



# Mitt Romney, Politician

## Family Ties

### Lesson Introduction

**Interview Log:** Interviewed on August 30, 2023 by Mark Salter

- Access *The Thread* episode of Mitt Romney on our [YouTube channel](#) or at [LifeStories.org](#) and download the transcript [here](#)
- Access his long-form interview on [LifeStories.org](#) and download the transcript [here](#)

### Learning Objectives

#### Social Studies Focus

- Gain insights on serving in elected office as a Governor, Presidential candidate, and Senator
- Explore the role of public service as a civic value and virtue
- Connect one life story to the larger story of American democracy in practice

#### English Language Arts Focus

- Inspire students to tell their own coming-of-age stories
- Examine perspective taking from the point of view of one politician
- Explore the idea of purposeful work and a meaningful life
- Use Mitt Romney's episode as evidence to write a rhetorical argument, commentary, or synthesis essay

### Episode Overview

Mitt Romney discusses his childhood, the values instilled by his parents, and the influence of his father, George Romney, a governor and cabinet member. He highlights his experience in the private sector and his political career as Governor of Massachusetts, Presidential candidate, and Senator from Utah. Romney emphasizes the importance of family, faith, and personal values – not career success – for a meaningful life.

### Biography

Born Willard Mitt Romney on March 12, 1947, in Detroit and raised in the nearby suburb of Bloomfield Hills, Mitt Romney is the son of George Romney, who served as Michigan governor in the 1960s. Mitt received his undergraduate degree from Brigham Young University in 1971 and then attended Harvard Law School and Harvard Business School, earning both a law degree and an MBA in 1975. He worked for the management consulting firm Bain & Company before founding the investment firm Bain Capital in 1984. A decade later, he ran for a seat in the U.S. Senate in Massachusetts but was defeated by longtime incumbent Ted Kennedy. Romney married Ann Lois Davies in 1969; they have five sons.

Romney stepped into the national spotlight in 1999, when he took over as president of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, helping to rescue the 2002 Winter Olympic Games from financial and ethical woes. He helmed the successful Salt Lake City games in 2002. Romney was elected governor of Massachusetts in 2003, and in 2008 ran for the Republican nomination for president, but lost to Senator John McCain. He was successful in the primaries four years later, but lost to incumbent Barack Obama in a close general election. He was elected senator in Utah in 2018.



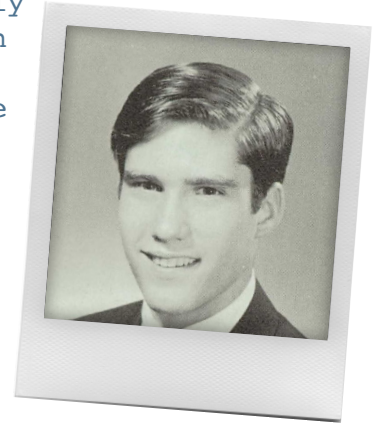
## Teaching Tip: **First Take**

A **First Take** is a warm-up writing or conversation exercise created uniquely for *The Thread* that strengthens media literacy skills. Like an opening song in a musical, the first stanza of a poem, or even the first impression one person makes on another, the First Take asks students to reflect and share their initial thoughts and feelings about the episode's opening.

### Suggested Steps

- ▣ **Read** the opening of Mitt Romney's episode aloud to students:

"Winning and losing an election – that really doesn't define who I am. My relationship with my family, my wife, my God –that defines who I am. And so losing is not as hard as people might expect in a circumstance like that. Again, in politics, you don't control the outcome necessarily. Things happen that you wouldn't have expected. But if you define yourself by how much money you make or whether you get promoted or whether you win an election, you're bound to be disappointed."



- ▣ **Ask and Discuss:** What do you learn about Mitt Romney from these opening sentences? What insights can you infer?
- ▣ **Next,** have students do a one-minute quick write reflecting on what he shared or have students get into pairs and share their thoughts and feelings.
- ▣ **Last,** as a class discuss the reasons they think the filmmakers choose this opening for the episode?



**Photos:** Mitt Romney in the 1965 edition of the Brook yearbook produced by Cranbrook School. (Ancestry.com Cranbrook School) top; Mitt Romney and family portrait with all of his kids and grandkids. (Mitt Romney for US Senator from Utah) lower



## Teaching Tip:

# THE THREAD Up Close

After watching the interview, have students debrief his life story with these suggested questions:

- Mitt Romney's episode is titled "Family Ties." How do you interpret this after watching his life story?
- In what ways do you connect to his life story?
- What was something new or surprising that you learned about Mitt Romney from this episode?

After discussing, have students return to *The Thread* episode and engage them in a close read and analysis of his interview using the video and transcript. Depending on the lesson, question, or theme you are aligning *The Thread* with, have students annotate the transcript, select passages that reflect the assignment, and explain their reasoning in class.

Here is an example of *A Thread* connection: In exploring the possibilities of bipartisanship, students could look at this passage from Mitt Romney as an example of its potential: (Note: This excerpt has been edited for clarity and brevity.)

"Lisa Murkowski invited me to a dinner at her home during COVID. We had takeout food and we sat in her living room. There were eight or ten of us, half Republicans, half Democrats. We began talking about a COVID relief package because the President and the Speaker of the House were at loggerheads. We came up with what we thought was the right idea and got our colleagues to accept a pretty similar proposal that got passed. And this group of five Democrats, five Republicans, kept on meeting and we were able to take on infrastructure, we looked at gun legislation, religious liberty, the Electoral Count Act, one thing after the other. Even though this little group was outside the committee structure, not subject to the committee chairs being able to move legislation or to negotiate, we were instead this group on our own who took on and got bills passed. That doesn't happen very often. A couple of the Senators, I think it was Senator Susan Collins of Maine, said, 'Look at all my years in the Senate. I've never had so much fun and I think it made a difference for the country.' I sure hope so."



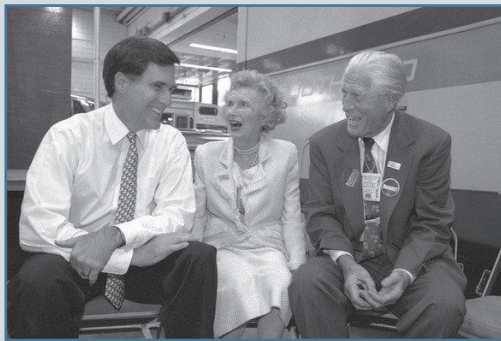
**Photos:** Republican Presidential hopeful former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and his wife Ann address supporters at a campaign stop in West Des Moines Iowa on Jan 3 2008. (Alamy) *left*; Mitt Romney greets family at the conclusion of the 2012 Republican National Convention at the Tampa Bay Times Forum in Tampa. Thursday, Aug 29, 2012. (Alamy) *right*





### Connections

- ▣ How would you describe the influence of Mitt Romney’s parents in his life and choice of career?
- ▣ What character traits would you use to describe Romney?
- ▣ Reflecting on the difficult political decision he made to vote to impeach Donald Trump in his first impeachment trial, Romney recalled that his parents – who had to put their personal beliefs above what was in their self interest – remained his guiding stars throughout his life, as pillars of integrity.
  - What people in your life are your guiding stars?
  - What qualities in them do you admire and seek to emulate?
- ▣ What new insights did you gain about (yourself, your community, your world) from Mitt Romney’s life story?



### Activity: Family Ties

Mitt Romney candidly explained that what defines him is his faith, his family, and his relationship with God. His definition may have been surprising considering his success in the private sector and his very public roles as a Governor, Presidential candidate, and Senator.

With Romney’s clear articulation of his priorities and definition of success in mind discussed in his episode:

- ▣ Take a few minutes to finish this writing prompt: Success to me means ....
- ▣ In small groups share your definitions with one another and discuss the similarities and differences that surfaced. Come to a consensus on a definition and choose a member of your group to share the definition with the class.
- ▣ Debrief after everyone has shared and reflect on the commonalities and the differences.



### Additional Resources

- ▣ See [Romney: A Reckoning](#) - official publishers page
- ▣ [Senator Mitt Romney](#) - official site
- ▣ With the importance of family emphasized in his episode, learn more about Mitt Romney’s heritage and family history from this BBC report [here](#).

Photos: Mitt Romney at 1994 Republican State Convention with his parents Lenore Romney and George W Romney at Springfield, MA Civic Center. May 14, 1994. (Staff photo by Michael S. Gordon) left; George M Romney participating in Civil Rights March in Detroit suburbs in the 1960s. (Mitt Romney Instagram) right