Introduction to Political Parties

What Are Political Parties?

Political parties are any organizations that seek to achieve political power by electing members to public office so that their political philosophies can be reflected in public policy. These organized groups of people with shared beliefs play a crucial role in democratic systems. Members of a political party work toward a common goal of promoting specific values, seeking to influence government policies, and gaining control of government positions.

Today, America is a multiparty system. Most people are familiar with the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, which are the two most powerful political parties in the U.S. However, other parties such as the Reform, Libertarian, Socialist, and Green parties are also active and can promote candidates in a presidential election.

Why Do We Have Political Parties?

Political parties play an important role in democratic societies. They provide a venue for diverse political views and ideologies to come together. Political parties also provide a way for people to be involved at the local, state, and national levels of government. Each political party devises a platform or a plan that outlines its views on specific issues such as education, healthcare, immigration, social justice, the environment, and the economy. Voters can consider a party's platform when casting their ballot. Political parties are successful at mobilizing public support through campaigns, outreach, and engagement. Their goal is to raise awareness about their platforms and encourage citizens to participate in the democratic process, especially through voting.

Explore the pros and cons of political parties. Place a ☆ star next to the example that you find most important.	
Advantages of Political Parties	**Disadvantages of Political Parties**
- Encourage public participation and civic engagement. - Support a system of checks and balances. - Keep citizens informed on issues. - Increase voter turnout.	- They can cause division among citizens. - They can create a logjam or gridlock where little to no legislation or government business gets done. - Powerful parties can shut out other perspectives or make it difficult for smaller parties to be heard. - They can be too influential or deliver biased information to supporters.