Asia, Africa, Europe, North America and **must have** at least one country from: Oceania (e.g. Australia, Fiji, New Zealand) and South America.

\* The name *fantasy politics* comes from a popular hobby of sports fans in the United States. Each year, fans of American football will play *fantasy football*. At the beginning of the season (seasons are 15 weeks long), each player selects real American football players to be on their “fantasy team.” Then, fantasy football players watch the week’s football games and are awarded points based on how well their team members performed in real-life games. At the end of each week, players are allowed, and even encouraged, to make changes to their teams or trade with other fantasy football players to try and improve their team.

## PROCEDURES

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### Part 1 – Pre-Draft Day

1. Before draft day (the day the countries are selected), explain to students the idea of Fantasy Politics. This will provide them time to think about countries they may want to select.
2. Explain the point structure of the game to the students. For points, there are two options; decide which version of the game is best for your students.
  - a. **Basic Game** – In the basic game, each time a country is mentioned in the news players/teams are awarded two points.
    - i. To get these points, students must document where and when their countries were in the news; this requires they write down the newspaper/website name, the date, and the title of the news story.
  - b. **Advanced Game** – In the advanced game, players/teams are awarded three points each time their country is mentioned in a positive news story, such as a story about a scientific achievement or economic growth. If a player’s country is mentioned in a negative news story, such as involvement in conflict, they receive only one point.
  - c. **IMPORTANT** – Inform students that news stories are only worth points if they occur during the current week of the game. Old news stories cannot be counted. For example, if the game begins January 1<sup>st</sup> only news stories from January 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> are counted in the Week 1 scores. This ensures the students are reading current events.
3. Allow students the chance to form teams or place them into teams. Give them time to work as a team and decide which countries they may want to select.
4. Provide students with three or four days advanced notice so that they have time to begin checking news stories and thinking about which countries they would like on their team.

### Part 2 – Draft Day

5. Begin class looking at the world map and giving teams a few moments to consider the countries they may want to select.

6. To make the country selection process fair, assign each team a letter and add that letter on a slip of paper to a random drawing. Mix the slips of papers well and then select the slips of paper from the drawing. The team whose letter is drawn first will choose first in the round. The team whose letter is selected last will choose a team last in this round. Each team selects one country per round. To keep the selection process from taking too long, set a timer so each team has a limited time to decide which country to select.
7. Rounds will continue until a specific number of countries have been selected.
  - a. For example, if 5 teams are playing and each is allowed to select 5 countries, there will be five rounds of country selection for a total of 25 countries.
8. To make selection fair, the game uses a serpentine selection. In serpentine selection, the team that goes last in a round selects first the next round.
  - a. For example, in a random drawing, the teams are selected in the order of: B, D, A, C, E.
  - b. In round one, the order of selection is in that order of: B, D, A, C, E.
  - c. In round two, the order is reversed and teams select in the order of: E, C, A, D, B.

### **Part 3 – The Following Weeks**

9. Over the weeks that fantasy politics is played, teams are responsible for keeping up on the news that features the countries on their team.
10. Allocate time in class to review the points the teams earn each week. This should be done at the end of the week or as early as possible the following week so teams can make changes to their teams.
11. Student teams are encouraged to make trades with one another and change their countries if they wish. This adds an element of strategy to the game. If one team has a country frequently in the news, they could accept offers from other teams to trade. Other teams may need to be willing to trade more than one of their countries to get a country they really want!
12. One suggested option for the game is to keep a reserve of countries by having more countries than teams are allowed to initially select. For example, in a game of fantasy politics with 5 student teams who are allowed to select 5 countries (for a total of 25), it would be best to have at least 35 countries available. This way, if teams have countries on their list that are not in the news, they can drop that country and pick another from the reserve list. Be sure to warn students that just because a country is not in the news this week doesn't mean it won't be in the news the following week, so they must choose carefully!

### Appendix 1: Fantasy Politics Example Score Sheet

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Team Name	Countries on Team	Week 1 Score	Week 2 Score	Week 3 Score	Week 4 Score	Week 5 Score