



SPHERE Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Introduction 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

What are the key components and processes involved in elections, and why is voting important in a democratic society? How do symbols and images shape national identity and reflect societal values? How do literature and art reflect and challenge ideas of equality, justice, and political power? How can civic engagement lead to social and political change in local and global contexts?

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: Introduction to Elections

The media students will discuss should be displayed as they walk into the room. This piece of media should be easy to interpret but also related to what students are studying. In this case, a picture of the US flag would be appropriate, or you might use a monument from your own hometown or country that captures the spirit of where you are from, such as a picture of the Statue of Liberty. Students will use what they say in the discussion as a jumping-off point to talk about how they relate to the image.

WARM-UP

Ask students to respond to the following prompt.

Journal Prompt: What images and colors stand out to you? What do they symbolize? How do they help shape a national identity? How do they reflect the overall meaning? What do you feel when you look at these images? How has its meaning changed over time? Does it still mean what it meant when it was created? What values or messages does the image show us? How do different cultures view this image? How do you connect with this image?

Class Activity 1

Briefly discuss the image from the beginning of class, relating it to the journal prompt questions.

Be sure to discuss elections and the election process in the country where you and your students are living (information about the process in the United States can be found on YouTube, PBS, iCivics, or other sources); keep the video or discussion focused on what you would like to emphasize in your classroom. Some highlights include the importance of voting, aspects of democratic participation, or other aspects that relate to you, your classroom, and your community.

Class Activity 2

Introduce the poems being used in this activity by connecting them to the overall themes of equality, civil rights, social justice, economic justice, political corruption, disillusionment, democracy, racial injustice, freedom, patriotism, and the day's essential questions. Have the poems you are using displayed in such a way that students can easily choose 2–3 to work with. You can do this by having them linked on a Google Doc or having several copies spread throughout the room for students to look at and read.

Put students in small groups and give each group 2–3 poems. Students should read the poems they've chosen in their groups. Then, ask students to identify words or phrases that stand out to them by writing them down or highlighting them.

Give time for each group to share their initial reactions with the class. One way to do this is through a close reading using title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shifts, title, and theme analysis or another form of reading analysis.

Note: This would be a good class period to invite a local politician or election official to give an unbiased view of the election process and the importance of civic engagement.

Closing the Lesson

Record on chart paper or in your journal 3 things you learned about elections and democracy. List questions you may still have.

These can be turned in or shared out loud to help with the lesson for the next class period.

Common Core State Standards

MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6–8) ELA STANDARDS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective summary.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6-8.6:** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1:** Engage in collaborative discussions on grade-level topics and texts.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6–8) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

- **D2.CIV.1.6-8:** Explain the origins, functions, and structure of government.
- **D2.CIV.2.6-8:** Explain the role of citizens in the election process and in maintaining democratic government.

HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9–12) ELA STANDARDS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1:** Cite strong textual evidence to support analysis.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2:** Analyze themes or central ideas of a text and how they are developed.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1:** Initiate and participate in discussions on various topics, making connections.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1:** Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and evidence.

HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9–12) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

- **D2.CIV.5.9-12:** Analyze the role of citizens in shaping public policies.
- **D2.CIV.8.9-12:** Evaluate social and political systems to determine the extent to which they promote civic engagement.