

America Votes Teacher's Guide

For Feature 6: “Voting Rights”

America Votes Quote: "Ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors to the bullet."
- Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States, 1861-1865 (1809-1865)

Purpose:

The purpose of the feature is to provide an interactive format in which students can examine and order the history of voting rights in America.

Other Activities:

1. Discover and report what groups did to gain the right to vote.
2. Research original documents including speeches, letters and news articles from key periods when voting rights were expanded.
3. Write an argument for or against a fictitious proposed constitutional amendment to lower the voting age from 18 to 16.

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

Ballot – the printed form or other item used in voting

Electorate – those individuals eligible to vote

Poll Tax – a tax once levied on individuals wanting to vote, usually used as a way to keep people from voting (Poll taxes were outlawed in the 1960s.)

Register – the process by which a person's name is added to the list of eligible voters

Suffrage – the right to vote, especially in political elections

Vote – a method by which people choose their leaders and decide public issues

U.S. Constitution Tie-ins:

Article 1 gives qualified citizens the right to vote.

Amendment 15 gives black males the right to vote.

Amendment 19 gives women the right to vote.

Amendment 24 stops states from using “poll taxes” to keep qualified citizens from voting.

Amendment 26 lowers the voting age to 18 for national elections.

Directions to the In-Paper Activity:

CREATE A VOTING RIGHTS TIMELINE

Materials:

One set of Voting Rights Timeline Cards per group.

One Voting Rights Timeline answer sheet per group.

Directions:

1. Gather into groups of three to five students. Each group needs one set of cards and one answer sheet.
2. One player agrees to be Game Master. The Game Master shuffles the cards and places them face down.
3. The Game Master checks the answer sheet as needed.
4. The first player draws one card and places it face up.
5. Each subsequent player draws a card, reads it and tries to place it in the correct order with all other cards on the table. If the player is correct, the card stays as placed. If not, the card is put on the bottom of the main stack.
6. Play continues until all the cards are gone from the stack and in the correct order on the table. If it is necessary to call a winner, the group taking the shortest time to order their cards wins.

Answers:

The correct order for the timeline is: F. (1789); E. (1868); J. (1870); A. (1876); C. (1876); I. (1920) ; B. (1940); G. (1964); H. (1965) ; D. (1971).

1776 - At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the right to vote is based on property ownership. Nearly all voters are white, male Protestants over the age of 21. Few African Americans own property.

- F. George Washington is elected president by the Electoral College. Only 6 percent of the entire population can vote in the election.
- E. Lawmakers enact the 14th Amendment granting citizenship to African Americans and permitting them to vote. However, state officials still try to deny them this right.
- J. The 15th Amendment gives African Americans the right to vote and prohibits state and local governments from denying that right.
- A. Poll taxes, grandfather clauses and literacy tests are used in many Southern states to restrict the ability of African Americans to register and vote.
- C. The Supreme Court rules that American Indians are not citizens and, thus, cannot vote.
- I. The 19th Amendment lets women vote.
- B. American Indians are made citizens by an act of Congress.

- G. President Lyndon B. Johnson signs a major civil rights law that guarantees the right to register to vote without reprisal. The 24th Amendment makes the “poll” tax unconstitutional.
- H. Martin Luther King, Jr. leads 25,000 people on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to dramatize the need for more voting rights.
- D. The 26th Amendment lowers the voting age to 18.

Further amendments to the Voting Rights Act require that many voting materials be printed in languages other than English.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you think we will ever add new cards to this game? What will the cards say?
- Who still cannot vote? Should they be able to vote? Why or why not?
- Why do people want the right to vote?
- Why has it taken so long for some groups to gain the right to vote?
- Do you know what each group did to gain the right to vote? How could you find out?

Internet Resources:

www.archives.gov - The National Archives – includes links to presidential libraries, digital classroom with many original source documents, remarks on civil rights laws

www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/intro/intro.htm - U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Voting Section – background on voting rights laws

Kids Voting Resource:

“Suffrage Timeline”

Concept 2

I have a right & responsibility to vote



Activity

Suffrage Sequence Cards

(20 minutes)

Objective

Students order and examine the history of voting rights.

Get Ready

- ✓ Copy and cut apart a set of Suffrage Sequence Cards for each group of three to five students.
- ✓ Copy a Suffrage Sequence Answers sheet for each group.
- ✓ See “The Right to Vote” in the appendix.

Arrange the Cards

- ✓ Help the students divide into groups of three to five.
- ✓ Give each group a set of cards and an answer sheet.
- ✓ Explain these instructions to the students:
 - *One player agrees to be Sequence Master. The Sequence Master shuffles the cards and places them face down. The Sequence Master checks the answer sheet as needed.*
 - *Each player draws one card and places it face up.*
 - *Each player draws a second card, reads it and tries to place it in consecutive order with the first card.*
 - *If the player is correct, the player keeps the card. If not, the card is put on the bottom of the main stack.*

- *Play continues until all the cards are gone. If it is necessary to call a winner, cards can be counted.*
- *To close the game, the players lay all the cards in consecutive order.*

Questions

- ★ *Do you think we will ever add some new cards to this game? Or does everyone have suffrage now?*
- ★ *Who still cannot vote? Should they be able to vote? Why or why not?*
- ★ *Why do people want the right to vote?*
- ★ *Why has it taken so long for some groups to gain the right to vote?*
- ★ *Do you know what each group did to gain the right to vote? How could you find out?*

More!

Assign students to discover and report what groups did to gain the right to vote. They could make a living Suffrage Time Line by dressing as their suffrage group did.

Vote Quote

Vote as an individual; lemmings
end up falling off cliffs.

-Pierre S. du Pont

U.S. SUFFRAGE TIME LINE CARDS

<p>The Declaration of Independence is signed. The right to vote is based on property ownership. Suffrage is primarily for white male Protestants over the age of 21.</p>	<p>The 24th Amendment passes, outlawing the poll tax.</p>	<p>With the Civil War over, lawmakers enact the 14th Amendment, granting citizenship to African Americans and permitting them to vote. But state officials still attempt to deny them the right to vote.</p>
<p>The Constitution is drafted. States are given the power to regulate their own suffrage laws and favor white male landowners.</p>	<p>Further amendments to the Voting Rights Act require that many voting materials be printed in the language of various minority groups.</p>	<p>The 15th Amendment is ratified, providing the legal rights of African Americans to vote and prohibiting state and local governments from denying that right.</p>
<p>George Washington is elected President by the Electoral College. Only 6 percent of the entire population is involved in the election.</p>	<p>The Voting Rights Act passes after Martin Luther King, Jr. leads 25,000 people on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to dramatize the need for more voting rights.</p>	<p>Wyoming becomes a state and is the first state to provide suffrage for women in its Constitution.</p>
<p>Vermont declares that all adult white males, regardless of property ownership or religion, can vote.</p>	<p>The 26th Amendment lowers the voting age from 21 to 18.</p>	<p>The Civil Rights Act passes, allowing punishment for interference with, or disruption of, protection for African American voters.</p>
<p>Rhode Island does not follow the lead of Vermont and other states with reformed voting rights. A rebellion begins and forces Rhode Island to adopt a new Constitution. This allows broader voting rights.</p>	<p>Before the signing of the Constitution, many communities vote in ways similar to their European home countries.</p>	<p>The 19th Amendment is ratified, giving women the right to vote.</p>
<p>Because African Americans and women will suffer discrimination at the polls, Elizabeth Cady Stanton sets forth resolutions for women's suffrage at the first convention of women's rights advocates. They pass.</p>	<p>A Civil Rights Act defines citizenship and prohibits discrimination based on race. The Republican Congress overrides the veto of President Andrew Jackson, hoping to lure the vote of former slaves.</p>	<p>Poll taxes, grandfather clauses and literacy tests are introduced in many Southern states. They are designed to restrict the ability of African Americans to register and vote.</p>
<p>Georgia lowers its voting age from 21 to 18 in state and local elections.</p>	<p>The National American Women Suffrage Association is founded, with Susan B. Anthony as president.</p>	<p>Miguel Trujillo, a Native American and former Marine, wins a suit against New Mexico for not allowing him to vote. New Mexico and Arizona are required to give the vote to all Native Americans.</p>
<p>The Voting Rights Act is amended to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 and ban the use of literacy tests.</p>		

U.S. SUFFRAGE TIME LINE DATE CARDS

1776 — The Declaration of Independence is signed. The right to vote is based on property ownership. Suffrage is primarily for white male Protestants over the age of 21.	1964 — The 24th Amendment passes, outlawing the poll tax.	1868 — With the Civil War over, lawmakers enact the 14th Amendment, granting citizenship to African Americans and permitting them to vote. But state officials still attempt to deny them the right to vote.
1787 — The Constitution is drafted. States are given the power to regulate their own suffrage laws and favor white male landowners.	1975 — Further amendments to the Voting Rights Act require that many voting materials be printed in the language of various minority groups.	1870 — The 15th Amendment is ratified, providing the legal rights of African Americans to vote and prohibiting state and local governments from denying that right.
1789 — George Washington is elected President by the Electoral College. Only 6 percent of the entire population is involved in the election.	1965 — The Voting Rights Act passes after Martin Luther King, Jr. leads 25,000 people on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to dramatize the need for more voting rights.	1890 — Wyoming becomes a state and is the first state to provide suffrage for women in its Constitution.
1791 — Vermont declares that all adult white males, regardless of property ownership or religion, can vote.	1971 — The 26th Amendment lowers the voting age from 21 to 18.	1957 — The Civil Rights Act passes, allowing punishment for interference with, or disruption of, protection for African American voters.
1842 — Rhode Island does not follow the lead of Vermont and other states with reformed voting rights. A rebellion begins and forces Rhode Island to adopt a new Constitution. This allows broader voting rights.	Before 1776 — Before the signing of the Constitution, many communities vote in ways similar to their European home countries.	1920 — The 19th Amendment is ratified, giving women the right to vote.
1848 — Because African Americans and women will suffer discrimination at the polls, Elizabeth Cady Stanton sets forth resolutions for women's suffrage at the first convention of women's rights advocates. They pass.	1865 — A Civil Rights Act defines citizenship and prohibits discrimination based on race. The Republican Congress overrides the veto of President Andrew Jackson, hoping to lure the vote of former slaves.	1876 — Poll taxes, grandfather clauses and literacy tests are introduced in many Southern states. They are designed to restrict the ability of African Americans to register and vote.
1943 — Georgia lowers its voting age from 21 to 18 in state and local elections.	1869 — The National American Women Suffrage Association is founded, with Susan B. Anthony as president.	1947 — Miguel Trujillo, a Native American and former Marine, wins a suit against New Mexico for not allowing him to vote. New Mexico and Arizona are required to give the vote to all Native Americans.
1970 — The Voting Rights Act is amended to lower the voting age to 18 and ban the use of literacy tests.		