

America Votes Teacher's Guide

For Feature 5: “Rights and Responsibilities”

America Votes Quote: "Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote."
- George Jean Nathan, U.S. drama critic & editor (1882-1958)

Purpose:

The purpose of this feature is to provide an interactive format in which students can analyze political cartoons and discuss the value of voting and who has the right to vote.

Newspaper Activities:

1. Get involved (even before you can vote): Find a current issue, and write a letter or e-mail about it to the newspaper editor or politician of your choice.
Use different resources (e.g. newspaper, Internet, library, etc.) to find the contact information for the president and your senators, congressional representative, mayor, councilman or newspaper editor. (Did you know that even the president’s e-mail is public information? It is president@whitehouse.gov.)
2. Make your own political cartoon about an issue.

Another Activity:

Break into small groups and brainstorm ideas for increasing voter turnout.

“Vote” abulary Words: (Underlined words appear in newspaper feature.)

Apathy – the lack of interest or concern, especially regarding matters of general importance or appeal; indifference

Dark Horse - an almost unknown contestant regarded by few people as a likely winner (A dark horse is a person who may get the nomination unexpectedly, often by a compromise.)

Disenfranchise -to deprive of a privilege, legal right, immunity or right of citizenship, especially the right to vote

Front-runner - the candidate who is leading the race for the party’s nomination or for the office itself

Qualifications - a quality, ability or accomplishment that makes a person suitable for a particular position or task

U.S. Constitution Tie-ins:

Amendment 15 gives former slaves the right to vote.

Amendment 19 gives women the right to vote.

Amendment 26 gives citizens who are 18 years old the right to vote.

Further voting rules were established with the **Voting Rights Act of 1970**.

Internet Resources:

www.kidsvotingusa.org - Kids Voting USA - all about voting for kids, plus teacher's sections

www.takeyourkidstovote.org/youth/index.htm - all about voting for kids

Answers to In-Paper Activity:
WHO CAN VOTE?

1. N The 26th Amendment set the voting age at 18, where it remains today, for all federal, state and local elections.
2. N There is a uniform 30-day residency requirement for voting in presidential elections, established by the Voting Rights Act of 1970 and upheld in the Supreme Court by an 8-1 majority.
3. N The Voting Rights Act of 1970, followed by the 26th Amendment in 1971, set the voting age at 18. Public feeling to lower the voting age was strongly influenced by the number of American soldiers in Vietnam below the age of 21 who could fight for their country but not vote in its elections.
4. N In 1920, 100 years of effort by women suffragists were rewarded with the passage of the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote in all states. Several states had already given women the vote; the first of these was Wyoming, which had done so in 1869, when it was still a territory.
5. N No citizenship rights were given to slaves by the original Constitution. Even former slaves had no citizenship rights in the United States until the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1868; voting rights were guaranteed to them by the 15th Amendment in 1870. Virtual exclusion from the polls in Southern states, through treaties, poll taxes, literacy tests and other tactics, was common until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed such activities.
6. N By 1845, property restrictions on voters had been abolished in all states but Virginia and North Carolina. However, some states had property and even religious restrictions before that.
7. N No matter how long a resident alien has lived, worked and paid taxes in the United States, he or she cannot vote. Only citizens by birth or naturalization possess voting rights.
8. Y According to the Voting Rights Act of 1970, there is no literacy qualification for voters. If the voter cannot read the ballot because of language or literacy barriers, he/she may bring a translator or reader to the polls.

Kids Voting Resource:
“Apathy Cartoon Analysis”

Concept 2

I have a right & responsibility to vote



Activity

Apathy Cartoon Analysis

(30-45 minutes)

Objective

Students analyze political cartoons portraying apathy to examine the value of voting.

Getting Ready

- ✓ Copy the *Political Cartoon Analysis* forms for each student or group. Copy a political cartoon for each student or group.
- ✓ See “Political Campaigns” and “Causes of Apathy and Barriers to Voting” in the Appendix.

Analyze the Cartoons

- ✓ Divide the class into groups of three.
- ✓ Decide which of the political cartoons dealing with voter apathy each group will analyze.
- ✓ Give the students time to complete the analysis forms. Students could exchange cartoons and complete another.
- ✓ When the forms have been completed, have the students share their analysis with the rest of the class.

Questions

- ☆ *What are some reasons for voter apathy in this country?*
- ☆ *Can political cartoons help solve the problem?*
- ☆ *Has analyzing political cartoons made you more aware of political apathy? Is that their purpose?*
- ☆ *What are the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy? How can you prepare for these responsibilities?*
- ☆ *How can you be responsible now?*
- ☆ *What can happen to a democracy when citizens are not responsible? Has it ever happened?*

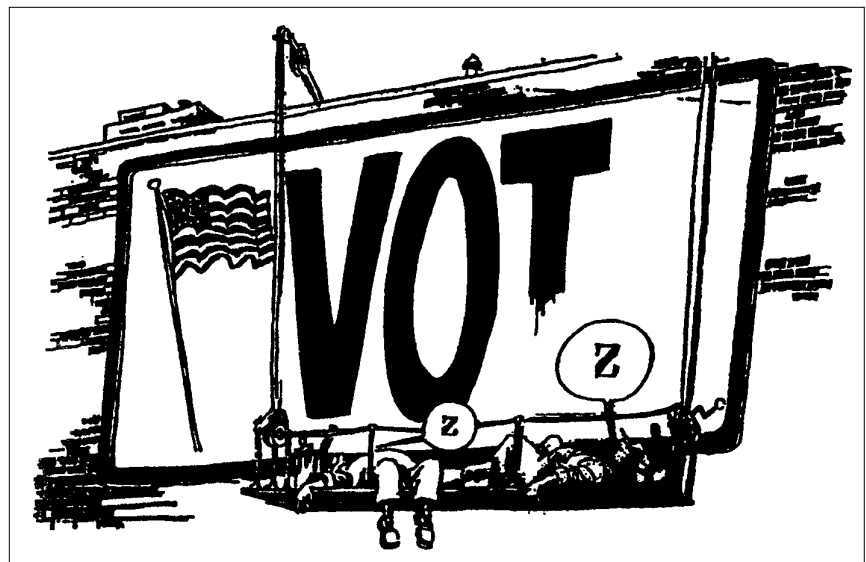
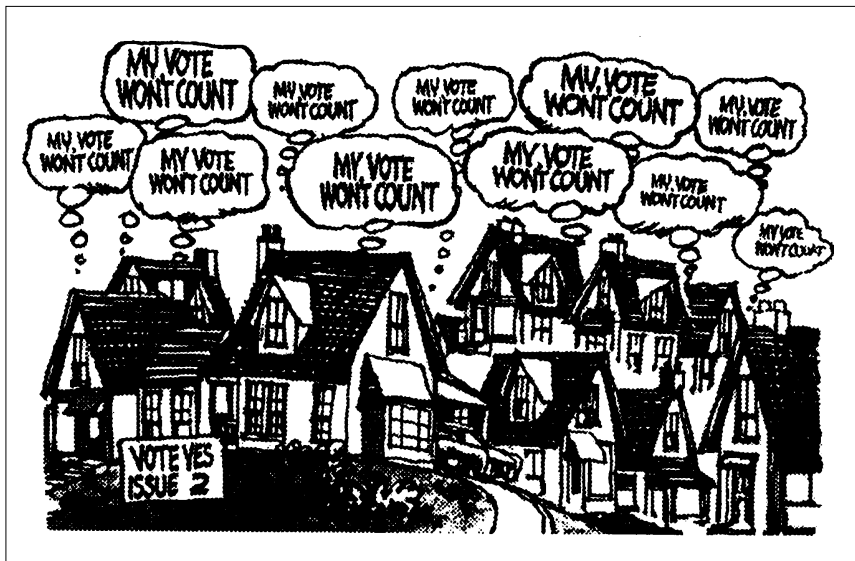
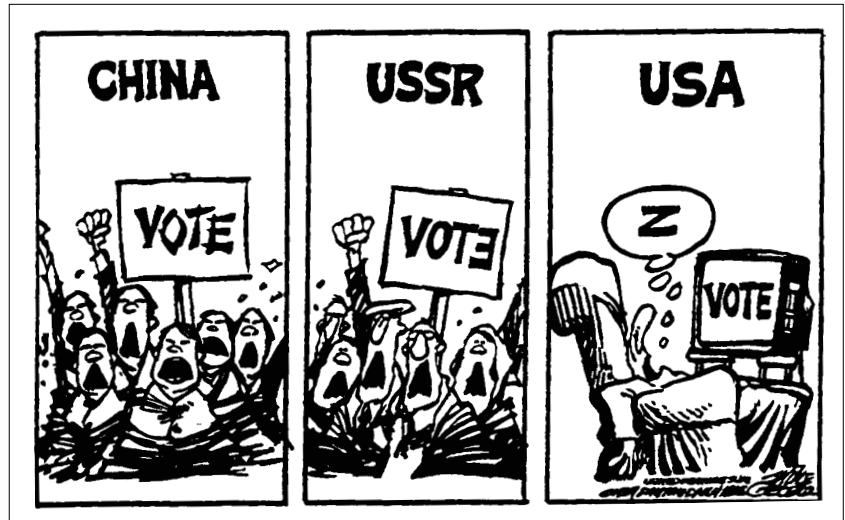
More!

Brainstorm ideas for increasing voter turnout. On poster board, allow each group time to report their ideas. Encourage students to make their own political cartoons about any issue.

Vote Quote

“The Greek word for idiot, literally translated, means 'one who does not participate in politics.' That sums up my conviction on the subject.”

-Gladys Pyle





Political Cartoon Analysis 1

Cartoons are a way of expressing an opinion. Cartoons have been used in publications for hundreds of years. Early cartoons were used to give messages to people who could not read.

Editorial cartoons have certain characteristics. Check the characteristics of your cartoon:

Presents a problem, not a solution	
Deals with one issue at a time	
Has people drawn as caricatures	
Uses exaggeration to prove a point	
Shows institutions, such as the government, as people	

Cartoonists use several techniques for getting their message across. Check the techniques your cartoon includes:

Caricature—changing or distorting a person’s features in a way that makes the person recognizable	
Exaggeration—overemphasizing an event or situation	
Stereotyping—showing all persons of the same group looking and acting the same	
Symbols—using a sign or object to stand for something	
Satire—using wit and ridicule to make fun of something that seems wrong	
Labeling—using written words to identify figures and causes	



Political Cartoon Analysis 2

NAME OF PUBLICATION	
DATE OF PUBLICATION	PAGE
Do you agree with the opinion expressed in the cartoon? Explain.	
What is the issue in this cartoon?	
Whom or what do the characters represent?	
Are any symbols used to add meaning? What are they?	
Are any labels used to add meaning? What are they?	
Is there a caption? What meaning does it add to the cartoon?	
Is the cartoon humorous? What makes it so?	
What seems to be the cartoonist's opinion on this issue?	
Do you agree with the opinion expressed in the cartoon? Explain.	