

BARACK OBAMA (1961 –)



Barack Hussein Obama is America's 44th President. He was born on August 4th, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii, to Ann Dunham, a white American from Kansas, and Barack Obama, Sr., who was from Kenya. Barack was the only child born to his parents, who married on February 2, 1961, and divorced in 1964, but he has seven half-siblings from his father's family, and one half-sister with whom he was raised, the daughter of his mother and her second husband.

As a child, Barack moved from Hawaii to Indonesia, when his mother's Indonesian second husband had to return in 1967. Barack attended school there, but returned to Hawaii when he was ten years old, where his grandparents raised him. He graduated from high school, where he was said to be mature for his age, in 1979. He first attended Occidental College in Los Angeles, before transferring to Columbia University in New York City. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in political science in 1983.

He worked for four years in New York. He then moved to Chicago, where he worked as a community organizer, doing things such as helping people find jobs or prepare for college, before entering Harvard Law School in 1988. In his second year at Harvard, he was elected President of the *Harvard Law Review*. He graduated from Harvard in 1991 with a Juris Doctor degree, and returned to Chicago. Obama organized a successful voter registration drive in Illinois in 1992. He published his first book of memoirs, *Dreams from My Father*, in 1995. He taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School for 12 years. He also worked at a law firm and as a community organizer.

Obama was elected to the Illinois state Senate in 1996. He served there until 2004, working to reform ethics and health-care laws; achieve tax credits for low-income workers; negotiate welfare reform; and promote increased subsidies for childcare. He worked to change unfair lending practices, and was praised by police organizations for police reforms he initiated. He was elected to the US Senate in 2004, making him the fifth African-American senator in history.

Barack Obama ran for President in the 2008 campaign. His running mate was Senator Joe Biden from Delaware. His main opponent was Senator John McCain from Arizona. Obama, an eloquent and inspiring orator, communicated a message of change and hope during his campaign. On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama won the election. He was inaugurated on January 20th, 2009, on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. and became America's first African-American President.

Name _____ Date _____

Choose the best answer for each question about BARACK OBAMA

1. Which of the following would be a good title for this text?
 - a. Barack Obama, Our 44th President
 - b. Barack Obama, Bi-Cultural Child
 - c. Barack Obama, Community Organizer
 - d. Barack Obama, African-American Politician

2. Obama spent a few years of his childhood in which foreign country?
 - a. Kenya
 - b. Indonesia
 - c. Hawaii
 - d. all of these

3. Obama was elected President of the *Harvard Law Review* at which university?
 - a. Columbia University
 - b. University of Chicago
 - c. Harvard University
 - d. Occidental College

4. Obama taught constitutional law at which university?
 - a. Columbia University
 - b. University of Chicago
 - c. Harvard University
 - d. Occidental College

5. What was Obama's first political office?
 - a. Chicago political organizer
 - b. Illinois State Senator
 - c. United States Senator from Illinois
 - d. President of the United States

6. What is Obama's speaking style?
 - a. dry and wooden
 - b. meandering and fanciful
 - c. articulate and inspirational
 - d. cold and ironic

Name _____ Date _____

Answer these questions about BARACK OBAMA in complete sentences.

1. Why did Obama move to Indonesia when he was a child?

2. What are the nationalities of Obama's half-siblings?

3. Why do you think Obama worked as a community organizer?

4. Was Obama the first African-American elected to the Senate?

5. What were the main messages of Obama's 2008 presidential campaign?

ANSWERS to BARACK OBAMA

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. a
2. b
3. c
4. b
5. b
6. c

SHORT ANSWER

(answers will vary; accept reasonable responses that include the following ideas)

1. His Indonesian step-father had to return.
2. Kenyan and Indonesian
3. He wanted to improve life for the needy.
4. No, he was the fifth.
5. Change and hope

ESSAY

Answers will vary.