

Lesson Title: Political Participation

Subjects

U.S. History, U.S. Government, Civics

Suggested Time

Two 50-minute class periods + weeklong homework research assignment

Grade Level

7-12

Essential Question

How does political activism make a difference ?

Objective

The lesson demonstrates to students that political change and far reaching legislation often start as grassroots protest movements. Students review steps toward a career in politics that starts with current community issues.

Overview

Students view the *We The Voters* film “Why We March,” a composite of protest movements from the 20th and 21st century: civil rights, women’s rights, Tea Party, climate change, gay rights, anti-war movement, etc. Students use their telephones or tablets for “quick checks” on a recording sheet about six of the protest movements shown in the film.

Then, students play a “Koosh Ball Catch” game, which models the power of small group interaction to solve a problem. At the conclusion of the game, each student chooses a movement in history to research—one which started small but became transformational.

The day that papers are submitted, students watch the *We The Voters* film “Run Rep Run” and read the handout “Preparing for a Career in Politics” to imagine how they might choose to launch such a career for themselves. In the Extension Activity, read through a series of excerpts about 19th century women’s suffrage.

Materials

- *We The Voters* film “Why We March”
- *We The Voters* film “Run Rep Run”
- Copies of Student Handouts
 - Handout #1: Protest Movement Research
 - Handout #2: Preparing for a Career in Politics
 - Handout #3: Women’s Suffrage (Extension Activity)

- Students' telephones or tablets
- Stopwatch/timer
- "Koosh Ball Catch" Instructions + 4 Koosh or other easy-to-catch balls

Procedure

Day One: Distribute Handout #1: Protest Movement Research. Play the *We The Voters* film "Why We March." As students watch, have them record information in Handout #1. Then, instruct students to look up objectives, leaders, and results of each movement listed on their telephones or tablets. Bring the class back together and discuss as a whole, slotting 5 minutes for each protest movement and calling on volunteers for each section. For the last 10 minutes of the class, play and debrief "Koosh Ball Catch," as described on the instructions page.

When students return to their seats, announce the assignment for the next week: to research and write about a group in American or world history that started with *a small protest group that broke the paradigm*. Give examples: the Committees of Correspondence, Seneca Falls women's suffragists, the Jacobin Club, Home Rule in India, Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Day Two

After students submit their short research papers, play the *We The Voters* film "Run Rep Run." Ask students: Are there issues that might compel you to run for elected office some day? Distribute Handout #3: Preparing for a Career in Politics. Give students a few minutes to read through it, and tell students to keep it and look at it again at the beginning of their senior year of high school or when they're thinking about college or career planning.

Extension Activities

1. Handout #3: Women's Suffrage. This is a Reader's Theater Role Play, which can be recommended to a drama or English teacher in your high school. Cast the parts of Brownson and Kellogg to two GIRLS and of Addams and Blackwell to two BOYS. Proceed through the reading, alternating girls and boys in the roles of sexist men and women's rights advocates, so that half of the time girls are expressing sexist speech and boys are reading women's rights statements, and the other half of the time, boys are playing Brownson and Kellogg and girls are playing Addams and Blackwell.

When the reading is finished, ask the girls who played against type to talk about how it felt to say those words. Ask the boys who played feminists whether they agree with Adams and Blackwell. Finally, the class should discuss how women's rights issues have continued into this presidential campaign (equal pay, family leave, abortion rights, first female candidate for President).

Standards

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.7-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.7-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.7-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.7-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.7-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

D2Civ.2.9-12 Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system.

D2Civ.5.9-12 Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2Civ.9.9-12 Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

D2Civ.14.9-12 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education)

Dispositions that foster respect for individual worth and human dignity.

- Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance to American constitutional democracy of dispositions that foster respect for individual worth and human dignity.
- To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain the meaning and importance of respect for the rights and choices of individuals—even beyond the legally enforceable rights guaranteed by the Constitution—such as holding and advocating differing ideas and joining associations to advance their views.