The right to vote in this country has evolved from the privilege of the few to the right of all citizens aged eighteen or above, with few exceptions. Arbitrary reasons for not allowing people to vote, such as race or gender, have been eliminated. Yet ultimately it is still up to the States to determine how to administer elections in a lawful way. Study the cartoon below and answer the following questions.

"I'd like to vouch for my friends here... They're from my neighborhood!"

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What is the meaning of the words on the side of the table?
2. Who is in line? What is the significance of the characters?
3. What point is the cartoonist trying to make?
4. Forming an Opinion Every State—except Maine, Utah, and Vermont—denies prisoners the right to vote. Fifteen States keep former felons from voting after they have served their sentences, with ten of them imposing a lifetime voting ban on anyone convicted of a felony. Do you think prisoners or people who have served their sentences should have the right to vote?
Voter qualifications, such as literacy tests, were used for many years to disqualify African Americans from voting. The ability to read or write as a requirement to vote was finally eliminated by federal civil rights laws and court actions. Study the cartoon below and answer the following questions.

"By th' way, what's that big word?"

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What are the two people in the cartoon doing?
2. What period of history does this cartoon portray?
3. What is the irony of the caption?
4. Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment Literary tests were outlawed because they were used to eliminate African American voters, by giving them more difficult tests than those given to white voters. Would you favor the use of basic literacy tests if they were administered fairly?
The Framers of the Constitution believed that the electoral college was a compromise between holding a popular vote and allowing Congress to decide who would be President. One of the results of that compromise has been that the popular vote and the electoral vote do not always match. For example, in 1972, Republican candidate Richard Nixon won 61 percent of the popular vote, but carried 49 States, winning 520 of 538 electoral votes, or about 97 percent of the electoral votes. Study the cartoon below and answer the following questions.

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. Whose face is pictured in the cartoon?
2. What are the States shown meant to represent?
3. Which party is shown rooting for the candidate?
4. Which was the only State not carried by the winner?
5. Expressing Problems Clearly Would the electoral system be improved by eliminating the electoral college and relying solely on a popular vote?
The cartoon below was published in November 2004, shortly after the presidential election took place. The campaign between President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry, like many previous presidential campaigns, included both principled debates and personal attacks. The two candidates were closely matched and Bush won re-election by fewer than three percentage points. Study the cartoon below and answer the questions that follow.

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What metaphor does the cartoonist use for the presidential campaign?
2. What does the mud symbolize?
3. Is the cartoonist positive or negative about the election process? Explain.
4. Identifying Alternatives How might this cartoon have looked if John Kerry had won the 2004 election? How different would it be?