

Subject: Civics and Government

Grade Level: 9–12

Standards:

Indiana DOE

Academic (8)

LH.3.3

Evaluate authors' differing perspectives on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

LH.4.2

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

LH.5.2

Write informative texts, including analyses of historical events.

LH.7.1

Conduct short as well as more sustained research assignments and tasks to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

USG.2.1

Summarize the colonial, revolutionary, and Founding-Era experiences and events that led to the writing, ratification, and implementation of the United States Constitution (1787) and Bill of Rights (1791).

USG.2.8

Explain the history and provide historical and contemporary examples of fundamental principles and values of American political and civic life, including liberty, security, the common good, justice, equality, law and order, rights of individuals, diversity, popular sovereignty, and representative democracy.

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USG.3.13

Explain the electoral process in terms of election laws and election systems on the national, state, and local level.

USG.5.4

Identify and describe the civil and constitutional rights found in the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights and expanded by decisions of the United States Supreme Court; analyze and evaluate landmark cases of the United States Supreme Court concerning civil rights and liberties of individuals.

Nationwide

National Standards for Civics and Government (8)

V.B.2

Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding political rights.

V.B.2.1

To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain the meaning of political rights as distinguished from personal rights, e.g., the right of free speech for political discussion as distinct from the right of free speech for expression of one's personal tastes and interests, or the right to register to vote as distinct from the right to live where one chooses

V.B.2.3

To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain the importance to the individual and society of such political rights as

V.B.2.3.b

the right to vote and run for public office

V.B.2.5

To achieve this standard, students should be able to evaluate contemporary issues that involve political rights, e.g., proportional voting, "hate speech," access to classified information, changing the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts

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V.C.2

Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding civic responsibilities of citizens in American constitutional democracy.

V.C.2.2

To achieve this standard, students should be able to evaluate the importance for the individual and society of

V.C.2.2.f

registering to vote and voting knowledgeably on candidates and issues.

College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Standards (3)

D2.Civ.2.9-12.

Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

D2.Civ.8.9-12.

Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

D2.Civ.10.9-12.

Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

Materials Needed:

Students will need access to:

A computer or laptop or a way to show video in class

Students may need headphones

Access to PBS Learning Media

Access to the internet

Learning Objectives:

- Realize that many Americans were denied the right to vote for most of our history.
- Consider how legislation and court rulings widened the scope of America’s voting franchise.
- Discuss recent efforts by state legislatures to regulate voting rights.

Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

The right to vote is fundamental to any democracy, so young Americans are surprised to learn that women and ethnic minorities have been allowed to vote only for the past century. And this is not a settled matter. At the beginning of 2022, more than thirty states were considering new laws that could disenfranchise millions of citizens again.

Body of Lesson:

1. Show the video, “What Does Disenfranchisement Mean?”
2. “No Taxation without Representation” was a popular slogan of the Revolutionary War because the British government levied taxes on its colonists but did not allow them to elect representatives to Parliament. This was true of most people in the British Isles as well. According to a 1780 survey, less than 3 percent of the people in England and Wales could vote.¹
 - a. Great Britain was a constitutional monarchy, while the United States was a constitutional democracy. Differences in their forms of government were immediately apparent, including the number of citizens who were allowed to vote. The U.S. Constitution recognized the right of all adult white male property owners to vote, which was a major difference.
 - b. However, large classes of citizens still could not legally vote until after the Civil War—blacks, women, Native Americans, other ethnic groups, and those who did not own real property.
 - c. Learning Activity:
 - i. Tell your students, “Assume that everyone in our class is at least 21 years old and owns a home. Let’s see how many of us would have been eligible to vote when the Constitution was ratified in 1787.”
 - ii. Have all white male students stand together as a group while everyone else stands in a second group. Only the first group would have been allowed to vote. What percentage of the total is this?
 - iii. Say, “Let’s see how many more became eligible to vote when the 15th Amendment was passed in 1870.” Have any black males join the first group. What percentage of the total are voters now?

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- iv. Say, “Two more generations passed and the 19th Amendment allowed women to vote in 1920.” Have all remaining students move to the first group.
 - v. Ask volunteers to share how they felt when they were not allowed to vote, even though they were obligated to pay taxes and fulfill other duties of citizenship. Why do they suppose lawmakers prevented these groups from voting at earlier stages of America’s history?
 3. Although the 15th and 19th Amendments gave black citizens the right to vote on the Federal level, many states of the former Confederacy enacted Jim Crow laws that limited their access to the ballot box.
 - a. State leaders feared that their large populations of freed slaves would take control of state government.
 - b. Jim Crow laws were a body of legislation that segregated public accommodations (schools, restaurants, transportation, etc.) for whites and blacks.
 - i. “Jim Crow” was the name of a minstrel song about a poor, uneducated former slave.
 - ii. States used two types of Jim Crow laws to limit black citizens’ ability to vote:
 1. Poll taxes barred access by blacks who had not accumulated wealth.
 2. Literacy tests barred blacks who had little formal education.
 - iii. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 struck down Jim Crow election laws.
 - c. Learning Activity:
 - i. Have students research a common Jim Crow practice that prevented black citizens from running for office: all-white election primaries.
 - ii. Have students write a one-page report (about 250 words) summarizing the history and effect of these primaries.
4. Many state legislatures have now passed laws to regulate citizens’ ability to vote.
 - a. In most cases, sponsors of these laws say they would prevent fraud.
 - b. Opponents of these laws say they will bar the poor and ethnic minorities from voting.
 - c. The U.S. Supreme Court will be asked to rule on the constitutionality of some of these new laws.
 - d. Learning Activity:
 - i. Have students read the article, “Voter Suppression in 2020,” from the Brennan Center for Justice² and “Myth vs. Fact: The Georgia Election Law,” from the Heritage Foundation.³
 - ii. Have them write a three-page report (about 750 words) answering these questions:

LESSON PLAN – WHAT DOES DISENFRANCHISEMENT MEAN?

1. What 2010 event prompted state legislatures to craft new laws regulating how citizens vote?
 2. Give examples of statements about the purpose of these laws, both from their supporters and opponents.
 3. What law(s) to regulate elections have recently been considered by the Indiana Legislature?
 4. What claims of either article can you challenge or corroborate with facts from other websites?
- iii. Discuss these questions as a group. Encourage students to think critically about Question 2 and express their own opinions.

Summary/Closure

Young people need to see that voting is an important right of citizenship. It is not a privilege granted by our leaders but a right that belongs to each of us. Over the years, Americans have learned to be vigilant in safeguarding this right. Now that responsibility is ours.

Extension Activities

Gerrymandering (the redistricting of a state based on recent census results) can change the number of representatives that a state sends to Congress and the ethnic make-up of each congressional district. Have students research gerrymandering efforts in your state or a neighboring state, then write a one-page report (about 250 words) that answers these questions:

- How did this change of the state's congressional districts change the number of your representatives in Congress?
- Did it change the racial or ethnic make-up of any districts?
- Is any political party or special-interest group challenging this new district map? What is the rationale for their challenge?

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¹ “The Struggle for Democracy: Getting the Vote,” U.K. National Archives, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle_democracy/getting_vote.htm, accessed February 24, 2022.

² “Voter Suppression in 2020,” Brennan Center for Justice, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voter-suppression-2020>, accessed February 25, 2022.

³ “Myth vs. Fact: The Georgia Election Law,” Heritage Action for America, <https://heritageaction.com/blog/myth-vs-fact-the-georgia-election-law>, accessed February 25, 2022.