

Lesson Plan Template: Hewit Summer Institute

Title: Voting in America: How do we vote? Who Should Vote?

Lesson duration: 45 min-1 Hour

Grade level: 7

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain how people in America vote by participating in a simulation and listening to a presentation about the history of voting in America.
- Students will be able to make a claim for who should vote in America after listening to a lecture, participating in a class discussion, and participating in a 4 corners activity.

Essential Question:

- Who should be allowed to vote in America?

Colorado State Standards Addressed:

- SS.7.4.1: Describe civic virtues and principles that guide governments and societies. For example: citizenship, civic participation, and rule of law.

Lesson content and procedures:

Day/time/duration	Title/content	Step by step instructions	Materials needed/notes
<p>45min-1hour</p> <p>When I taught this lesson, students had lots of questions that made the lesson run a bit longer.</p> <p>The lesson is split into 2 parts. I taught 2 mini lessons, but you can choose to combine them into one longer lesson.</p>	<p>Voting in America: How do we vote? Who Should Vote?</p>	<p>Here is the full lesson below on one Google doc: Voting in America Lesson Plan</p> <p>Part 1: How Do We Vote?</p> <p><u>Voting simulation</u></p> <p><i>You will need a trash can next to your podium or desk (wherever you count the votes).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open this slideshow ● Direct students to read/follow directions on board. Do NOT read out to them or explain it. ● At 5 minutes after the start of class, stop the vote. Then, start opening up the votes. Throw away any votes that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bubble outside the lines ○ Do not use black pen ○ Lack a students signature ○ Are students who did not write their name on the paper ○ Votes that were late ● Explain why you are throwing away votes as you do so. If there are no errors, you may need to “fake” it. The goal is for students to get upset. Stop the simulation before there is too much frustration (we don’t want tears). ● Explain why you threw votes away <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students who didn’t write their names on the paper didn’t “register to vote.” ○ Black pen is required on voting ballots ○ Not signing the ballots omits your vote ○ Bubbling outside the bubble also omits your vote 	<p>Voting Bubble Sheet</p>

- Many states don't allow ballots after voting deadline has passed...even if it was mailed before

Electoral College

- What is the electoral college?
 - A system where the people vote indirectly for the president. Instead of votes going directly to the president, states choose electors to elect the president.
 - This way, the people get a say in who is elected but people who are informed about the candidates make the final decision.
- Why do we use it?
 - Framers of the constitution *claimed* that it gave states with a smaller population a more equal weight in the election
 - However, the framers of the constitution really did not trust the common man to make informed decisions. This was a way to reduce vote weight.
- How does it work?
 - Electors are elected by each state. Citizens can vote.
 - 538 total electors in each presidential election across all states.
 - The number of electors each state gets is according to state population (number of Congresspeople). The least number of votes per state is 3.
 - To win the presidential vote, you need 270 votes.
 - Once you cast your vote, your state elector counts the votes. Based on the majority of votes (hypothetically), the elector submits all of the state's electoral votes for one candidate. The only exceptions are Nebraska and Maine, which can divide the number of votes.
- The Problem with the Electoral College
 - Source: Candice Halverson's teaching strategy
 - Go through the hypotheticals on this slideshow (slides 5-6). As you go through, you can ask questions like:
 - Which group has the largest population?
 - Which group has the most electoral votes
- Electoral Map

- Pull up the maps on slide 7. Explain that the maps on the left show political lines for states/districts. The skewed maps on the right show how much weight votes in those areas weigh.
- Popular vote
 - Ask the students: Can someone win the popular vote in the presidential election and not become the president? (Yes)
- If students are still interested, I highly recommend this interactive map: <https://www.270towin.com/>

Part 2: Who should vote?

Discussion Question:

- Ask students to jot down thoughts on a blank piece of paper (they will use the other side later)
- Ask for volunteers to share out.

Voting Timeline:

*I've taken this information from a lesson created by Teaching Tolerance:

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/the-true-history-of-voting-rights> I chose which parts of the timeline to include, but there is a much lengthier timeline in the lesson from Teaching Tolerance.

- Ask students to make an organizer on the other side of their paper they used earlier. Have them split it into 4 sections: Interesting, Surprised me, I'm confused, and Ah-Ha!
- Go over key vocab:
 - **Franchise** [fran-chize] (noun): a right or privilege that a government guarantees its people. This usually refers to the right to vote.
 - The verb “**enfranchise**” means to grant the right to vote to a person or group of people.
 - The verb “**disenfranchise**” means to take the right to vote away from a person or group of people.
- Timeline:
 - **1776-1821:** From the beginning, only white, land-owning men could vote. That means only the very rich could vote.
 - **1821-1830:** States begin to change their laws, expanding the right to vote for some white men.
 - **1845-1864:** States expand voting rights for white men. The last property requirement

for white men is lifted. New York votes to keep property restrictions in place for Black voters.

- **1848:** The federal government expands voting rights for some Mexican Americans living in some Southwestern states and territories.
- **1870:** The 15th Amendment is ratified. This allowed Black men to vote throughout the United States. However, there were many other voting restrictions created that inhibited black men from voting.
- **1875–1885:** Congress denies voting rights to Chinese American men following a long history of racism toward Asian Americans. The Supreme Court upholds the denial of voting rights to Native American men.
- **1920:** The 19th Amendment is ratified: White women are legally granted the right to vote throughout the United States.
- **1965:** The Voting Rights Act Passes: All Black people of all ages—not just men—can exercise their right to vote throughout the South for the first time.
- **1971:** The 26th Amendment is ratified: The voting age is lowered to 18. Before, it was 21.
- **1970–1975:** The Voting Rights Act is expanded: People who don't speak English have their right to vote protected.
- **1984:** Federal law expands voting rights for people with disabilities.
- **2014–present:** Today, states formerly restricted by the Voting Rights Act continue to pass laws restricting voting.

Voting Restriction History

- Many states created ways of restricting voters, even after they were legally guaranteed the right to vote. Literacy tests were a way of restricting voting for low socio-economic class peoples and minorities. States would create tests and if you could pass the test, you weren't allowed to vote.
- Poll taxes were another way of restricting voting. Many people who could not pay the money were not allowed to vote. How does this restrict voters? [select some students to answer]
- Many states restrict felons from voting (and still

continue to do so today.) However, this restriction led to increased incarceration for the purpose of taking away their vote.

- Intimidation was another tactic used to stop people from going to the polls. For example, the KKK, a white supremacy group (you may need to explain this further, though we have talked about it in history class) would travel around hurting and sometimes killing Black Americans to stop their vote. The government, at first, tried to stop this, but they eventually became very lenient and the KKK was allowed to intimidate and often kill African Americans.

Literacy Test Example:

- Open Alabama's Literacy Test mid-1960s
- If time permits: print off the literacy test and have students attempt to take it (you can white-out the answers or tape a piece of paper over them before making copies). Otherwise, you can simply read off some of the questions on the literacy test. This is a primary source and actually a test someone might have taken in Alabama before being allowed to vote.
- After class has taken the test, ask students to think/pair/share for the following question:
 - How do restrictions such as literacy tests affect our country's democracy?

4 Corners

- Before class, teacher can tape pieces of paper in each corner of the room titled: Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Alternatively, teacher can facilitate a class debate based on one of the questions (assign students positive vs negative stance), having students complete research before debating.
- Go over 4 Corners Protocol
 - A statement will be read/put on the board
 - Go to the corner of the room that corresponds to YOUR opinion (Agree, Strongly agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
 - Discuss with your group why you are of this opinion
 - Be prepared to share out with the class
 - Refrain from side conversations
- Questions:
 - The electoral college is a fair and necessary way to conduct voting in America.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Voting should be a right, not a privilege.○ Voting restrictions result in flawed, undemocratic elections. <p>Still interested? Here's a fun game students can play: https://www.icivics.org/games/win-white-house</p> <p>Sources: Gamio, Lazaro. "Election maps are telling you big lies about small things." The Washington Post. 1 November 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/how-election-maps-lie/ Teaching Tolerance, "True History of Voting Rights." https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/the-true-history-of-voting-rights Candice Halverson's teaching strategy</p>	
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