Decoding Democracy

Understanding the Electoral Process

Mariana DeLoera, Daniel Schwarz, Tanner Lusher
Published by *K20 Center*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License

Grade Level	9th – Secondary Grade	**Time Frame**	130
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	3 class periods
Course	U.S. Government		

Essential Question

What factors influence political elections? How do political candidates reach their desired office?

Summary

In this lesson, students develop computational thinking skills by role-playing as a campaign manager in political elections. Students begin by considering and discussing a set of statements related to the election process used in the United States. Next, students participate in two separate activities designed to introduce them to vocabulary terms that are frequently used during a political campaign or election cycle. To extend their learning, students will play the Operation: ELECT online game so that they can apply their prior knowledge and practice computational thinking. Finally, students will respond to a series of written prompts that will allow them to demonstrate what they have learned from playing the game.

Snapshot

Engage

Students complete an anticipation guide and discuss the questions as a class using the Two Corners strategy.

Explore

Students are introduced to new vocabulary using the I Have Who Has strategy.

Explain

Students engage with targeted vocabulary by using the Password strategy.

Extend

Students extend their understanding of the concepts by playing Operation: ELECT in the K20 game portal.

Evaluate

Students evaluate their learning with a Quick Write prompt response.

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.
USG.5.5: Explain the steps of the electoral process including the components of local and national campaigns, the nominative process,and the Electoral College.

Attachments

- Anticipation Guide—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.docx
- Anticipation Guide—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.pdf
- Anticipation Guide—Decoding Democracy.docx
- Anticipation Guide—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- Game Portal Guide—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- I Have Who Has Cards—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.docx
- I Have Who Has Cards—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.pdf
- I Have Who Has Cards—Decoding Democracy.docx
- I Have Who Has Cards—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- I Have Who Has Graphic Organizer—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.docx
- I Have Who Has Graphic Organizer—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.pdf
- I Have Who Has Graphic Organizer—Decoding Democracy.docx
- I Have Who Has Graphic Organizer—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Decoding Democracy.pptx
- Operation ELECT Teacher Guide—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- Operation ELECT Teacher Handout—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- Quick Write Prompts—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.docx
- Quick Write Prompts—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.pdf
- Quick Write Prompts—Decoding Democracy.docx
- Quick Write Prompts—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- Two Corners Signs—Decoding Democracy.pdf
- Vocabulary Cards—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.docx
- Vocabulary Cards—Decoding Democracy - Spanish.pdf
- Vocabulary Cards—Decoding Democracy.docx
- Vocabulary Cards—Decoding Democracy.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Two Corners Signs (attached)
- Operation: ELECT Teacher's Guide (attached; one for facilitator)
- Operation: ELECT Teacher Handout (attached; one for facilitator)
- Game Portal Guide (attached; one for facilitator)
- Anticipation Guide Handout (attached; one per student)
- I Have Who Has Cards (attached; one set; printed front only)
- I Have Who Has Cards (Spanish) (attached; optional; one set; printed front only)
- I Have Who Has Graphic Organizer (attached; one per student; front and back)
- Vocabulary Cards (attached; one set per group)
- Quick Write Prompts handout (attached; class set)
- Devices with internet access
- Pens/Pencils
- Notebook paper

- Card Stock Paper (optional)

15 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Prior to beginning, print out the **Two Corners signs** with the words “Agree” and “Disagree.” Hang them around the room where students can access them. If you have larger classes, consider printing two copies of each sign.

Feel free to consult the attached **Operation: ELECT Teacher’s Guide** and **Operation: ELECT handout** in order to better acquaint yourself with the game that students will be playing in the Extend section of this lesson.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lessons. Display **slides 3–4** to introduce the lesson’s essential questions and learning objectives.

Transition to **slide 5** and distribute the attached **Anticipation Guide** handout to each student. Using the Anticipation Guide strategy, students read each statement and decide if they agree or disagree with the statements. Allow students approximately five minutes to complete the Anticipation Guide, or adjust this time as needed.

Once students have completed the guide, display **slide 6** and explain that there are two signs around the room for a modified Four Corners strategy. As you read a statement, students should move to either the “Agree” or “Disagree” side. Once at their sign, they should discuss in their groups why they made that choice and elect a spokesperson to share out for the group. Repeat this step for all of the statements on the Anticipation Guide.

25 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note: Activity Preparation

Print the **I Have Who Has Cards** handout. Consider printing on card stock paper, especially if you plan to reuse these cards. Cut out the cards from the handout. If you do not have even group sizes, then you can pair students for extra support or give a student more than one card from the same set for a challenge. Place card sets at designated station areas around the classroom.

Teacher's Note: Bilingual Options

If you have students who speak Spanish as their primary language, you can provide them with extra support for this activity with the attached **I Have Who Has Cards (Spanish)** handout.

Show **slide 7** and explain the I Have Who Has strategy to the students. Next, distribute a copy of the **I Have Who Has Graphic Organizer** handout to each student and divide students into groups of four. If you have an odd number or uneven groups for some reason, then you can give a student multiple cards if necessary.

Each student group will be working with a set of cards that corresponds with a group of terms related to political campaigns. Student groups will move between the stations and collect information about each term to add to their graphic organizers.

During each rotation, each student should take one card from the set as their own. They will find out what that term means by reading the card and then share that information with their group members using the I Have Who Has strategy. As one student is reading their card, the other students should add the definition to their graphic organizer in the appropriate column.

When students are finished and ready to advance to the next station, make sure they leave the set of cards at the station so the next group can use them. Each rotation should take approximately 5–10 minutes.

Class Example

Before the students begin, consider practicing this step together as a class first. For example, "I have *electorate*. An electorate is the group of people in a country or an area who have the right to vote. Who has *city council*?" Then the student who has "city council" would repeat this procedure. Students continue the process until they have gone through all terms at the station.

At the end of the activity, students will independently add a definition of each term in their own words and draw a visual representation of the term on their graphic organizer. They will be able to refer to this handout later in the lesson during the Password activity and while playing the Operation: ELECT game.

15 minutes

Explain

Keep students in their small groups from the previous activity. Display **slide 8** and let students know that they will be playing a game called Password. Take a couple of minutes to go over the rules with your students and ensure that all of your students understand how the game is played.

Make sure to explain to students that each group will be asked to draw a word from the pile of **Vocabulary Cards,** which you will pass out to each table at this point in the lesson. Emphasize that the object of the game is to provide the other students in their group with different clues that will allow them to guess the "password" written on the card they have selected. Remember, you cannot say the password when giving clues.

Instructions for each round of the game are as follows:

Round 1: Students will use phrases or sentences to describe the password to the students who are guessing.

Round 2: Students can only use one word at a time to describe the password to the guessing students. If students do not guess the word based on one clue, they can add another word or phrase.

Round 3: Students will have the option of acting out the term or drawing a picture, and students will have to use the visual clues in order to guess the password.

At the start of each round, set the 5-minute timer on **slide 9**. In each round of the game, the person providing clues must make sure not to reveal the password until a student has correctly guessed it.

Make sure that each student in a group has a chance to pick a word and provide clues for their classmates during each round. Also, make sure that students cast aside terms when they have been guessed so that they are not reused. You should plan to allot about five minutes for each round of the game.

60 minutes

Extend

Teacher's Note: Accessing the Game Portal

For your students to play Operation: ELECT, you'll need to set up a class in the K20 Center Game Portal ahead of time. Go to games.k20center.ou.edu and create an account. After you log in, you'll be able to create a class and invite students. For more information, refer to the Game Portal Guide in the Attachments section. If you experience any issues, go to games.k20center.ou.edu/support to contact user support. Further information can be found at the end of Operation: ELECT Teacher's Guide in the Attachments section.

If it is not possible to supply each student with access to the game, then having students play the game in pairs will also work.

Teacher's Note: Bilingual Options

Operation: ELECT can be accessed in Spanish for students who would benefit from this option. Once you have entered the game, select "Settings," and under "Language," switch this option to Spanish.

Introduce the students to Operation: ELECT. It is recommended that you play through the game at least once before teaching with it so that you have a general understanding of how the game functions.

- The student will take on the role of a campaign manager for a political candidate.
- The student will manage campaigns at the local, state, and federal levels to represent the different kinds of elections that take place within the United States.
- The student's goal is to win the election at each stage of the game by accumulating the most votes, or the most electoral delegates in the case of the presidential election.
- The student will use their available currency to perform actions, which will influence the voters every week leading up to the election at the end of each round.
- The student will spend their currency to perform a variety of different actions during each week of the election cycle. Examples include the following: running voter registration drives, starting grassroots campaigns, running issues or smear campaigns, hosting fundraiser events, and holding rallies.
- The actions the player chooses to perform during each week will affect the candidate's favorability among voters, the amount of funds available to the campaign, the number of total voters within a district, etc.

Have your students play through the tutorial and first round of the game. This should take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. The tutorial will show the player how to use the game's basic mechanics. The rounds should move faster as students gain a better understanding of how the game works and their responsibilities as the campaign manager.

Students will continue to advance through the four remaining rounds as they apply what they learned in round 1 and the tutorial to manage elections at the local, state, and national levels of government. The presidential election in the final round is designed to simulate the electoral college system that is used in presidential elections. The winners of all other elections are solely based on who receives the most votes from the voter population.

You should plan to allot at least an hour of time for students to play through the game.

15 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 10** and introduce the Quick Write instructional strategy. Distribute the **Quick Write Prompts** handout to every student and have them take out a piece of paper to write their response.

Explain to students that they will apply the knowledge from the game to write a response. Let them know that they will have 15 minutes to complete their responses, and each question should be answered in two or three complete sentences. Collect students' responses as a summative assessment.

Teacher's Note: Quick Write Support

A timer can be found on **slide 11** to keep students on task.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Anticipation guide. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/2364
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Four corners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/138
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I have who has. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1497
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 5 minute timer [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVS_yYQoLJg
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 15 minute timer [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3zT2IxZQaw
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Password. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/106
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127