



Experience the Vote: A Simulation in Registering to Vote

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About this Lesson

This lesson is designed to teach students about the steps that must be taken to vote in the United States. The entire voting process—from being qualified to register, identifying who and what you are voting for, locating your polling place, and ultimately successfully completing the ballot—is covered in this lesson. Through an opening simulation students are immersed in the experience, engaging first-hand in the many steps it takes to vote in our democracy. The simulation is explained in a student handout and group work activity that allow students to understand the process, explore the need to insure that elections are fair and secure and consider possible areas for reform. The lesson concludes with options for assessment of the student work.

Grade(s) Level

7-12

Classroom Time

One 45-50 minutes classroom period

Handouts

- Classroom Election Rules
- Classroom Voter Registration Forms
- Poll Workers' Instruction Sheet
- Steps to Voting

Constitution Connections

Article I, Section 4

Amendments

10, 14, 15, 19, 26

Background

Voting in the United States is a multi-step process and successfully doing so requires citizens to understand each step. These procedures have been created to ensure that elections are fair for the citizens wanting to exercise their right to vote, as well as the candidates running for office. These unique voting procedures have been put in place to ensure that the election system is protected from voter fraud and other crimes that may weaken democracy in the United States.

Citizens who would like to vote and are eligible must first register in their home state and locality. Once registered but before Election Day, citizens' should fulfill their responsibility to understand who and what is on the ballot. On the big day, registered voters must know where their polling station is located and when it opens and closes to ultimately cast their vote. Although not inherently difficult, each of these steps requires a certain knowledge and understanding of the system.

Objectives

Students will:

- Simulate the process of registering and voting in an election.
- Understand the steps necessary to vote in the United States today.
- Examine how the system works, identify potential problems or shortcomings and consider recommendations for reform.

Standards

NCSS Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutes
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
- X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Classroom Set-up

Prior to the start of class, take the following steps:

- Attach a number to each student desk. Begin with number 1 and go in order through each desk. Make sure the number is visible to the student when seated.
- Add 2 extra desks and designate them as polling stations by placing a sign that reads “Polling Station #1” and “Polling Station #2” on each desk respectively.
- Post **Classroom Election Rules** sheet and a copy of the **Classroom Election Ballot** in the front of the classroom

Simulation

This activity is designed to be a simulation of voting requirements in the United States. To ensure the accuracy of the simulation, follow the steps below very carefully. Results may vary from class to class, as some classes will have very pro-active students who complete all voter registration materials, election rules, and ultimately vote, while others may have students who do not participate at all. Do not worry if each of your classes reacts differently. Either situation will complete the objectives of this lesson.

1. As students enter the classroom, give each student a **Classroom Voter Registration Form**. DO NOT PROVIDE ANY FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.
2. Designate the first 2 students who hand in their voter registration forms to be poll workers, instructing them each to sit at one of the two polling stations. Provide each with **Poll Workers Instruction Sheet**.
3. Ask all students to take out a sheet of paper and create a brainstorm list to respond to the following question:
 - What steps must you take to vote in the United States?
4. Once the class has been in session for 5 minutes, provide each poll worker with the completed voter registration forms of students who are residents of their district (see below). Announce to the class that the election has begun and complete rules for the election have been posted in the front of the classroom.
 - Polling Station #1- Students registered at desks 1-12
 - Polling Station #2- Students registered at desks 12 and higher
5. Encourage students to keep working on their brainstorm lists. Once students have completed their lists, going around the classroom, ask students to share their findings with the class as a whole. Create a running list of responses in the front of the classroom.

As students are working, keep an eye on the clock. Once polls have been open for 15 minutes, announce that the polls are now closed. Ask each of the poll workers to tally the votes and provide you with a complete result in each of the contests. Combine the result and announce the winners.

Debrief

1. Once you have announced the winners, provide students with the following information:
 - The simulation that was just completed was designed to show you the steps necessary to vote in the United States.
2. Ask students to examine the brainstorm list in the front of the classroom and ask the class if they would like to add anything to the list based on their experience in the simulation.
3. Distribute the student handout **Steps to Voting** in the United States. Read the instructions aloud to the students.
4. Divide the students into groups of 3-4 students and ask each group to complete the rest of the handout using the instructions provided.
5. Ask each group to report on their findings to the entire class. Compile a list in the front of the classroom of their responses.
6. Finish the class with a discussion using the following questions as guides:
 - Do you believe these steps help ensure fair elections?
 - Are all of these steps necessary? If no, which ones can be eliminated? If yes, why?
 - How has this simulation and activity changed your view of elections?

Assessment

- Ask students to write an op-ed article about reform in the electoral process, including what steps should be taken and why.
- Ask students to create an awareness campaign by making posters or flyers explaining the steps to voting.
- Use the National Constitution Center's Civic Action Center (<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/CitizenAction>) to find key dates and information about your state and compare and contrast it to other states.

Election Rules

1. To vote in classroom elections, each person must complete a voter registration card prior to the start of the election.
2. Registered voters may only vote at their designated polling station. Please see the list below to locate your polling station.
3. Elections begin 5 minutes after the class is officially scheduled to begin and polls close 15 minutes after they open.

<u>Poll Locations</u>	
Polling Station #1	Polling Station #2
Desks numbered 1-12	Desks number 12 or higher

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Poll Worker Instruction Sheet

1. The teacher will provide you with the completed voter registration forms that have been completed for your poll.
2. Only 1 student may vote at a time.
3. When a student wants to vote, you must locate his/her voter registration form. If you do not have a completed form or it is not completely filled out, the student is not able to vote.
4. Ask the student to sign the back of their voter registration form and verify that the signatures match.
5. Provide the student with a ballot and pen. Instruct the student to complete the ballot and return it to you, folded in half, for collection.
6. Once the student has completed voting, you may move on to the next student in line and begin the process again.

Classroom Election Voter Registration Card

Instructions:

1. Complete all the information requested below.
2. Submit the completed card to teacher upon completion
3. To be eligible to vote, a completed registration form must be submitted prior to the start of each election.
4. Form must be completed in blue or black ink ONLY.

Are you a student of this class? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		If you answered "NO" to either of these questions do not complete this form.
Have you been a student in this classroom for at least 30 days? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial
Desk Number (To find your desk number please check the desk at which you are currently seated. Ensure that this is the desk where you will remain for the entire class period):		
# _____		
<p>I HEREBY DELCARE THAT:</p> <p>(1) As per instruction on this form, I am legally allowed to vote in the classroom.</p> <p>(2) The information I have provided in this registration declaration is true. I understand that this registration declaration will be accepted for all purposes as the equivalent of an affidavit; and if the registration contains false information I am subject to all applicable penalties.</p>	<p>Please place your signature (or mark) on the space below:</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">X _____</p>	

-----CUT HERE-----

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Are you a student of this class? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		If you answered "NO" to either of these questions do not complete this form.
Have you been a student in this classroom for at least 30 days? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial
Desk Number (To find your desk number, please check the desk at which you are currently seated. Ensure that this is the desk where you will remain for the entire class period):		
# _____		
<p>I HEREBY DELCARE THAT:</p> <p>(3) As per instruction on this form I am legally allowed to vote in the classroom.</p> <p>(4) The information I have provided in this registration declaration is true. I understand that this registration declaration will be accepted for all purposes as the equivalent of an affidavit; and if the registration contains false information I am subject to all applicable penalties.</p>	<p>Please place your signature (or mark) on the space below:</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">X _____</p>	

Official Classroom Election Ballot

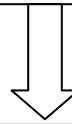
Candidates for the position of: International Youth Ambassador (Vote for One)	Candidates for the title of: Greatest President of the United States (Vote for One)		
Hannah Montana → <input type="checkbox"/>	George Washington → <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Ballot Question:</p> <p>(Vote Yes or No)</p> <p><i>... The official governing statements of the classroom shall be altered to read the following: So it be designated on the day of all elections the designated leader of all instruction shall make it not permissible to provide for all those receiving instruction and those not present but still authorized to receive instruction from said designee, to receive and be given such measures as will serve as a burden upon them during hours not officially designated as set hours of instruction by powers of municipality, state, or federal governments.</i></p>	
Ryan Seacrest → <input type="checkbox"/>	Thomas Jefferson → <input type="checkbox"/>		
Ruby Bridges → <input type="checkbox"/>	Abraham Lincoln → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Theodore Roosevelt → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Woodrow Wilson → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Franklin Delano Roosevelt → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Harry Truman → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Dwight D. Eisenhower → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	John F. Kennedy → <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Ronald Reagan → <input type="checkbox"/>		
		NO	

Steps to Voting

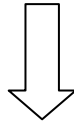
Instructions:

1. Identify the 5 steps necessary to take before voting. The first and the last have been provided. Use your experience from the simulation as a guide. Provide an explanation of why this step is necessary in the box marked "Explanation."
2. In the box labeled "Positive" list reasons this step is necessary to make elections fair.
3. In the box labeled "Reform" list where you think this step could be changed or altered, to make voting more accessible.

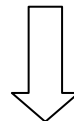
1. Qualified to Vote		
Explanation	Positive	Reform



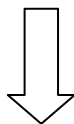
2. Register to vote		
Explanation	Positive	Reform



3. Inform yourself about the candidates and the issues		
Explanation	Positive	Reform



4. Find your polling location		
Explanation	Positive	Reform



5. VOTE		
Explanation	Positive	Reform