

Third Parties in the United States

U.S Government

Chelsee Wilson
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Grade Level	11th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	150 minutes
Course	U.S. Government, U.S. History		

Essential Question

How do third parties affect American government and society?

Summary

This lesson analyzes the impact of minor political parties on national elections.

Snapshot

Engage

Students watch an advertisement for Johnson/Weld 2016 and complete an I Notice, I Wonder activity.

Explore

Students analyze voter turnout statistics related to four key presidential elections.

Explain

Upon discussion of the statistics, students read and analyze an article over third parties in the United States.

Extend

Groups of students create a poster presentation discussing the pros and cons of third parties.

Evaluate

Students use a Gallery Walk to view and critique posters and participate in an Exit Ticket activity.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))

USG.5.4: Analyze factors affecting the political process and their role in government, including the role of political parties, interest groups, mass media, public opinion,and campaign funding.

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))

USH.2.3B: evaluating the 1912 presidential election including the role of Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party and Eugene V. Debs Socialist Party.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—Third Parties in the United States.pptx
- Voter Statistics Handout - Spanish.docx
- Voter Statistics Handout - Spanish.pdf
- Voter Statistics Handout.docx
- Voter Statistics Handout.pdf

Materials

- Pens, pencils, markers, crayons
- Poster board or butcher paper
- "Third Parties in the U.S. Political Process" article
- Voter Results handout (attached)
- Notebook paper
- Sticky notes

Engage

Display **slide 5**. Upon entering the classroom, students will be asked to watch an advertisement for 2016 Libertarian candidates, Gary Johnson and William Weld. While watching the ad (**slide 6**), students will complete an I Notice, I Wonder activity to jot down any observations or questions they have about what they are watching.

Following the video, display **slide 7** and ask students to share their observations and questions with the class. Then, display **slide 8** and pose a few questions (below). Call on volunteers to share out their thoughts.

- What does it mean to be a third party in the United States?
- How are third parties different from the Democratic and Republican parties?
- What have you heard about third parties? What have you heard about third party candidates? Can you name any third party candidate (past or present) besides Johnson/Weld?
- Do you think that third parties could have any impact on a national presidential election?

Explore

Next, students will receive the Voting Results handout. Display **slide 9**. Students will analyze the charts on the handout for any trends or interesting statistics.

Following the student analysis of the handout, display **slide 10** and ask students to share out.

- What trends do they see?
- Would the elections have turned out any differently had the third party not been on the ballot?
- What do you think was going on historically at the time of these elections?
- How might those events have necessitated the inclusion of the third parties?

Teacher's Note

It might be pertinent to include a few key pieces of information. For example, Gore was more liberal, and if Nader had not run, then it may have changed the voter turnout. Additionally, Harry Byrd essentially earned fifteen electoral votes just for being a registered Democrat. Furthermore, you may wish to discuss the historical context of these elections. Theodore Roosevelt was unhappy with the direction William Taft was taking the Republican Party, which forced him to run as a third party. Harry Byrd ran in part because of the progressive politics of political newcomer John F. Kennedy.

Explain

After students have analyzed past voting statistics, hand out the PBS article, "Third Parties in the U.S. Political Process" and display **slide 11**. While reading, students should complete a Why-Lighting activity to highlight key points and explain their understanding.

Once students have completed the reading, ask them to share what they highlighted (**slide 12**) and why they thought it was important.

If students do not mention highlighting the contributions of third parties, have them highlight those, too.

Teacher's Note

Another great resource for third parties and political ads is The Living Room Candidate. This site contains ad for campaigns dating back to Dwight Eisenhower.

Extend

After reading and discussing the article, divide students into small groups of three to four. Display **slide 13**. Each group will be responsible for creating a poster that advertises the positive contributions (example: child labor laws) of third parties in the United States as well as possible negative impacts of these parties (example: election spoilers).

For each poster, students should identify a third party, a key change made as a result of that party, and a consequence of that party. Furthermore, students should include a visual in order to tie their advertisement together.

For example, one group may select to advertise the Populist Party. The Populists fought for many social changes, such as the 40-hour workweek, which we enjoy today. However, the Populist Party resulted in highly factionalized politics as well as a rise in tensions between industrial companies and industrial workers.

Teacher's Note

Third parties in the United States since 1860 included Independent, Reform, Libertarian, Socialist, Green, American Independent, Populist, Progressive, and States' Rights. Assign each group a different party or have groups draw at random, in order to cover parties equally.

Evaluate

Upon completion of their posters, students will participate in a Gallery Walk to view each group's work (**slide 14**). As students view the work, each student should use a Post-it Note to provide feedback to the group.

After students return to their seat, ask them to reflect back on the questions from the Engage section. Display **slide 15** and ask them to complete an Exit Ticket by selecting and responding to two of the questions from earlier.

Resources

- Gary Johnson and William Weld 2016. YouTube Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGD8gJt7weU
- Leip, David. "1912 Presidential General Election Results". Copyright 2012, David Leip. http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1912
- "Election of 1912". Copyright 1999-2016 - Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley - The American Presidency Project. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1912
- K20 Center. I Notice, I Wonder. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f507d1a7
- K20 Center. Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505e7d5
- K20 Center. Gallery Walk / Carousel. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505a54d
- Nwazota, Kristina. "Third Parties in the U.S. Political Process". (2004, July 26). PBS NEWSNOW. Copyright 1996 - 2016, NewsHour Productions LLC. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/politics-july-dec04-third_parties/
- "The Living Room Candidate". Copyright 2016 Museum of the Moving Image. http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/