

LESSON 3: ALLSIDES: STATE- AND FEDERAL-LEVEL VOTING RIGHTS TODAY

Overview

In this lesson, students will read and assess current news articles on state and federal voting rights issues facing American society today, building on the historical knowledge, document analysis, and critical thinking skills they gained in the previous lessons. They will learn how to use the AllSides link on the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Civics through History webpage, applying their newfound knowledge as informed and engaged citizens.

AllSides.com is a website that identifies articles written from right, center, and left viewpoints. Students will engage in group discussions that emphasize healthy civil discourse and distinguishing facts from opinions as members of an American democracy.

Objectives

Students will be able to

- Apply knowledge of history to current issues
- Use critical thinking skills to distinguish fact from opinion
- Employ civil discourse to discuss potentially divisive issues

Materials

- Articles from AllSides.com on the The Right to Vote project site, gilderlehrman.org/right-to-vote/lesson-plans.
- Analyzing a News Article activity sheet
- Optional: Teacher's Resource: Civil Discourse Guidelines. The guidelines provided here are adapted from "Managing Difficult Classroom Discussions," Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University Bloomington, citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources.

Procedure

1. Introduce the scope and purpose of the lesson. A demonstration of the AllSides material will allow students to comfortably begin to research materials that reflect right, center, and left perspectives on the political spectrum.
2. To help maintain civil discourse throughout the discussion, you may ask the students to develop guidelines to follow as they discuss potentially divisive issues that affect them and their families or communities. We have provided examples of such Civil Discourse Guidelines in the handouts. Student input is important and helping them create the rules for civil discourse themselves will give them greater commitment to follow those rules.
3. The articles on AllSides will be different from day to day, so you may want to assign specific articles or topics for the students to work on. Additionally, given the changing nature of the articles linked on the AllSides website, you may want to download and save articles of interest.
4. You may assign three articles from AllSides representing different points on the political spectrum (right, center, left) or allow students to select their own three articles.
5. Students will then explore (either in groups or individually) some of the articles on topics that relate to voting rights, either viewing nationally via the widget or using the dropdown filter on the linked AllSides landing page to focus on an assigned state.
6. Students will read the three articles and complete the "Analyzing a News Article" activity sheet for each. If they are working in groups, circulate to ensure they are maintaining civil discourse.
7. Facilitate a class discussion among the students about their responses to the questions in the activity sheet.
8. As a summary activity, students will develop an oral or written response to the following question:

"How do the important issues presented in current news articles reflect, differ from, or compare with the historical development of voting rights in the United States?"

Make sure that the students cite key evidence from the articles and use their historical knowledge to support their viewpoints.

NAME

DATE

PERIOD

Analyzing a News Article

Source (*newspaper/magazine/website*):

Date published:

Article title:

1. What did you already know about that topic?

2. Basic information presented:

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

NAME

DATE

PERIOD

How?

3. What role do states play in this issue? Does the author talk about voting rights or the role of state or federal government? If so, assess the author's arguments about who has more say in this issue.

4. Does your article have a right/center/left point of view? What evidence leads you to that conclusion?

5. What audience was this article written for? What evidence supports your conclusion?

6. Reliability of Sources

a. Is there an author's name? YES NO If so, who is the author?

b. What source or sources does the author quote or refer to in the article? Do you think these sources are reliable? Why or why not? What evidence supports your conclusion?

7. Personal Reaction: What do you think of this article? (*Include two points made in the text to support your answer.*)

Civil Discourse Guidelines *

Listen respectfully without interrupting.

Allow everyone the opportunity to speak.

Criticize ideas, not individuals or groups.

Avoid inflammatory language, including name-calling.

Ask questions when you don't understand; don't assume you know others' thinking or motivations.

Don't expect any individuals to speak on behalf of their gender, ethnic groups, class, status, etc. (or the groups we perceive them to be a part of).

Base your arguments on evidence, not assumptions.

* The guidelines provided here are adapted from "Managing Difficult Classroom Discussions," Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University Bloomington, citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/diversity-inclusion.