

LOSING IS DEMOCRATIC



The Fina Mendoza Mysteries Podcast

ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

STORY SYNOPSIS

Story Synopsis:

Ten-year-old Fina Mendoza and her fourth grade class lose a reading competition to the fifth grade. And yet, the promised first prize of pizza is delivered to the homes of the entire fourth grade. Fina is in Zoom class when the U.S. Capitol is attacked. Fina's congressman father is inside, voting to certify the election, but returns home to assure his family that he is all right. He returns to vote, an act of democracy in action. Fina decides to solve the pizza mystery. Her class discusses the violence on Capitol Hill, examining the importance of losing in both baseball and politics.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What's the contest between the 4th and 5th grade? (who can read the most pages)
2. What's the prize? (pizza)
3. Who is Senator Something? (dog)
4. What is Fina's father doing at the Capitol? (voting to certify the election)
1. What instrument does Fina's sister Gabby play? (clarinet)
2. How does Fina track down the person who stole the pizzas? (social media)

VOCABULARY

- **inauguration** (noun) – the ceremony where the new president officially takes office
- **carnitas** (noun) – a Mexican pork dish
- **vote certification** (noun) – the last step in a presidential election, when each state sends its official paperwork to Washington and Congress verifies that the results are correct
- **Kornacki** (person) – Steve Kornacki is a political journalist famous for his electronic vote counting graphics
- **electoral college** (noun) – the 538 people who actually elect a president. Each state has the same number of electors as it does members of Congress. It takes 270 electoral votes to win.
- **constitutional amendment** (noun) – the way the U.S. Constitution can be changed. It takes either a two-thirds majority vote in Congress or a constitutional convention called for by two-thirds of state legislatures.
- **Confederate flag** (noun) – the red flag with a blue X and white stars flown by states that broke apart from the United States. Today it is a symbol of racism.
- **gracias a Dios** (Spanish phrase) – thank God
- **rosaries** (noun) – a Catholic prayer tradition using a string of beads
- **House chamber** (noun) – the large room where the House of Representatives casts votes
- **democracy** (noun) – a form of government in which the people have the authority to choose the people who govern them
- **Rotunda** (noun) – the round room in the middle of the U.S. Capitol, topped by a dome
- **House of Representatives** (noun) – the 535 women and men who represent us in Congress. The other governing body is the Senate.
- **French Revolution** (historic event) – the violent event that ended the rule of kings and queens in France in the late 1700's.
- **rivals** (noun) – people who compete
- **reimburse** (verb) – to repay a sum of money
- **reputation** (noun) – the opinions and beliefs someone has about someone or something
- **tarnished** (verb) – dirtied

LISTENING GUIDE

Activate Student Knowledge:

What students need to understand before listening.

BEFORE LISTENING:

Begin the lesson by asking students to share what they know about the election process in America. Some questions to guide discussion:

1. Who gets to vote in an election?
2. What's the electoral college?
3. What's the role of Congress in an election for president?
4. What happened on January 6, 2021 at the U.S. Capitol?
5. Why did it happen?

Preview the vocabulary by reading aloud the terms and their definitions. How do the political terms fit in with what students know about elections?

INTRODUCE THE STORY

Say to students: In this episode, Fina and her fourth grade classmates are competing in a reading competition with fifth graders. The prize is free pizza. But somehow, the pizza goes to the losers. Fina must find out how. Meanwhile, Fina's congressman father is voting to certify the election when the U.S. Capitol comes under attack.

AFTER LISTENING

Reflect on the story:

Ask students to respond to the listening comprehension questions and share their responses with a partner, small group, or the whole class. Take time for student reflection on the audio story. Use the discussion questions to let students discuss their own understanding of the events of January 6, 2021, the importance of losing, and appropriate punishment for doing wrong.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think people attacked the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021?
2. Is losing important? Why?
3. In the podcast, losing is important in baseball and politics. Where else?
4. Did Mason receive the appropriate punishment? Why or why not? What would be appropriate?
5. In the podcast, the kids use letter writing as a way to apologize. Are there other ways?

EXTERNAL MATERIALS

FOR CHILDREN:

- Podcast: *The Fina Mendoza Mysteries* - 8 part episodic series
- News story: Chaos at the U.S. Capitol - Scholastic News
<https://sn56.scholastic.com/pages/news/2020-21/chaos-at-the-us-capitol.html>
- National Archives: What is the Electoral College?
<https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>
- National Archives: Peaceful Transition of Power:
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2000/winter/inaugurations>
- Newspaper Column: In Politics, As In Sports, If The Final Score Isn't Accepted, The Whole Game Is Lost - Tom Boswell, *The Washington Post*
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2020/12/04/sports-elections-cheating-world-series/>

FOR TEACHERS/PARENTS:

- NPR news story: How To Talk To Kids About The Riots At The U.S. Capitol
<https://www.npr.org/sections/insurrection-at-the-capitol/2021/01/07/954415771/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-the-riots-at-the-u-s-capitol>

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

- *Welcome to Washington Fina Mendoza* - Kitty Felde
- *Teacher's Guide to Welcome to Washington Fina Mendoza* - Kitty Felde