

Government & Your Right to Vote

Voting Rights in America

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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

What should the government do to promote voting rights? Why do so few people vote?

Summary

The struggle for the right to vote has been a hallmark of American history. From African Americans to women, many groups have struggled to gain this basic civil right. This lesson examines the U.S. government's role in voting rights by looking at ways the government has promoted and restricted these rights over the course of the country's history. The lesson also discusses why so few people vote in current elections. We will examine various constitutional amendments, as well as voting rights legislation and its impact. Students will gain an understanding of how important the right to vote is to our democracy and hopefully be encouraged to participate in the political process in the future.

Snapshot

Engage

Students use the Collective Brain Dump strategy to discuss why so few people vote today.

Explore

Students explore the history of voting rights in the United States by examining multiple historic documents using a documents graphic organizer as well as the National Constitution Center's interactive website.

Explain

Students use the I Used To Think...But Now I Know strategy as they learn about voting rights for former prisoners and will debate about whether ex-convicts should have their voting rights restored.

Extend

Students create a survey to poll neighbors and friends about current voting issues and opinions.

Evaluate

The graphic organizer, the I Used To Think...But Now I Know document, and the group presentation can all serve as the assessments for this lesson.

Standards

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

USG.5.1: Define civic virtue and explain the individual's duty and responsibility to participate in civic life by voting, serving on juries, volunteering within the community, running for office, serving on a political campaign, paying state and federal taxes prior to the April 15thannual deadline,and respecting legitimate authority.

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

USH.7.1B8: passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Attachments

- Document Analysis - Spanish.docx
- Document Analysis - Spanish.pdf
- Document Analysis.docx
- Document Analysis.pdf
- I Used To Think But Now I Know - Spanish.docx
- I Used To Think But Now I Know - Spanish.pdf
- I Used To Think But Now I Know.docx
- I Used To Think But Now I Know.pdf
- The 15th and 19th Amendments - Spanish.docx
- The 15th and 19th Amendments - Spanish.pdf
- The 15th and 19th Amendments.docx
- The 15th and 19th Amendments.pdf
- Voting Rights Act (1965) - Spanish.docx
- Voting Rights Act (1965) - Spanish.pdf
- Voting Rights Act (1965).docx
- Voting Rights Act (1965).pdf
- Voting Rights in America Teacher Slides.pptx

Materials

- Computers or tablets for student use
- Copies of the Document Analysis graphic organizer
- Copies of student readings
- Large sticky notes or poster board
- Markers

Engage

Lesson Preparation

Prior to beginning this lesson, make copies of the following articles for each member of the class-- Why Prisoners Deserve the Right to Vote from Politico Magazine and the article,Voting Rights: 6 Reasons Ex-Felons Shouldn't Vote from NewsMax

The Engage section should take between 15 to 20 minutes for the class. To begin the lesson, show students the title slide and slide three entitled, Circle Maps activity. After students prepare their notebook paper like the example shown, have students individually write down anything that they know about voting rights inside the inner first circle (1 minute). After they have written down what they know, place students in groups of three and discuss what they know with their group (5 minutes) Have various groups share out what they know about voting rights. (5 minutes)

Tell students that as they watch the following video, they are to add notes or statements that they learn about voting rights in the NEXT inner circle. These directions are on slide four. Present the video The Fight for the Right To Vote in the United States. (4:30 minutes) The link is on slide five. Have groups discuss what they observed and then ask some groups to share out their observations after the video, using their notes for information (5 to 7 minutes).

Display slide six. Pose the following question. "Given the struggle for voting rights in the United States, why do so few citizens exercise their right to vote in elections?" Ask groups to discuss this question and write two or three statements about it inside the "picture frame". Have selected groups share out their statements. This Circle Map activity can also be taken up by the teacher and used as a formative assessment.

Teacher's Note-Class Discussion

Depending on the overall level of your class discussion and how experienced students are in discussions, this engage piece can last from fifteen minutes to an entire class period.

Embedded video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9VdyPbbzII

Explore

Keep students in their small groups of three. Pass out a copy of the documents graphic organizer to each student. For each group, pass out a copy of the 15th & 19th Amendment documents and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 document. Also, have a laptop or tablet with internet access available for each group. On the board, list the following website for students to access: https://constitutioncenter.org/

Display slide 7. Each group member will use the Documents graphic organizer to review one of the three documents. They will use the U.S. Constitution Center website to further explore the history and origin of the law or amendment that they chose. Allow 25 to 30 minutes for students to analyze the documents and help each other with the internet research. After they have finished reading, have them share in their groups about what they learned from their research.

Allow students to share and add information until their own graphic organizer is complete. Have groups share out with the class to describe what they learned. As each group shares out, ask one student to create a timeline on the board to show a visual history of how these laws and amendments changed voting rights in the United States.

Teacher's Note

Make sure you have a good understanding of voting rights history in the United States prior to teaching this lesson. It will be your primary responsibility to steer the discussion and provide context to discussion of the documents.

Explain

Show slide eight. Have students take out a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns with the heading "I used to Think" on the left side, and "But Now I Know" on the right, or pass out copies of the "I Used To Think But Now I Know" attachment. Using the I Used to Think...But Now I Know strategy, pose the following question: Should ex-convicts be allowed to vote after they have completed their sentence and paid their debt to society? Students will first complete the left side of the paper, writing down their thoughts and opinions about this question.

After students have completed the left side of their papers, distribute copies of the articles "Voting Rights: 6 Reasons Ex-Felons Shouldn't Vote" and "Why Prisoners Deserve the Right To Vote." Allow students time to read both articles and then complete the "But Now I Know" side of their papers. Once students have completed their papers, allow them to choose one side of the debate about voting rights for ex-convicts, pro or con. Have students move to one side of the room or the other based on which side of the debate they chose. Have like-minded students discuss their reasoning using the readings to support their stance. Have both sides share their stance and reasoning, calling on individual members of each side to speak their minds.

Extend

Before class begins, write the following question on the board, "How engaged are Americans in voting?" and display slide 9. Have students break into small groups to discuss the question. Have groups create a 10-question survey to ask about voting in order to gauge the political involvement of the citizens in their community. Encourage students to include some demographic information in their surveys, such as age or gender, to determine trends in the responses while keeping participants' names anonymous.

You can have groups create their own poll questions or you may also want all groups to submit ten questions and then the class rank order the ten most important questions to ask. If the class agrees on ten questions together, then students can poll only 5 people. You will want to approve the survey or seek approval from your administration prior to students conducting polls. Doing so can help ensure that no inappropriate or overly controversial questions are being included.

After the survey is finalized, each member of the group will be responsible for administering it to 10 people they know. If it is a class poll and not a group poll, then class members can survey only five community participants. Students should then compile their results within their groups or as a class and create a poster or other visual representation that displays the results and conclusions from the survey. They will give a short talk in front of the class to present their findings. The presentations will drive the discussion further as needed.

You may also wish students to write individually what they learned in conducting the poll and their conclusions about the results. What have they learned about the involvement of their community with voting in elections?

Differentiation & Technology

For classes that need additional guidance, you can allow students the freedom to find sample survey questions on the internet. You can also reduce the number of survey questions to 5 for groups. Students could also use an online tool to create the survey, such as the free version of Survey Monkey , Google Forms, or the poll form of Mentimeter.

Evaluate

The circle map results documents graphic organizer, the I Used to Think...But Now I Know activity, and the group presentation of survey findings can all serve as assessments for this lesson.

Resources

- Brettschneider, C. (2016, June 21). Why prisoners deserve the right to vote. Politico Magazine. http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/06/prisoners-convicts-felons-inmates-right-to-vote-enfranchise-criminal-justice-voting-rights-213979
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Collective Brain Dump. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/111
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I Used To Think . . . But Now I know. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/137
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mentimeter. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645
- Ourdocuments.gov. (n.d.). 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Voting rights (1870). https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=44
- Ourdocuments.gov. (n.d.). 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's right to vote (1920). https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=63
- Ourdocuments.gov. (n.d.). Voting Rights Act (1965). https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100
- Shaw, J. (2015, April 15). Voting rights: 6 reasons ex-felons shouldn't vote. Newsmax. http://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/felons-voting-rights/2015/04/15/id/638743/
- TED-Ed. (2013, Nov. 5). The fight for the right to vote in the United States - Nicki Beaman Griffin [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9VdyPbbzlI