

Critical reading - Sarah Palin

Sarah Palin by Camille Paglia

Pow! Wham! John McCain has introduced Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska as his pick for Republican vice president. This woman has turned out to be a tough, scrappy fighter with a mischievous sense of humour.

Conservative though she may be, I felt that Palin represented an explosion of a brand-new style of muscular American feminism. At her startling debut she was combining male and female qualities in ways I have never seen before.

The gun-toting Palin is a brash ambassador from America's pioneer past. She immediately reminded me of the frontier women of the Western states, who faced the same harsh challenges and had to tackle the same chores as men, unlike the genteel, corseted ladies of the eastern seaboard. Despite the lurid allegations and half-truths about her, I am still waiting for evidence that she is a dangerous extremist.

But what of her pro-life stand? Creationism taught in schools? The Iraq war as God's plan? If she tries to intrude her conservative Christian values into secular government, then she must be opposed and stopped. But she has every right to express her views and to argue for society's acceptance of the high principle of the sanctity of human life.

(Adapted from The Sunday Times 14.09.08)

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/us_elections/article4741274.ece



Critical reading - Sarah Palin

Sarah Palin by Andrew Sullivan

Formerly sane people have written of the McCain selection of Sarah Palin as running mate as if it represents a new face for Republicanism, an emblem of can-do western spirit, a new feminism, a reformist revolution and a genius appeal to the religious right.

This candidacy is a farce. It is an insult to all intelligent people. It cannot be taken seriously. Review the extraordinary facts about this woman and you will see how ephemeral this will soon turn out to be.

It took her a fortnight to agree to sit down for an intimate interview of the kind usually reserved for Hollywood stars instead of the press conference typical of a new vice-presidential candidate. There have been two explanations for this astonishing delay. The first was that the press would be too mean to her, and the second that she needed time to cram for the exam. The McCain camp knew she had never expressed any views about foreign policy.

In the end the audience was painful. She said it was common for vice-presidential candidates never to have met a single foreign leader. Untrue. Every living vice-president has met some foreign leaders before being picked. She says she's a fiscal conservative, but as mayor she increased her tiny town's debt service by 69%.

As Lyda Green of the Alaskan senate said, 'She's not prepared to be governor. How can she be prepared to be vice-president or president?'

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http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/us_elections/article4746999.ece



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L2 reading tasks

General

- Underline or highlight any *facts* you can find about Sarah Palin in these two articles.
- Circle a few *opinions* about her.

Camille Pagia

- What characteristics does this writer find attractive about Sarah Palin?
- Which words or phrases are used to convey her personality?
- Does Camille Paglia refute the 'allegations and half truths'?
- How does the writer justify Palin's views on creationism, pro-life and Iraq?

Andrew Sullivan

- How does Andrew Sullivan portray Sarah Palin?
- What evidence does he give that she is not fit to be vice president?
- Do you find his views on her convincing? If so, why?

Further discussion

- Try to work out the meanings of any words you have not come across before. Check them in a dictionary.
- Does either writer give real evidence that Sarah Palin is fit or unfit to be vice president?
- Discuss how the writers have reinforced their views by what they may have left out as well as what they have put in.
- Has your opinion of Sarah Palin been influenced by these articles?