

A-Level Politics Bridging Work

Welcome to Politics at Presdales! We are very much looking forward to you joining us this September.

Politics is a subject that not only helps you to develop valuable academic skills but does so with content that enables you to be an informed and empowered citizen.

As it is a new subject for you all, we would like you to prepare for your A-Level by completing the following tasks as part of your bridging work:

1. Research
2. Study
3. Read or Listen
4. Journal
5. Reflect

All completed tasks must be ready to submit during your first politics lesson.



1 - Research: Who are they and what do they do? (complete either A or B)

- a) A **Member of Parliament (MP)** is the person elected by all those who live in a particular area (constituency) to represent their interests and concerns in the House of Commons. They do this by participating in debates, voting on new laws, asking a question of a government minister on behalf of their constituents or by supporting and highlighting particular campaigns which local people feel strongly about. They can also be part of the government (a minister), part of the official opposition (a shadow minister) or sit on one of the many committees that look at particular government departments or issues in more detail. Presdales is in the constituency of Hertford and Stortford and our local MP is Labour's Josh Dean.

Option A - Choose an MP (other than Keir Starmer, Kemi Badenoch, Nigel Farage or Josh Dean) **and create an A4 display about them.** You will need to include:

- Their background – upbringing, education, previous careers, outside activities etc
- Where they are MP for and which party they represent
- If they are a minister for the government, a shadow minister, or if they hold any other responsibilities in parliament (such as being part of a committee)
- Details of their key activities recently
- Any other interesting information (fun facts, scandal etc...)
- A summary of policies they have voted for & opposed e.g Remain or Leave?; climate change policies; LGBTQ+ rights; where they might have rebelled against their party etc.
- You could contact them and see how/if they reply and include this – it's really easy to do!

We will be making a display of these in the politics classroom (Mansion, P5) so we want them to be informative and for them to look great - **A4, portrait layout** please, with a **good colour picture of them, clear text and good visuals.**

Useful websites: www.parliament.uk, www.theyworkforyou.com, www.ukpolitical.info

b) A **pressure group** is an association or organisation that tries to further the interests of a specific section of society (such as the National Education Union - NEU - representing the interests of teachers), or to promote a particular cause (such as Amnesty International promoting the cause of human rights). Pressure groups do this by trying to influence the government, the public or both. They provide an alternative way for people to get involved in politics and get their voices heard in a democracy but are seen by some as harming democracy when they represent the interests of only a powerful few but exert high levels of influence. Pressure groups can take different forms, including charities, professional bodies and trade unions, and campaign groups to name just a few types.

Option B - Choose a pressure group that interests you and create an A4 display about them. You will need to include:

- Their main aims
- Methods they use to try and influence the government or the public (*such as protests, carrying out research, taking the government to court, social media campaigns etc*)
- Examples of major or noteworthy events / activities
- Examples of any key achievements (how and why have they been influential/ met their aims - and for an extra challenge, any reasons for failures)

As with your MP posters, we will be making a display of these in the politics classroom so we want them to be informative and for them to look great - **A4, portrait layout please, with a good colour picture of their logo and key activities, clear text and good visuals.**

2 - Study: Parliament and Government

a) Study the "[How the UK Parliament Works](#)" guide and complete the following tasks:

- Outline are the main features of the UK's parliamentary democracy
- Explain the difference between parliament and government
- As well as passing laws, parliament also performs the functions of 'scrutiny, accountability and representation' - Briefly explain which of these functions you think is the most important
- Briefly outline what happens in the main chambers of parliament
- Describe the main difference between a select committee and a legislative committee
- Read pages 8 and 9 about the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Identify 3 differences between them and give a reason for each.

b) Using the '[How government works](#)' website, complete the following tasks:

- Outline the role of the Prime Minister (PM) and the Cabinet
- Pick any 5 of the 22 cabinet ministers, state who the current post holder is, outline what department they are in charge of, and list the key responsibilities on the role (can be found by clicking the titles of each cabinet member once on the 'See who is in the Cabinet' link)
- Briefly outline what the civil service is and what its relationship is with the government

3 - Read or Listen

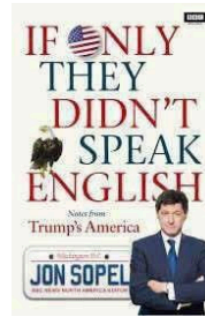
Choose between one of the following:

a) **EITHER read one of the following books:**

- *If Only They Didn't Speak English:*

Notes From Trump's America by John Sopel

- *Things Can Only Get Worse?* by John O'Farrell



Trump's America as experienced by the BBC's political editor



UK Politics 1997-2017 seen from a Labour point of view

It should be treated as 'light reading' i.e. not like a textbook full of facts. They are often telling 'stories' or anecdotes so try to read them like a novel on holiday, or dip in and out of different sections and you will get a sense of the political context of either the USA or the UK. You do not need to make specific notes but should be prepared to share some key things that you have learnt/ insights that it has given you.

b) **OR listen to at least two episodes of one of the following podcasts:**

- Political Thinking With Nick Robinson
- The Rest Is Politics
- Americast

You can look through the episodes and pick one that appeals to you (although if you are choosing 'The Rest is Politics' or 'Americast', try to pick a more recent episode and one in which they discuss UK or US politics, rather than mainly global politics). As with the book, you do not need to make specific notes but should be prepared to share some key things that you have learnt/ insights that it has given you.

4 - Journal

Keeping up to date with political goings on and current affairs is essential for success in Politics A-Level. You will be required to complete a weekly news journal where you summarise a key political news story each week and briefly outline how it links to our course. To get you started, you must **follow a political news story over the course of the summer and in 200-400 words:**

- **Summarise** what it is all about and take note of any key changes / developments
- **Explain** why it is/ was politically important

5 - Reflect - Political Spectrum

The political spectrum is a way of mapping different political beliefs on a line and acts as a shorthand to help us see where people, political parties, and ideas stand in relation to one another. The political spectrum is a scale with two opposite ends - 'the left' and 'the right'. Traditionally, the left and the right have been categorised in the following way:

The Left	The Right
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus on reducing inequality and promoting 'social justice'● The government should actively intervene in the economy (e.g., funding healthcare and education) to reduce inequality● Support higher taxes on the rich, welfare for the poor, and government regulation (control) of business.● Embraces social change and progressive ideas in an attempt to have a fairer, improved society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Individual responsibility and tradition● Smaller government with less intervention - support lower taxes, and less business regulation, and believe that private sector competition leads to better services so less government investment in public goods and services● Values tradition and preserving stable institutions● Traditionally 'tougher' approach to law and order and migration

Why is it Useful?

- Politics involves many complicated issues and the spectrum acts as a shortcut to help us understand a party's or a person's general worldview quickly - *If you know a party is on the "left," you can usually guess they will support higher public spending. If they are on the "right," they will likely support lowering taxes.*

How is it Limited?

- Too simplistic? A single straight line cannot capture the full picture. For example, someone might be "Left-wing" on economic issues (wanting free healthcare) but "Right-wing" on social issues (wanting strict immigration controls). Many argue that a political 'compass' with another axis is more useful instead

Task - VoteCompass - <https://votecompass.uk/>

- a) Take the survey to see where you land on the political spectrum and see how your views align with those of the political parties (based on their 2024 election manifestos)
- b) Once you have your results, take notes and briefly explain your answer to the following questions:
 - i) Are your results what you expected them to be on the spectrum/compass?
 - ii) Would you have considered yourself a potential voter for the party(ies) you had most in common with? Are there any surprises in your % support for each party?
 - iii) *Optional challenge* - where are the political parties today? Have any moved on the spectrum since the 2024 general election?