

Voting Rights & Equality

Interdisciplinary Subject: Civics

Grade Level: 9-12

Duration: 80-100 minutes

Lesson Overview: In this three-part lesson students will use primary sources to explore voting rights in the United States. In Part I, students will analyze two sets of documents to gain a deeper understanding of how suffrage has been both expanded and suppressed, developing claims about how voting rights impact equality. In Part II, students will further analyze one of the documents from Day One before taking on the role of a congressional committee charged with amending (or not) the Voting Rights Act to require compulsory voting. In Part III, students write their answer to the Essential Question, informed by class discussion and primary-source analysis.

Essential Question

How could equality in the United States be expanded through voting rights?

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Use analysis skills to make inferences about the content, context, and relevance of primary source documents.
- Develop evidence-based claims and arguments about the connection between voting rights and equality.
- Make evidence-based arguments and reach a conclusion through participation in a discussion.

Materials Needed

Part I

- [Source Pack 1](#): Sources A, B, and C (1 per pair of students)
- [Source Pack 2](#): Sources D, E, F, and G (1 per pair of students)
- [Handout A](#) (1 per student)
- [Bibliographic Information](#) (1 per student)
- [Slides](#) for Part I Closure & Assessment

Part II

- [Handout B](#) (1 per student)
- [Handouts C & D](#): Arguments in favor of/opposed to compulsory voting (1 copy each for half the class)

Part III

- Slide three for Conclusion (included in slide pack hyperlinked in Part I materials)

Library of Congress & Additional Resources

A. "The first vote" / AW; drawn by A.R. Waud, 1867: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011648984/>

B. "Ready to vote" 1918: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ggb2006002004/>

C. Demonstration for reduction in voting age, Seattle, 1969:
<http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/imlsmohai/id/1715/rec/6>

D. "Sign, Mineola, Texas" 1939: <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997025030/PP/>

E. Rosa Parks Papers: Miscellany, 1934-2005; Receipts; Poll tax, 1957:
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss85943.002605/?sp=2>

F. The color line still exists (literacy test): <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002710390/>

G. S. Rept. 109-295 - FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, CORETTA SCOTT KING, AND CESAR E. CHAVEZ VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006 109th Congress (2005-2006):
<https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/109th-congress/senate-report/295>

NOTE: The students will examine just two parts of Source G: the cover page and Section VI.

Standards

C3 Indicators

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.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

Teacher's Guide

Preparation Tips

Part I

- Assemble Source Packs for each pair of students.
- Copy Handout A – 1 per student
- Copy Bibliographic information – 1 per pair of students (or display electronically)
- Review slide pack

Part II

- Copy Handout B – 1 per student
- Copy Handouts C & D – one for half the class, the other for the other half of the class

Part I: Spark Inquiry

A. Introduction

Tell students that they are going to work with a partner to explore the Essential Question by examining primary sources: *How could equality in the United States be expanded through voting rights?*

B. Pairs Analyze Source Pack 1

Divide the class into pairs of students and distribute Source Pack 1. Students should spend a few minutes analyzing each source and answering the questions posed.

Source Pack 1:

- A. "The First Vote"
- B. "Ready to Vote"
- C. "Demonstration for reduction in voting age, Seattle, 1969"

C. Brief Discussion

After students have completed Source Pack 1, ask:

- What was the most interesting document? Why?
- What story do the documents tell about equality?
- Why is voting an important issue of equality in America?

D. Pairs Analyze Source Pack 2

Distribute Source Pack 2 to each pair of students and ask them again to examine each source and answer the questions posed.

Source Pack 2:

- D. "Pay your poll tax now"
- E. "Rosa Parks' poll tax receipt"
- F. "The color line still exists"
- G. S. Rept. 109-295 - FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, CORETTA SCOTT KING, AND CESAR E. CHAVEZ VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006 109th Congress (2005-2006)

E. Part I Closure & Assessment

Facilitate a class discussion by asking the following questions about both sets of sources:

- What was the most interesting source? Why?
- What did someone else notice about a source that you might have missed?
- What is your best advice for examining sources?
- What did the sources reveal about voting rights and equality?

NOTE: These questions are listed on slide one of the slide pack provided for this lesson.

F. Debriefing Assignment

1. Distribute the Bibliographic Information handout (or the links) for the sources to each student. Direct students to read the bibliographic information and answer the following questions:

- What important information did you learn about the source from the bibliographic record?
- Did the bibliographic record answer any questions you had? Did it raise any new questions?
- What did you learn from the sources and bibliographic information about voting rights and equality?

NOTE: These questions are listed on slide two of the slide pack provided for this lesson.

2. Optional: Have students complete an inquiry exit slip in which they name one source from the activity that they found most interesting and informative.

Part II: Deepen Inquiry

A. Introduction

1. Remind the students that in Part I of this lesson they examined several sources that reflected the expansion and the suppression of voting rights. Distribute Handout B to each student and read and discuss section A of the handout with the class.

2. Explain to the class that now they are going to become members of Congress who have been appointed to a special committee to determine if the Voting Rights Act should be further amended to expand equality in the U.S.

B. Small Groups

1. Divide the class into groups of four and explain that each group is a congressional committee.
2. Ask students to follow the instructions on the handout to conduct their committee meetings.
3. Distribute Handout C to half the members of each small group, and Handout D to the other half.

C. Committee Reports

Ask a member of each committee to share the decision his or her group made about compulsory voting.

D. Debriefing

Ask students to describe how it felt to be in their committee. Also, ask:

- Did you have to argue a position you disagree with? How did that feel?
- What was the most compelling argument you heard as part of this discussion?

Part III: Connection and Action

A. Conclusion

Facilitate a class discussion of the following questions:

- Did all of the committees agree?
- What were some of the strongest arguments made in your committee?
- What did you learn about voting and equality?
- Do you think equality in the U.S. is a "done deal" or do you think there is more to do to expand equality?

NOTE: These questions are listed on slide 3 of the slide pack provided for this lesson.

B. Writing Assignment

Assign students to state and support their opinions on the following question in a short 200-word essay that includes specific examples from the primary sources they examined and from the congressional committee activity: *How could equality in the United States be expanded through voting rights?*

Standards Alignment

Common Core

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA.RH.11-12.9](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.A-D](#)

California History/Social Science Content Standards

11.10

12.2.4

12.6.4

12.3.2

Illinois Social Science Standards

SS.IS.4.9-12

SS.IS.5.9-12

SS.CV.2.9-12

SS.CV.9.9-12

SS.H.8.9-12