



SPHERE Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Analyzing Poems and Connecting Them to Elections

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Learning Objectives

- Explore and understand the election process
- Explore and understand the importance of voting
- Explore and understand democratic principles through the analysis of selected poems



Essential Questions

How do poets use literary devices and symbolism to convey messages about democracy and elections? What themes about democracy and civil discourse can be identified in the selected poems, and how are these themes relevant to contemporary political and social issues? How can the principles of civil discourse be applied to discussions about elections and political issues? In what ways can poetry serve as a tool for exploring and expressing political and social ideas?

Media

- A drawing, image, or some other representation of the US flag or the Statue of Liberty or a monument from your own hometown or country that captures the spirit of where you are from
- Copies of the selected poems
- Notebook/journal or paper
- Pens/pencils
- Internet for research (if needed)

Part I: Analyzing the Poems

In this section, students will delve deeper into their poems, connecting them to the essential questions and the importance of the election process. Please note that this lesson may take 2 class periods and can be divided as such.

WARM-UP

Review some of the ideas and concepts students discussed during the first day. Have students record aspects of the discussion in their journals or on paper.

Activity

Give students the following questions and ask them to discuss the questions with a partner or in a small group.

- What is the main message of the poem?
- How does the poet convey their message about elections and the democratic process?
- What literary devices are used to convey these messages?
- How does the historical or social context influence the poem's themes?
- How do the poems address the concept of civil discourse and the role of dialogue in a democratic society?

- How do the poems propose or reflect solutions to the challenges that democracies face?
- How does poetry contribute to our understanding of political and social ideas?

SAY

We will spend about 15 minutes researching and discussing the poems in our small groups, and then each small group will present its poem title, author, and findings to the class.

Note: As students are talking, be sure to help them focus on the common themes and differences between the poems. They can do this by completing a chart like the one below on a piece of paper or in their notebooks.

Poem	Author	Themes	Similarities and differences with other poems discussed

Share with students the importance of civil discourse as part of democratic society. Discuss the principles of respectful dialogue, active listening, and understanding diverse perspectives. Reinforce these principles as you observe students discussing various poems.

SAY

How do the themes of the poem relate to the importance of civil discourse?

Part II: Connecting Poetry to Modern Elections

In this section, students think about how the poems in this mini unit connect with how we view elections in the past, present, and future. After they do this, they will create their own poems focusing on 1 or more topics discussed.

WARM-UP

Have students brainstorm for about 5 minutes, listing on paper or in their notebooks themes, symbols, words, and phrases that relate to the modern election process in general. Ask students to compare the issues and sentiments expressed in the poems with political events and the election process.

SAY

We're going to use the rest of class to write poems about the topics discussed over the past few class periods.

Activity

A suggestion would be to let students write the poems in any format they find comfortable using. Students should also turn in the poem by the end of class so that they will not be compelled to use other sources. These poems should be original and contain elements from class discussions and learning.

Use the following prompts to spark students' poems:

- Describe the feelings you have about the voting process.
- Describe a conversation between a historical figure/narrator or author of one of the poems and a modern-day person who can vote.
- Write about the importance of voting.
- Write about why voting counts.
- Write about the importance of civil discourse in modern elections.
- Describe how the historical and social context of poetry influences issues today.
- Consider a current political issue or election. How might the themes from the poems apply to this situation? What lessons are learned?

Closing the Lesson

Discuss the lesson's essential questions to see how students are connecting the poems to the election and the goals for the mini unit.

You may want to have a few students share their poems, or students can journal and reflect on what they learned about elections through poetry. Then, discuss how poetry can be a powerful tool for expressing political and social ideas. End by asking students to share their thoughts about the importance of elections, democracy, and civil discourse in their own lives and communities.

Common Core State Standards

MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6–8) ELA STANDARDS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.1:** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6–8) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

- **D2.CIV.2.6-8:** Explain the roles of citizens in the political process.
- **D2.CIV.2.6-8:** Explain the role of citizens in the election process and in maintaining democratic government.
- **D2.HIS.1.6-8:** Explain how historical contexts influence people's perspectives.

HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9–12) ELA STANDARDS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped by details.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings, and analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on topics, texts, and issues.

HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9–12) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

- **D2.CIV.5.9-12:** Evaluate citizens' responsibilities to uphold constitutional principles.
- **D2.CIV.8.9-12:** Analyze how civic virtues and democratic principles impact democratic participation.
- **D2.HIS.14.9-12:** Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in history.