



VOTE! IT'S OUR RIGHT!

Learning Objectives: The students will...

1. Learn about the history of voting rights.
2. Experience voter discrimination.
3. Understand the importance of individual participation in civic affairs such as voting.

TEKS: 3.3B, 3.11A, 3.11C

Materials Needed: Poster board, markers, internet access

(<http://pbskids.org/democracy/classic/vote/>).

Vocabulary: candidate, campaign, nominate

Teaching Strategies:

1. Introduce students to the concept of voting or choosing by announcing that the class will take a vote on an after school snack.
2. Allow students to “nominate” a snack that they like. After writing down all of the suggestions, allow the students, by show of hands, to select the top four.
3. Students may then select which group (snack) or “party” they would like to campaign for. Groups may not be even, as states are not all the same size.
4. Each group will make a poster to campaign for their “nominee” which will show why people should vote for their snack. (Students may add a jingle.)
5. Even though students work with one group, they may vote for any snack at election time, if they choose to. They’re allowed to change their minds.
6. But before the election, remind students that in our history there have been times that some people were not allowed to vote.
7. Introduce voting rights in our country by showing <http://pbskids.org/democracy/classic/vote/>.
8. Click on “Step into a Voting Time Machine” and allow different students to read each segment that tells about various voting laws throughout our history.
9. Announce that in keeping with history, the class will pretend that this is 1919, when women were not allowed to vote. So even though the girls in the class have participated in the posters, they won’t be allowed to vote.
10. Take a vote and determine a winner (vote #1).
11. Choose another random disqualifier (glasses, sneakers, blue eyes, anything that would disqualify some of the students) and vote again.
12. Assign a few students to indicate that they do not care enough to vote and skip the vote. Take vote #2 and determine a winner.
13. Take a final vote (vote #3) with everyone pretending to be 18 years old and qualified to vote. Determine the final winner and distribute snacks at the end of the day.
14. Discuss the importance of everyone getting to vote and of the importance of everyone having a say in the outcome of an election.
 - a. What difference does it make when some people choose not to vote? Did it make a difference in the class vote?
 - b. Should there be some other requirements for voting other than age and citizenship?

- c. At one time there were tests to see if the voter knew facts about our government. These tests were very hard and were designed to keep many people from voting. Would it be a good idea to have a simpler test?
- d. In many states people who have been convicted of a crime are not eligible to vote. Is that fair? Why or why not?
- e. In Great Britain, campaigns can only last for 6 months. Is that a good idea? Why or why not?
- f. In 2008 there were about 230,000,000 people who were 18 years old or older. Only about 132,000,000 voted. That's 57%, the same percentage that voted in 1828. Why is that? What could be done to interest more people in voting?
- g. The voting age is 18 and older. Should the law be changed to include those who are teenagers, age 13 and above?

Extension for Gifted/Talented:

Students will make a Voting Rights timeline, listing all major legislation that gradually allowed different groups of people to vote. Research the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to discover the impact that law had.