

Primary Questions

As the dust settles in a two-man Republican race, the question now is: Does Bush have the brains, McCain the temperament to be President?

By NANCY GIBBS

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES ONCE FAMOUSLY described Franklin Roosevelt as a man possessed of a second-rate intellect but a first-rate temperament. In the years since, America has elected brilliant men and charming ones, wonks, rogues, rascals, a general, an actor, a nuclear engineer, in a rolling judgment about knowledge and wisdom, instinct and style. At times it seems that the murkier the issues, the sharper the matter of character becomes.

This year's Democratic race was a two-man show from the start (*see following story*), but on the Republican side, it took more time, five drop-outs, some stumbles and some surprises to arrive where we are now. And as it happened, at just the moment that the contest

came into focus, the issues of intellect and temperament that have hummed all year suddenly threw off sparks and lit up the whole horizon of the Republican race.

One Navy prince, one political prince, both rebel cutups with frat-house charm, they took very different roads to the stage they currently share. If Bush is defined by his friends and alliances, McCain is known by the enemies he has dared to make and the grievances he has dared to have. Whereas Bush spent his early years with a father who made everything easier, McCain spent his at

war, with a father who ordered the bombing of the city where his son was held prisoner. Bush talks of compassion and those prosperity leaves behind; McCain of courage and the forces of evil at work in the "City of Satan." Bush, all lightness of being, struggles to be viewed as serious enough for the job; McCain, all coiled conviction, is so intense he has to struggle to be seen as normal. Both want to make over the Republican Party: one says he wants to give it a heart; the other says he wants

to give it a conscience. Put them together, and it's easy to think you're looking at the ticket right now.

But whose name would come first? In staking his claim to leadership, McCain has never had a problem of lack of intellect or discipline—despite graduating fifth from the bottom of his Annapolis class with a bushel of demerits—but rather of temper and tempera-

ment. The question exploded last week in newspaper stories, most notably a Sunday editorial in his hometown paper, the *Arizona Republic*, damning McCain as a bully, sarcastic and insulting. His personal story, in this view, becomes his burden, with the suggestion that the fighting spirit that allowed him to resist his North Vietnamese captors has left him muscle-bound, not quite nimble enough to cajole and compromise in complicated times.

McCain's natural response was to frame his fault as a virtue: "I have always had this acute sense of right and wrong," he told *TIME*. And

**"The only thing I know to do is be myself.
And, ya know, if people like it, fine;
if they don't like it, that's the way it is."**

—George W. Bush

**"There was a time when I became so angry
that I would say things I didn't mean.
And that would hurt people, and I always
regretted it. Now I don't do that."**

—Arizona Senator John McCain

people like a fighter. "Show me a politician who's never offended anyone," said his spokesman Dan Schnur, "and I'll show you a politician who has never got anything done."

People see McCain as plausible and plainspoken, not as a hothead but as a warrior against the "special interests," ranging from trial lawyers to tobacco makers who have government in a choke hold. If there is, as Bush has said, a crisis of cynicism about government, Bush has put a match to it with his high-octane fund raising. McCain, with his 50 staff members to Bush's 150, working out of a condemned one-story building in Virginia, isn't out giving big policy speeches. He just stands in town-hall meetings hour after hour answering questions about how to fix a broken system.

For Bush, the critical moment came last week when he flunked a pop quiz from a Boston television reporter by failing to name the leaders of countries like India and Pakistan. Bush argued in defense that the names are less relevant than his policies toward them. But the quiz was as much a test of his political radar as of his foreign-policy smarts: ever since he confused Slovenia and Slovakia and called the Greeks Grecians, he should have known it was only a matter of time before someone administered a midterm exam. And at other moments during the week, when he veered off text, the words just sort of floated out there, untied to any actual ideas. The implicit charge is less that he's stupid than that he's incurious, proudly anti-intellectual. Yet he is applying for a new and very demanding job—and it was hard for Bush to attack this as a media ambush when his education philosophy hinges on testing what students know before allowing them to advance to the next grade.

When Bush is challenged about his mastery of the material, his response goes straight to his vision of presidential leadership, the argument that too much knowledge can clutter a vision. His experts can sort through the details, he says; it is more important for a President to have strong convictions about where he wants to take the country. The spirit he invokes is that of Ronald Reagan, who, as Ted Kennedy once noted, could forget your name but always remembered his goals. But 1999 is not 1979, Bush's critics reply: the

■ Are there important differences between the Republicans and Democrats on issues that matter to you, or are the two parties pretty much the same?*

	1995	2000
Important differences	67%	55%
Pretty much the same	31%	38%

■ If you were asked to vote for a Republican nominee for President today, for whom would you vote?***

	Nov. '99	Jan. '00
George W. Bush	59%	59%
John McCain	13%	18%

*Telephone poll of 1,589 adult Americans taken for TIME/CNN on Jan. 5-6 by Yankelovich Partners Inc. Sampling error is ±2.3%. "Not sures" omitted.

**Asked of 528 registered Republicans with a margin of error of ±4.3%.

nation is not shuddering through a cold war or a crisis of confidence that demands a grand vision and buoyant spirit. The job, with the times, has changed, so that on any given morning, a President may have to wrestle with Mexico, Medicaid and Microsoft. Reagan could afford to be more full of principle than policy detail because his whole view of government was that it should do as little as possible; a candidate like Bush, with an activist agenda, is bidding for a job that comes with much more homework.

In the end, both men were swatting away charges about their brains and their tempers with the other great weapon in this race, the sword of authenticity. "The only thing I know to do is be myself," Bush told TIME, when asked if it bothered him to be tarred as a lightweight. "And, ya know, if people like it, fine; if they don't like it, that's the way it is." As for McCain, he argued to TIME that his imperfections only improved him. "By realizing that you are a person with some weaknesses, it gives you a better appreciation that others may not be perfect," he said. It was as if he could wear his flaws like another one of his medals. ■

Questions

1. What contrasts does the writer note between Bush and McCain? According to the writer, what are each candidate's strengths and weaknesses?
2. In your view, was it fair for a reporter to spring a "pop quiz" on George W. Bush? How did Bush respond to the quiz?

How To Tell Them Apart

The Gore-Bradley battle gets personal as the Democratic race heats up. But what are the real differences between them?

By ERIC POOLEY

THERE'S A MOMENT WORTH WAITING FOR during every Democratic presidential debate these days—the moment when Bill Bradley's feelings for Al Gore bob into view like a big chunk of ice on a cold gray sea. "Maybe you weren't in the loop, Al." "The point is, Al—and I don't know if you get this—but a political campaign is not just a performance for people." "Let me explain to you, Al, how the private sector works." At such times, Bradley looks at the Vice President as if Gore had suddenly morphed into an overripe mackerel; Bradley's voice, normally so flat and affectless, drips with sarcasm and a condescension that borders on contempt. Because to Bradley, who really does see himself as a better class of politician, Gore is an opportunist driven by ambition instead of principle—the kind of candidate who will demand on Wednesday that his Pentagon leaders support gays in the military, then backpedal on Friday. "Bill sees Gore as a smaller guy, a smaller guy all around," says someone close to Bradley. "Gore leapt at the vice presidency, a job Bill would never have taken, because [Gore] is devoted to furthering his career over all else." And last fall, when Gore saw that Bradley's high-minded pitch was working in New Hampshire, he stole it and started talking about "elevating our democracy" by running "a different kind of campaign"—all Bradley-speak. Sometimes Bradley can't stand him.

And sometimes the feeling is mutual. Gore views Bradley as a slave to his own self-regard, a man whose sanctimony is an ineffective and even hypocritical approach to politics. Gore's lieutenants love to point out Bradley's contradictions: he spent \$2 million on his polling operation in his 1990 Senate race—an early attempt at Clinton-style values polling—yet claims to hate poll-driven politics. He calls himself a crusader against corporate

■ If you were asked to vote for a Democratic nominee for President today, for whom would you vote?

	Nov. '99	Jan. '00
Al Gore	50%	49%
Bill Bradley	29%	27%

■ Would you be more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate who favors big, bold ideas or one who favors steady progress on a larger number of issues?

Big, bold ideas	14%
Steady progress	81%

■ Do the following apply to Gore or Bradley:

YES	Gore	Bradley
Sincere	74%	65%
Has new ideas	57%	58%
Can beat Republicans	54%	42%
Inspiring	46%	49%
Not a typical politician	45%	44%

■ Which candidate would do a better job on the following:

	Gore	Bradley
Health care	62%	25%
Maintaining economic prosperity	59%	27%
Education	58%	28%
Balancing the budget	57%	26%
Social Security	53%	29%
Helping the poor	52%	32%
Race relations	49%	31%
Gay rights	46%	22%
Campaign finance reform	39%	41%

Asked of 592 registered Democrats on Jan. 5-6; margin of error ±4.0%

tax loopholes, yet came out in support of ethanol subsidies that chiefly benefit one conglomerate, Archer Daniels Midland, because he wants to curry favor with Iowa farmers. "What's fatal," says a Gore strategist, "is holding yourself up as superior."

The candidates' disdain was on display last week as the battle for the nomination began to crackle. The Iowa caucuses are two weeks away, the New Hampshire primary three weeks away. Young Gore and Bradley volunteers are starting to tussle in the streets, and the candidates are tussling on-stage. Last Wednesday in Durham, N.H., and on Saturday in Johnston, Iowa, Gore was hammering

away at Bradley's health-care plan, as usual, and Bradley was sneering back at him, employing his recent tactic of responding to Gore attacks by pointing out their theatricality.

"Bill gets a little out of sorts when I talk about the substance of the policy," said Gore in Durham, smiling sweetly and obviously having fun getting under Bradley's skin. He had just suggested that Bradley lacks "the experience to keep our prosperity going," and that Bradley "wants to blow the whole surplus" on an "unwise" plan.

The way Bradley and Gore see it, the primaries offer a clear choice—the Washington bunker, as Bradley calls it, vs. the ivory tower. Bradley says that after two terms in the Clinton Administration, Gore has become one of those politicians who "stay too long and fight too much." But Gore is proud of his bunker. He's pleased to be a gladiator in the arena too—a pro who knows how to get the job done, who didn't leave town but stuck around to fight Newt Gingrich—because "the presidency is not an academic exercise or seminar; it's a daily fight." He dismisses Bradley's "maximalist measures" as having no chance of becoming law in the real world. Bradley's rejoinder: "The Democratic Party should be thinking big things with big ambitions Where would the country be today if Franklin Roosevelt said Social Security's too difficult to do?"

With a few exceptions, their policy differences tend to be minor—a nuance here, an incremental step there, with Bradley generally wanting to go a bit further to the left than Gore and calling himself "bold" and his rival "timid" because of it. Both support abortion rights, free trade and gays in the military; on gun control, both would limit purchases to one a month and close the gun-show loophole by requiring background checks, though Bradley would also require that every gun be licensed and registered. ("Doesn't have a prayer of ever becoming law," sniffs Gore.) On campaign finance, both want to ban soft money, curb issue-advocacy attacks and provide free broadcast time,

and at different points, both have advocated public financing of elections. On education, both want more teachers, Internet access and preschool and after-school programs, but Bradley calls for fully funding Head Start while Gore offers bite-size ideas like salary bumps to good teachers and discipline codes to be signed by parents and teachers. To battle child poverty, both want to raise the minimum wage, ease the marriage penalty on the working poor and let welfare mothers receive child support. But Bradley wants to beef up child-care block grants and index the minimum wage against inflation as well.

Health care is the most dramatic policy difference between them. Gore would build on existing programs to cover uninsured children, extending

Gore and Bradley are both cautious, but after suffering midcareer setbacks at the polls, both launched Bids for Boldness with showy makeovers meant to prove they would listen from now on to their inner voices.

benefits to 88% of Americans. He claims his plan represents a "first step" toward universal coverage, but his 10-year budget contains no money for a second step. Bradley's plan promises near universal coverage right away and subsidizes the middle class as well, which is why it costs so much (\$65 billion to \$100 billion a year, depending on whose experts

you believe). Gore calls the proposal "risky" because its payments might not be enough to let the poor buy health insurance. And he says it would leave no money to shore up Medicare, which is due to go bust in 15 years. Gore paints himself as the bold one, saying it's gutsier to pursue and protect many policies at once, in the manner of L.B.J. and J.F.K. Last week in New Hampshire, Bradley introduced an ad that wraps him in the mantle of risk. "People accuse me of offering big ideas that they say are risky," he tells the camera. "I say the real risk is...doing nothing." ■

Questions

1. Compare and contrast the vision of presidential leadership that Bill Bradley and Al Gore present.
2. Analyze the poll data on page 16. What conclusions can you draw about the candidates' strengths and the status of the campaign?



Portrait of a Candidate

In “Primary Questions” on page 14 and “How To Tell Them Apart” on page 16, TIME looks at the leading contenders for the Republican and Democratic presidential nominations. While the articles address political issues, they also paint a portrait of four men in politics by exploring the character and values of each candidate along with his position on issues.

Use this page to take a closer look at one of the four candidates profiled in these articles: John McCain, George W. Bush, Bill Bradley or Al Gore.

Candidate you will focus on:

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1. Background. What important details about the candidate’s background, professional history and qualifications does the article provide? Cite two examples.

a.

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b.

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2. The Power of Description. What words and phrases does the writer use to describe the candidate’s achievements, philosophy and goals? Quote three passages.

a.

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b.

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c.

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3. Quotations. Select two direct quotes from the candidate that reveal something important about him.

Text of quote #1:

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What this quote reveals:

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Text of quote #2:

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What this quote reveals:

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4. Position on Issues. In the text of the article, locate specific stances on two campaign issues.

Issue #1:

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Candidate’s position:

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Issue #2:

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Candidate’s position:

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5. Conclusions

Based upon this profile, do you think the candidate you have studied possesses the qualities of a strong leader? Why or why not?

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