



**English 204
Final Examination
Fall 2000-2001**

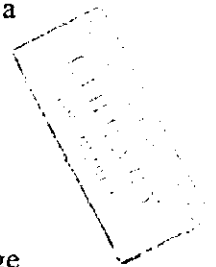
Directions: Passages A and B are both related to the extraordinary events that occurred during the recent American presidential election. Use the information in passage B to write a well-developed critique of passage A in 5-7 paragraphs. Try to also include general knowledge and/or any other ideas you may have on the topic.

Passage A:

Lessons From the Ordeal of Election 2000

by
James Zogby

1. As I crossed Pennsylvania Avenue on my way to the White House, I noticed a half-dozen construction trailers set up in Lafayette Park. They are there to prepare the site for the quadrennial presidential inauguration parade that will take place in just two months.
2. Even in these abnormal times, the presence of the construction crews is a sign of normality. We still do not know who the next president will be, but we know that we will have one.
3. Because this election has been so close, a magnifying glass has unfortunately exposed many of the flaws that are inherent in our all too human democracy. If the election day results had been more decisive, the transition would have been a smooth one. As it is, the world now knows that: vote-counting machines make errors; humans who count votes make errors; partisan politicians make partisan judgements.
4. At this point, Al Gore is still leading in the popular vote. He is ahead by over 300,000 votes—a mere three-tenths-of-one percent of the over 100 million total votes cast. Gore also leads in the total electoral votes decided—267 to 246 George W. Bush. However, as the US system is based on electoral votes, Florida's 25 electoral votes are needed by Gore or Bush to put them over the top.
5. With Bush unofficially leading in Florida by a mere 930 votes of the over six million votes cast, the Gore campaign is demanding their legal rights to recount in three counties where tests have shown that the voting machines, in fact, under-counted tens of thousands of votes.



6. Fearing that these under-counted votes may swing toward Gore, Bush's camp sought a court order to block a hand count. In a no less partisan move, Gore's team, fearing that late arriving absentee ballots might have added to Bush's total, made an effort to have them thrown out based on a technicality.
7. Both sides have repeatedly taken these and other issues to court—both state and federal—and more such legal actions are pending.
8. Of course, the matter could end quickly, if one or the other candidate were to decide to concede the election. That may still happen, but as I write on the day after the US holiday of Thanksgiving, it appears that both camps remain committed to exhaust the legal and political avenues still available to them.
9. Even if, as Florida Supreme Court has ruled, a final certification of Florida's vote should take place on Monday, Nov. 27, at 9am, it is not certain that the wrangling will end there. Since that decision, the Bush campaign has filed two different appeals to the US Supreme Court and separate suits in courts in 13 of Florida's 67 counties. Gore's campaign has also filed suits of their own to force counties that have stopped their recounts to restart them and have them completed before the Monday deadline.
10. If the Monday count goes against Bush, Republicans, who control both Florida's Senate and the House of Representatives, have discussed plans to overturn the verdict and name Bush the winner.
11. And so it continues. And so the nation waits and watches.
12. It may be ironic, but it appears that this post-election drama has attracted more public attention than the election itself. Several news networks have added special programs to cover the Florida developments; others have given themselves over to 24-hour coverage. In the process, the public has been given an in-depth education about election procedures and election laws.
13. This education and the national discussion it has generated may create pressure on the US Congress to review and reform federal election law when Congress reconvenes in January of 2001.
14. Several problems have been exposed that require attention. First and foremost, of course, will be pressure to end the "electoral college" system and replace it with an election by popular vote. There are also calls to create a uniform ballot and system of counting ballots in presidential contests.
15. Currently each state determines its own procedures and within each state rules may vary from county to county.

16. There will also be pressure for Congress to look at how the television networks cover the elections and to determine whether it is appropriate for them to announce outcomes, based on estimates, before actual voting has been completed.
17. Given the debacle of election 2000, there clearly is strong public support for reforms such as these to be enacted. Many members of Congress have announced that they will be introducing legislation when the new session begins. Nevertheless, cynics caution that there was the same public outrage with campaign finance abuse in 1996 and the same congressional resolve to reform the system in 1997. Partisan bickering, however, stood in the way of any agreement. The result was that the 2000 elections were the costliest in history. Estimates are that over \$3 billion were spent in the Presidential and Congressional races combined. That represents a dramatic increase over the \$2 billion spent in 1996.
18. In addition to this matter of election reform, there is also speculation as to how the next president will relate to Congress and vice versa. Public opinion polls show that the overwhelming majority is ready to accept either Bush or Gore and support their presidency. Contrary to what was assumed, the individual who emerges from this ordeal may be given more support than he would otherwise receive and precisely because the public will want to put closure on the divisiveness of the election. (Although it appears that Republican voters are more anti-Gore than Democratic voters are anti-Bush.)
19. It is not certain that the Congress will be so magnanimous. The wounds from the nightmare of impeachment are still fresh. They have only been exacerbated by this Florida recount battle.
20. However, there is a lesson in this election that, if learned, can prove helpful to the next president. Despite the deep philosophical divide that separates Republicans and Democrats on issues of governance and budget, most Americans, it appears, want domestic tranquility and continued prosperity. The closeness of this election, and the fact that 80 percent of the public would support the presidency of either of the two men as president, attests to the fact that, despite the vocal anger of a minority on each side, the majority wants less partisanship and more bipartisan partnership.

21. If the next president reaches out to the candidate he has defeated and to his opposing party and takes concrete steps to bring them into a partnership with his administration, the American people will respond enthusiastically. Going over the heads of those who may seek to replay this election and stoke the coals of bitterness could give the next president a surprisingly strong mandate and prove that the ordeal of election 2000, instead of weakening American democracy, made it stronger.

James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute in Washington, wrote this commentary for *The Daily Star*.

Monday, November 27, 2000

Passage B:

The Florida Debate: How Far Is Too Far?

by
Dan Balz

1. The legal and political collision course that brought the campaigns of Texas Governor George W. Bush and Vice-President Al Gore into federal district court in Florida on Saturday underscored the high-risk strategies both have adopted in attempting to win one of the most disputed presidential elections in American history.
2. Whether either Bush or Gore will be able to govern the country effectively once the election is resolved is an open question. More pressing is whether, given the deepening distrust between the two sides, there is an exit strategy for both candidates that will help to reassure the American people that the conflict of the campaign and its aftermath does not continue indefinitely into the next president's first term.
3. Until next Friday, when the last of the overseas absentee ballots must be counted in Florida, or a few days after that, resolution of the election is unlikely. That day now looms as potentially decisive, and whichever side pushes the conflict beyond that point runs an even greater risk of undermining confidence in the outcome.
4. There was talk within the Gore operation Saturday that the vice-president was considering an offer to forego legal action to challenge disputed ballots or voting procedures in Florida if the Bush campaign dropped its objection to the hand recounting process.
5. But Gore campaign chairman William Daley and former Secretary of State Warren Christopher made no such promise when they spoke with reporters on Saturday after meeting with the vice-president. For now, they made clear, they will hang tough in the face of Bush's legal challenge.
6. The arguments on both sides have been framed by statements from Christopher and another former secretary of state, James A. Baker, who heads the Bush team monitoring the situation in Florida.

7. On Friday, Baker warned of potentially irreparable harm from a protracted fight brought on by the hand-counting of ballots as was requested by the Gore campaign. "Let the country step back for a minute and pause and think about what's at stake here," he said. "This may be the last chance to do that. There is no reasonable end to this process if it slips away."
8. But Saturday, Christopher provided a different perspective, one grounded in the belief that as long as Gore is within his rights under Florida election law, there is no reason to hurry. "The importance of getting it right outweighs the importance of rushing to judgment," Christopher said. "When that balance will tip, I think none of us are able to say at the present time. But we're certainly at a very early stage in the process, and we certainly have not gone too far at the present time."
9. Neither side began this fight with a clear road map for resolving the question of who won, but both Gore and Bush advisers started out driven by the belief that their candidate was the popular choice of more voters who went to the polls in Florida on Tuesday. And the steps they have taken since then, risky and questionable at the same time, grew out of another shared conclusion: the only way to win the election was to do what they were doing.
10. As the Bush and Gore campaigns have developed their strategies, they have been operating with a distinctly different sense of the time frame. Bush has pushed from the beginning for a quick resolution, arguing that he won Florida both the first time the votes were counted, and won it again—albeit it narrowly—after a second canvassing of the state's 67 counties. "We think people think that counting twice is very reasonable," a Bush adviser said.
11. Gore's team, under pressure even from many Democrats not to threaten a prolonged fight for Florida's votes, has assumed that time is an ally and that until the last of the overseas absentee ballots are counted, there is no reason to yield to pressure from Bush's campaign to short-circuit the process, abandon the manual recounting that has begun in several counties on Saturday, or concede anything.
12. "Anything that gets us closer to the truth of the election before then is a good thing, not a bad thing," one Gore adviser said.
13. Both campaigns felt as if they survived near-death experiences on election night. Many in the Bush camp were despondent when the networks prematurely projected Florida in Gore's column early in the evening. The Gore forces were even more depressed when Florida appeared lost about six hours later.
14. Since then they have scrambled to learn the intricacies of Florida election law, draft teams of lawyers, deploy platoons of operatives, and warily monitor public opinion. A Newsweek poll showed that a sizeable majority of Americans say it is more important to have an accurate count in Florida than it is to impose a hasty deadline. But just over half said they oppose going beyond Friday.

15. A Time/CNN poll showed that a quarter of those surveyed said Gore should concede immediately, with another quarter saying he should concede if the official count in Florida goes against him. But about four in 10 said the vice-president should await any court challenges on disputed ballots in Florida.
16. Both campaigns have been subjected to conflicting pressures as they have debated how to proceed day by day. After criticizing the Gore campaign for raising the prospect of legal action, Bush's campaign actually took the first formal step into the courts on Saturday, a decision not taken lightly among Bush's legal and political advisers.
17. The action potentially robbed Bush of the high ground in the heated argument over whether the presidential election should be decided in the courts, and by going into federal court, the action undermined Bush's long-stated philosophical preference for the right of state and local government to operate without undue interference from the federal government.
18. But from the Bush campaign's perspective, there was no other choice.
19. Campaign spokesman Dan Bartlett said there were already eight pending lawsuits challenging Tuesday's vote filed by friends or allies of Gore and the Democrats. The Bush camp argues that the vice-president is hiding behind Floridians, while Bush and Cheney, whose names are on the injunction filed on Saturday, are being upfront about their actions.
20. Beyond that, the Bush team believed only a federal court could deal with the constitutional challenges, to what they regard as the potential capriciousness of Florida's hand-counting process.
21. They also believe that because Florida could set a precedent for other states where the outcome of the election is close and recounts are possible, federal action was preferable to state court action.
22. If they lose in federal court, however, it is not clear what Bush's next step will be.
23. They may be able to file for hand recounts in some counties favorable to Republicans, but the arguments they are making in their lawsuit would complicate a decision suddenly to embrace such a system.
24. At a minimum, their hope is to undermine the validity of any outcome reached through the process of manually counting the ballots.
25. The Gore campaign has struggled with pressures of its own, but at the heart of the vice-president's strategy is a determination to focus as much attention as possible on the details of the Florida count.

25. The Gore campaign has struggled with pressures of its own, but at the heart of the vice-president's strategy is a determination to focus as much attention as possible on the details of the Florida count.
26. "The basic bottom line is that the more scrutiny the vote in Florida has, the more likely we win," one Gore adviser said.
27. "That leads to the hand counting. As people get an eyeball look at this, they'll see the intent was to vote for Gore."
28. The campaign has also not ruled out embracing further legal action, particularly involving the Palm Beach vote, in part because no one in either campaign has any clear idea whether the hand counting will significantly change the current margin between the two candidates.

Dan Balz wrote this commentary for
The Washington Post.
Monday, November 13, 2000