

## *Profiles in Courage*

Prior to being elected president, John F. Kennedy served as a U.S. senator from the state of Massachusetts. In the following excerpt from his 1955 Pulitzer Prize winning book *Profiles in Courage*, Kennedy discusses the many interests that a senator must balance.

The primary responsibility of a Senator, most people assume, is to represent the views of his state. Ours is a Federal system—a Union of relatively sovereign states whose needs differ greatly—and my Constitutional obligations as Senator would thus appear to require me to represent the interests of my state. Who will speak for Massachusetts if her own Senators do not? Her rights and even her identity become submerged. Her equal representation in Congress is lost. Her aspirations [goals], however much they may from time to time be in the minority, are denied that equal opportunity to be heard. . . .

Any Senator need not look very long to realize that his colleagues are representing *their* local interests. And if such interests are ever to be abandoned in favor of the national good, let the constituents—not the Senator—decide when and to what extent. . . .

But . . . we have not yet told the full story. For in Washington we are “United States Senators” and members of the Senate of the United States as well as Senators from Massachusetts and Texas. Our oath of office is administered by the Vice President, not by the Governors of our respective states; and we come to Washington . . . as members of the deliberative assembly [assembly whose role it is to make decisions] of one nation with one interest. Of course, we should not ignore the needs of our area—nor could we easily as products of that area—but none could be found to look out for the

national interest if local interests wholly dominated the role of each of us.

There are other obligations in addition to those of state and region. . . . We believe in this country in the principle of party responsibility, and we recognize the importance of adhering to party platforms. . . .

But when party and officeholder differ as to how the national interest is to be served, we must place first the responsibility we owe not to our party or even to our constituents but to our individual consciences.

But it is a little easier to dismiss one’s obligations to local interests and party ties than to face squarely the problem of one’s responsibility to the will of his constituents. A Senator who avoids this responsibility would appear to be accountable to no one, and the basic safeguards of our democratic system would thus have vanished. . . .

In short, . . . if I am to be properly responsive to the will of my constituents, it is my duty to place their principles, not mine, above all else. This . . . is the essence of democracy, faith in the wisdom of the people and their views. To be sure, the people will make mistakes—they will get no better government than they deserve—but that is far better than the representative of the people arrogating [taking without authorization] for himself the right to say he knows better than they what is good for them. Is he not chosen, the argument closes, to vote as they would vote were they in his place?

### Thinking Critical I y

1. According to Kennedy, to what entities is a senator responsible?
2. In what situations should a senator go against local interests?
3. Why is a senator’s primary responsibility to the constituents?

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tion, and restrictions on the rights and liberties of the people.

## READING 60

1. Economic motives have more of an impact because they extend over a larger part of everyday life—for example, daily activities in the workplace, interaction with fellow workers, and so on.
2. Marshall states that economics has not attracted the world's great thinkers because such people generally are not concerned with the study of wealth.
3. Answers will vary but students should comment on whether or not they agree with the importance of economic motives on people.

## READING 61

1. Ford decided that the big money was in mass production, quick turnover, and easily interchangeable parts.
2. Ford was having trouble keeping men employed at his factory. He remedied it by paying higher wages and providing incentives to stay with the company.
3. Ford's policies would be considered discriminatory in today's workplace. He would have to hire women, and he would be unable to hire people based on their marital status or personal appearance.

## READING 62

1. People panicked and sold stocks at record levels; had they not panicked, the stocks may have risen naturally.
2. Tuesday was the most devastating day because banks could no longer prevent the losses. They had managed to ward off the financial crisis for several days, but, as people rushed to withdraw their savings, banks were forced to close because they simply did not have the capital to cover the mass amount of trading.
3. The significance of Wall Street being busy is that many people had a lot of cash because they had just sold their stocks. The booming business of Wall Street businesses demonstrates that people were attempting to cling to the economic prosperity of the previous decade, ignoring the fact that the economic infrastructure of the United States would crumble.

## READING 63

1. The employment agencies were charging men to find them jobs and then sending them to jobs for which they were not qualified. Men would thus have to

come back to the agency and pay to receive another job.

2. Monroe was not offered more assistance at the institution because he was not a released prisoner and thus the state was not obligated to help him.
3. The Great Depression was emotionally devastating because hardworking Americans were forced into poverty and desperation and could find no way out of their predicament.

## READING 64

1. Consumers are price conscious because they are poor in relation to the extent of their wants and thus are constantly trying to balance their wants with their financial means of achieving them.
2. Retailers are better able to lower prices because they are more efficient, they are more knowledgeable in assessing quality, they are able to search greater possibilities for less expensive supplies, and they can purchase larger quantities from manufacturers and thus can force producers to make improvements.
3. It would probably be more economical to shop at a large chain store because they purchase greater quantities and have more sources from which to buy their goods. Thus they can offer products at lower prices to the consumer.

## READING 65

1. Statehood would provide Alaskans with the rights of U.S. citizenship, opportunity for economic development, and financial assistance for social welfare programs such as medical treatment and education.
2. Gruening notes that the immense territory and vast terrain of Alaska would be instrumental for defense and, by granting Alaska statehood, Congress would have members familiar with the territory. He also makes the argument that the Alaskan people are the type of Americans who will help the country prosper.
3. Answers will vary but students should explain why they found the argument convincing.

## READING 66

1. Senators are responsible to constituents, the good of the United States as a whole, personal conscience, and party loyalty.
2. A senator would go against local interests when the benefits to the nation as a whole outweighed the benefits to his or her constituents alone.
3. A senator's primary responsibility is to the constituents because promoting the wishes of the people is the "essence of democracy."