



CIVICS LEARNING PROJECT

PRESENTS...

ELECTIONS IN OREGON

Lessons for the 2023-2024 School Year

Secondary Grades

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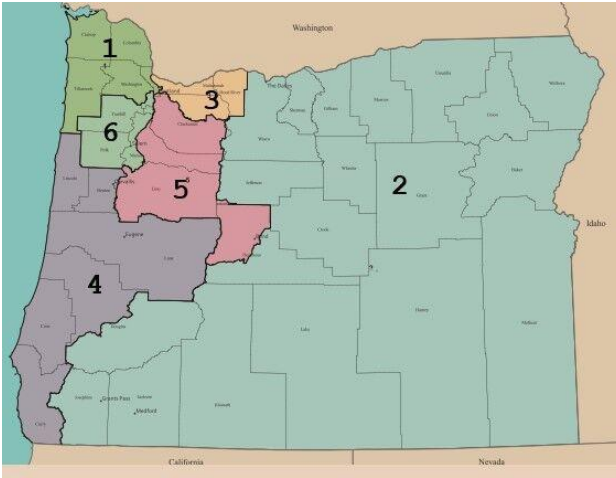
Oregon HS Social Studies and Literacy Standards Addressed in these materials:

- HS.1 * Analyze the positive and negative implications of the US Constitution, Bill of Rights and Amendments, Supreme Court decisions, Federal Laws, and executive orders, for political, legal, economic, and social equality for all, including traditionally marginalized groups.
- HS.2 * Identify and analyze the existence and perpetuation of discrimination and inequity in the local, state, national, or global context.
- HS.3 * Identify, discuss, and explain the exclusionary language and intent of the Oregon and U.S. Constitution and the provisions and process for the expansion and protection of civil rights.
- HS.4 * Describe core elements of early governments that are evident in United States government structure.
- HS.5 * Compare and contrast the United States' republican form of government to direct democracy, theocracy, oligarchy, authoritarianism, and monarchy.
- HS.6 * Examine institutions, functions and processes of the United States government.
- HS.7 * Evaluate the relationships among governments at the local, state, tribal, national, and global levels.
- HS.8 * Examine the institutions, functions, and processes of Oregon's state, county, local and regional governments.
- HS.9 * Analyze political parties, interest and community groups, and mass media and how they influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals, and local, state, and national constituencies.
- HS.11. * Analyze and evaluate the methods for challenging, resisting, and changing society in the promotion of equity, justice and equality.
- HS.39 * Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.
- HS.52 * Evaluate continuity and change over the course of world and United States history.
- HS.60 * Analyze and explain the historic and contemporary examples of social and political conflicts and compromises including the actions of traditionally marginalized individuals and groups addressing inequities, inequality, power, and justice in the U.S. and the world.
- HS.77 Engage in informed and respectful deliberation and discussion of issues, events, and ideas applying a range of strategies and procedures to make decisions and take informed action.
- 9-10.RH.6 Compare the perspectives of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.*
- 9-10.WHST.1b Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
- 11-12.RH.6 Evaluate authors' differing perspectives on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.*
- 11-12.WHST.3 Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation provided.*

Worksheet 1.1

Oregon's Democracy - Basics

1. Visit the The Oregon Blue Book state elections page here:
<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/Pages/state-elections.aspx>
2. Like all states, Oregon has two senators serving in the U.S. Senate. They represent our state in national lawmaking. Our current 2 US Senators for Oregon are Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkeley. The U.S. House of Representatives' seats are based on the population of each state. Because Oregon's population increased to 4,240,137 in the last census, we also now have 6 U.S. representatives. This map shows the new Congressional House District map boundaries.



(map credit: Oregon Capitol Insider, Nov 4, 2022)

Our state level legislature that makes Oregon law is also **bicameral** (made of two houses).

Find who represents you by putting your address in the Legislative District Map:

<https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=fd070b56c975456ea2a25f7e3f4289d1>

State Senator: _____

State Representative: _____

Congressional House: _____

3. Click on your county: <https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/Pages/local/county-population.aspx>

Is your county's population growing or shrinking?

How many people lived in your county in 2022?

4. Explore The Blue Book and list things you learn about our state here:

Lesson 1.1

Primary Source Examination: The Oregon Constitution

Essential Question:

- How do constitutions guide the practices of democracy?

Objectives:

- Students will close read particular sections of the Oregon constitution and analyze the requirements.
- Students will evaluate Oregon's unique approach to state governance.

Definitions:

- **constitution:** a set of fundamental rules that determine how a country or state is run
- **suffrage:** the right to vote in political elections
- **legislature:** an organized body having the authority to make laws for a political unit
- **executive:** having the power to put plans, actions, or laws into effect
- **judicial:** of or relating to a judgment, the function of judging, the administration of justice, including interpreting the meaning of laws
- **impeachment:** to charge a public official with a crime or misconduct
- **amendment:** a change or addition to the terms of a contract or document

Suggested Opener:

Quickwrite: *What is the purpose of a constitution?* and *Why would states need their own constitutions if the USA has one?*

Small Group Inquiry:

Students work in groups to examine [The Oregon Constitution](#), have them answer the following either in writing or orally, according to teacher choice.

Overview

1. Which is longer, the US or the Oregon constitution? Why do you think that would be?
2. How do the two constitutions differ in terms of the organization by topics? Reasons?

Electors

3. Looking at Article II, Sections 1 and 2, who has the right to vote in Oregon and who doesn't?

Campaign Finance

4. Looking at Article II, Section 22, is there a limit on how much an individual can donate to a candidate who is running for office in the individual's district? How do you feel about that?

Who is Eligible for State Legislature

5. Article IV Section 8 stipulates the requirements for representatives in Oregon's state House and Senate. Do you think these are too strict or not strict enough?

Executive Power

6. According to Article V, Section 8a, who acts as Oregon governor if there is a vacancy in between elections?

Administrative Department



7. What does Article VI of the Oregon Constitution say about who is qualified to be Secretary of State or Treasurer of the state? How do you feel about this?

Residency for Justices

8. Why do you think Article VII, Section 2 requires Oregon's Supreme Court Justices to live in the district that elected them?

Impeachment

9. Why do you suppose Article VII, Section 6 and Section 19 prohibit impeachment of public officers?

Note: [House Joint Resolution 16](#) passed unanimously in the Legislature in 2023 and heads to voters for approval in November 2024. This proposed constitutional amendment would allow impeachment of statewide elected officials of the Executive Branch, and would bring Oregon into alignment with the other 49 states, all of which have a process for impeachment..

Amendments

10. According to Article XVII, Section 1, how are constitutional amendments approved?

Closure:

Quickwrite: *What surprised you about the state constitution? What would you change, if anything?*

Adaptations:

Print out the sections needed and pre-highlight the phrases to scaffold the reading for students.

Rather than small group work the teacher could do this as a whole class to think-aloud and model reading difficult primary sources.

Lesson 1.2

Becoming a Voter in Oregon

Essential Question:

- How do people participate in Oregon elections?

Objectives:

- Students will analyze Oregon voter turnout statistics.
- Students will understand how voter registration functions in Oregon.
- Students will distinguish between primary and general elections.
- Students will explore the party platforms of major parties in Oregon.

Definitions:

- **political party:** A political party is made up of individuals who organize to win elections, operate government, and influence public policy.
- **primary election:** a process by which voters can indicate their preference for their party's candidate, or a candidate in general, in an upcoming general election, local election, or by-election.
- **general election:** an election usually held at regular intervals in which candidates are elected in all or most constituencies of a nation or state
- **unaffiliated voter:** is a voter who does not align themselves with a political party.
- **major political party:** a political party with enough electoral strength to periodically gain control of the government or to effectively oppose the party in power.

Opener:

Student warm up/quick write:

1. Compare voter turnout in Oregon's primary vs. general elections here:
<https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Pages/electionsstatistics.aspx>
What do the statistics show you? What are your initial impressions?
2. Go to your county's clerk website to find the latest data on election results here:
<https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Pages/countyofficials.aspx>
What important issues were decided? What percentage of registered voters made those decisions?

Eligibility:

Students: *Are you eligible? Have you already registered? Check here:*

<https://sos.oregon.gov/voting/pages/myvote.aspx?lang=en>

Here's where you can register on the Secretary of State's website if you are 16 years old:

<https://sos.oregon.gov/voting/Pages/registration.aspx?lang=en>

How does the Motor Voter Law work? Explore [here](#) then partner with another student to quiz yourselves on the basics.

Do you think automatic voter registration was a good choice? Why or why not?

Political Parties:

Only party members can vote in Oregon's primary elections, which decide the candidates who will be on the ballot for the general election. Not every voter is a party member. Some are unaffiliated voters. They will not be able to vote for preferred candidates in a primary election, but can vote for any candidate in the general election.

There are 3 parties that qualify as 'major political parties' in Oregon. You can find their party platforms here:

[Oregon Republican Party Platform](#)

[Democratic Party of Oregon Platform and Legislative Priorities](#)

[Independent Party of Oregon](#)

Do any of these resonate with you? Explain.

Extension Activities:

- A. Write a **political party platform of your own**. Make sure to include statements on the following categories: health care, education, housing, the environment, the economy, elections and governance.
- B. Explore the **No Labels Party Movement**. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.
Their platform: <https://www.commonsemajority.org/about>
Ballotpedia's overview: https://ballotpedia.org/No_Labels
Critical take: What To Know About No Labels: Shadowy Political Group Raises Alarms Over A 'Spoiler' 2024 Presidential Candidate, Forbes, Jul 18, 2023
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/saradorn/2023/07/18/what-to-know-about-no-labels-shadowy-political-group-raises-alarms-over-a-spoiler-2024-presidential-candidate/?sh=63d2b2c03c29>

Lesson 1.3

Free and Fair Elections

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Article 21 reads:

“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

Let’s unpack this statement... Use a dictionary to help define words and discuss the text with your classmates:

- What does it mean to have periodic elections? Why does frequency matter?
- What about genuine elections? What does that mean to you?
- What would universal and equal suffrage look like in our country?
- Why do you think it matters that votes are secret?
- If voting procedures are ‘free,’ what does that mean to you?

In the United States, a whole network of governments collaborate to ensure free and fair elections. Take a look at the flowchart on the Department of Homeland Security website:

<https://www.dhs.gov/topics/election-security>

- Which of the components of our elections process do you think is the most vulnerable and in need of oversight? Explain your reasoning.
- Oregon’s Secretary of State oversees the election process in our state. What advice would you give to the current elected official in that important position?

Here’s a primer on the 8 standards for free and fair elections from Facing History & Ourselves:

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/free-fair-elections>

Section 2
Lesson 2.1

Direct Democracy in Oregon

Essential Questions:

- In what ways do voters have direct influence on how Oregon runs?
- What are voters currently considering in Oregon?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy compared to representative democracy?

Objectives:

Students will:

- Distinguish between the various forms of direct democracy allowed by the Oregon constitution.
- Evaluate current ballot proposals.
- Study an issue and propose their own solution to be considered by voters in Oregon.
- Weigh the pros and cons of direct democracy

Vocabulary:

- **legislation:** a law or laws passed by a government
- **initiative:** gives direct legislative power to the voters to enact new laws, change existing laws, or amend the Oregon Constitution.
- **referendum:** allows voters the opportunity to reject legislation adopted by the Oregon Legislature. A referendum usually asks a question or questions to which all eligible electors must vote either 'yes' or 'no'.
- **referral:** The referral process gives voters the opportunity to decide on Constitutional or statutory changes proposed by the Oregon Legislature
- **recall:** to remove elected officials from office before their term is completed
- **ballot measure:** a law, issue, or question that appears on a ballot for voters to decide
- **bond measure:** when voters are asked to authorize a government to issue bonds to pay for specific projects or services, usually repaid by raising taxes
- **levy:** when a government needs more money than it is collecting and asks voters to approve temporary increase on property tax to pay for something specific

Opening Discussion: Ask students to consider why the Constitution established a republic rather than a direct democracy. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having citizens decide each and every issue when it comes to making law? Why would states like Oregon have added direct democracy into their processes in the 20th Century? How has society changed from the colonial times that would have prompted these reforms?

Direct Instruction: Close read the overview of how **Direct Democracy** works in Oregon. Clarify any confusion.

Inquiry: Students can weigh the current proposals with **Investigate a Ballot Measure**. There is also an activity in which students look into local **bonds and levies** on their county clerk’s website.

Application: The **Propose a Ballot Measure** worksheet lets students come up with their own solution, provide evidence, and evaluate the likelihood of getting support.

Assessment: Have students do a **Silent Debate** activity on which type of democracy is best, direct or representative. Start with having students individually read the two points of view (see attached opinion pieces in Handout 2.2) and underline the best arguments on each side. Then have students take on the two positions themselves and debate the question by passing a paper back and forth as the teacher uses a timer. First, have students pair up, sitting side by side with a piece of paper folded in half. Each student will debate the issue, writing on only one side of the paper (have them label which position they are taking at the top of the column). Give at least two minutes of writing time before having students pass the paper to their partner.

Extension Activities:

- Have students investigate the success or failure of past ballot measures and their consequences. This could be an opportunity for more data-based writing or presentations. Example: Ballot measure 110 <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/hsd/amh/pages/measure110.aspx> and <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/06/27/oregon-measure-110-drug-addiction-treatment-model-changes-from-jail-time/>
- Have students look into an issue and how other states are addressing it. For example, what ballot measures are showing up in the aftermath of recent Supreme Court decisions?
- Take the student proposals through the process. Students write their own ballot measures anonymously. Give students star stickers to put on the measures they are most supportive of. Narrow the proposals down to the ones that got at least three stars. Then break the class into teams and have students ‘hired’ to prepare a persuasive elevator speech to convince others to vote for their assigned ballot measure. Listen to speeches. Use Google Forms to create a class ballot and see if any of the measures pass.

An Overview of Direct Democracy

How Does Direct Democracy Work in Oregon?

In 1902, 91 percent of voters approved an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to allow for the initiative and referendum processes. The 1902 decision to give voters the ability to make legislation directly (rather than depend only on their elected representatives), and a 1908 amendment to allow voters to recall public officials were popular reforms across the country during **The Progressive Era**.

Like many Western states, The Oregon Constitution currently provides voters with three methods to directly change state laws (both the Oregon Revised Statutes and the Oregon Constitution) as well as a recall process which allows voters to oust an elected official, by means of a direct vote, while that official is still in the middle of their term.

Initiative

The initiative process gives **direct legislative power to the voters to enact new laws, change existing laws, or amend the Oregon Constitution**

- All initiatives begin as an idea from one or more citizens (this is where the name ‘initiative’ comes from). Any person may be a chief petitioner of an initiative petition and act as the primary sponsor.
- Sponsors must gather signatures to start the process of making it to the ballot.

Referendum

- The referendum process **allows voters the opportunity to reject legislation adopted by the Legislative Assembly**
- If an Act is successfully referred to the ballot it remains **on hold** until the voters determine whether to support or reject the action of the Legislative Assembly.
- The Constitution sets the number of signatures required to qualify a referendum to the ballot

Referral

- A referral is when **a governing body places a question on the ballot for voters to decide**.
- Referrals may be prepared by a state, county, city, or district governing body.
- Any change to the Oregon Constitution passed by the Legislative Assembly requires a referral to voters.

Recall

- The Oregon Constitution allows voters to oust any non-federal public office holder from office before the term has expired.
- If a petition is submitted containing the required number of signatures and the office holder does not resign, an election will be held for voters to decide whether the person should be recalled from office.
- The recall election must be held no later than the 35th day after the last day for the public officer to resign.

Current ballot measures and historical information can be found at Ballotpedia [here](#).

Worksheet 2.1

Investigate a Ballot Measure

Directions: Go to https://ballotpedia.org/Oregon_2024_ballot_measures to review what ideas have qualified for voters to decide this Fall. **Pick one** from the list that interests you and write down some information about it.

Title:

Number:

Type:

Description:

Who has proposed it? What can you find out about this person or group that provides insight into why they have proposed this initiative?

Do you think this proposal is needed by Oregonians? Why or why not?

In your opinion, would this initiative if passed be good for Oregon and Oregonians? Why or why not?

How successful do you think it might be with voters? Explain.

Worksheet 2.2

Bonds and Levies

A **bond** is debt, offered to the public, which must eventually be repaid with interest. By contrast, a levy is a tax that towns, counties, and similar districts impose on local property owners in order to raise money for services. Municipal governments will often have different requirements for levies than for bonds.

A **levy** refers to the act of imposing a tax to raise revenue. For example, a city that needs to raise money will often levy an extra tax on property owners within the city. The city will define the dollar amount it needs. Then it will spread this amount over the city's property owners, assessing the levy on each in proportion to the size and value of their property.

1. *Read these two articles to better understand how bonds and levies work in Oregon.*

<https://pamplinmedia.com/go/42-news/553827-443188-bonds-and-levies-are-completely-different-revenue-sources-pwoff>

<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/05/17/oregon-may-2023-election-levies-for-school-operation/>

2. *Now, investigate your area. Will there be any bonds or levies on the ballot in your county? Go to your county clerk's website by clicking on the county name in the list below the table [here](#) and hunt around for the elections page. Look for links to the next election and then look for measures that will be on the ballot. You should be able to see the official filing which will show you what agency put in the request (parks department, school district, city, etc) and what they are asking voters to approve.*

Describe any of the bonds you find here:

Describe any of the levies you find here:

Do you think any of these will pass? Explain.

If you were a voter, would you approve of any of these? Explain.

Worksheet 2.3

Propose a Ballot Measure

Title of Proposed Ballot Measure:

Is this a (circle one): **Initiative** **Referendum** **Referral**

Describe what this Measure will do if enacted:

How will this Measure help Oregonians?

What evidence do you have that Oregonians need this change? Include your sources.

How likely do you think it is that your ballot measure will be voted in? Why?

Worksheet 2.4

Which Type of Democracy Is Best? Direct or indirect democracy?

Read each point of view and underline the best arguments for each. Then discuss as a class the pros and cons of each.

A. “In devising our political system, the Founders wanted above all to strike a balance between popular government and government by the elite. They did not believe in direct democracy – in which people assemble and administer government in person – because it would prove cumbersome in a country our size, and threatened a vital process: cooling the passions of the moment, encouraging deliberation and reasoned debate, and protecting the right of the minority to be heard and understood. Thus they spoke of the “mortal disease” of popular government that decides by force of numbers and immediate passions.

At the same time, the Founders wanted to ensure that the people were the rulers, not the ruled. So they opted for an indirect democracy in the form of representative government, in which people elect legislators to make decisions. By passing the public’s view through an elected body of citizens who are better positioned to discern the interests of the country, representation prevents the ills of an overbearing majority...

...the initiative process would undermine two principles vital to effective democracy: perspective and deliberation. A ballot measure addresses one issue. But making policy is a matter of choices and setting priorities when faced with a host of issues – many of them worthy, all competing for attention and money. It may seem as though building more prisons and limiting class size are unrelated issues, but they’re not: with a limited budget, doing one often means not doing the other. Legislatures are designed to allow representatives to weigh these matters and make difficult decisions about their priorities. Initiatives are not.

Cumbersome as it might seem, the legislative process allows different interests and points of view to be heard so that complex issues can be fully examined. I’d be the last to say the legislative process always works – indeed, I find the recent trend to short-circuit debate in Congress quite worrisome. But just as worrisome is the prospect of a citizenry deciding difficult questions based on 30-second television commercials.

The Founders opted for representative democracy so we would have a system of decision-making that reflects the complexity and diversity of our society, and permits us to effectively set priorities. Representative democracy enlarges and refines the public view, making it more likely that we’ll arrive at decisions that advance the public good.”

Lee Hamilton, attorney and former member of the U.S. House.

B. “... research shows that direct democracy might improve happiness in two ways.

One is through its psychological effect on voters, making them feel they have a direct impact on policy outcomes. This holds even if they may not like, and thus vote against, a particular proposition. The second is that it may indeed produce policies more consistent with human well being.

The psychological benefits are obvious. By allowing people literally to be the government, just as in ancient Athens, people develop higher levels of political efficacy. In short, they may feel they have some control over their lives. Direct democracy can give people political capital because it offers a means by which citizens may place issues on the ballot for popular vote, giving them an opportunity both to set the agenda and to vote on the outcome...

States that use the initiative tend to have policies that help protect citizen prosperity, health, and security, all of which contribute to greater happiness.

This may be because citizens themselves use the initiative process to implement laws that directly aid them. Or it could be that legislators are more attentive to citizen well being in states that have mechanisms for initiative, referendum, and recall. Either way, the net impact on both satisfaction and well being is positive.

Perhaps more importantly, the study finds that lower and middle income people benefit most from initiatives. Simply put, the happiness of the rich and powerful in a state increases less (or even declines slightly) relative to happiness boost that ordinary citizens receive.

In other words, the greatest increase goes to those who are the least happy to begin with, effectively reducing the “satisfaction inequality” between the rich and poor.”

Professors of political science Benjamin Radcliff and Michael Krassa, Universities of Notre Dame and Illinois, respectively.

Section 3
Lesson 3.1

Voting Behavior

Who votes? Why do they bother? What affects their beliefs and therefore their behaviors regarding political participation? For the disengaged, why are they in the background? This unit helps students examine both their own political socialization and political efficacy, national trends, and comparing voter turnout globally.

Essential Questions:

- How does a person's political socialization affect their vote?
- How does a person's political efficacy affect their vote?
- What factors influence voter turnout of a democratic nation?
- How should democratic societies respond to poor voter turnout?

Objectives:

Students will:

- Identify the influences that form a person's political socialization.
- Distinguish between internal and external political efficacy.
- Examine their own political socialization and efficacy.
- Compare democratic countries voter turnout statistics.
- Evaluate proposed voting reforms.
- Conduct a personal interview with a community member on voting behaviors.

Vocabulary:

- **politics:** the art of guiding or influencing governmental policy
- **political socialization:** the lifelong process through which individuals acquire political attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors. It is the process by which people develop their understanding of politics, political ideologies, and their role in the political system.
- **internal political efficacy:** the comfort a person has in their own skills and knowledge about the political system in order to engage in it
- **external political efficacy:** the belief that the government will respond to an individual's input and reflect their needs and concerns

Preparation:

As the teacher, you will know better what academic vocabulary you may need to pre teach. One word you'll definitely need to start with is politics. Several definitions:

Politics is the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status.

Politics includes the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power.

Politics is basically about who gets what, when and how.

Opener:

1. Have students silently write a list of people whose opinions they trust. They can be personal acquaintances or public figures, or anyone in between.
2. Next, have students write what makes those people trustworthy.
3. Then have them complete the grid on the handout What Influences my Political Opinions? to rank how much influence types of people have.

Direct Instruction:

1. Using a projector, show the overview film clip on Political Socialization: <https://youtu.be/yS0eJJGuQaw> Alternatively, you could have them do a reading on it: <https://www.thoughtco.com/political-socialization-5104843> Check for understanding.
2. Have students then answer the question below the grid on What Influences My Political Opinions? handout.
3. Discuss as a class the comparisons between students' answers and the video.
4. Transition from who influences people to how likely they are to get involved in shaping their communities. Have students read the Political Efficacy sheet then watch the short video of the definition.
5. Then direct students do the survey questions to assess their own political efficacy. Assist them in determining what their answers for each question indicate.

Inquiry:

1. Have students read the linked articles and explore the data on who votes and answer the analytical questions on Parts 1 and 2 of Who Votes?
2. Have students debate compulsory voting after they complete Part 3 of Who Votes?

Assessment:

1. Move on to Part 4 of Who Votes? to the proposed reforms to increase voter turnout by first reading the Fair Votes website, then give a personal response on paper.
2. Discuss as a class.
3. Move from discussion to decision making. See if you can get them to come to consensus on a reform that the entire class agrees with.

Extension:

Have students interview a person in their community about their voting behavior using the Interview Form.

Worksheet 3.1

What Influences My Political Opinions?

Rate the following values and areas of your life that most influence your political opinions and ideas by checking the box that most applies (you can fill in some of your own at the bottom).

Issue/Value	5 Really Important	4 Sort of Important	3 Neutral	2 Very little Importance	1 Not important at all
My family's opinions					
My age					
My education level					
My job/job plans					
My religious beliefs					
My race/ethnicity					
My gender identity					
My family's income level					
What my favorite celebrities think					
Who the current president is					
My friends' opinions					
Where I live					
Other (write in)					
Other (write in)					

Now, watch this overview of Political Socialization: <https://youtu.be/yS0eJJGuQaw>

Compare: how similar are your influences to what the video presents?

Worksheet 3.2



Political Efficacy

Maybe you've heard someone say that 'the system is rigged,' that their 'vote won't affect anything,' or that 'politics are too complicated to follow.' The way you feel about your role in the political process indicates your level of political efficacy.

Political efficacy is the feeling that individual political action does or can have an impact on the political process. It has two parts:

→ **internal efficacy**: the comfort a person has in their own skills and knowledge about the political system in order to engage in it

→ **external efficacy**: the belief that the government will respond to an individual's input and reflect their needs and concerns

For some explanation, watch this overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dN1UKY7FDw>

Survey: Answer with: **strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree**

Internal Efficacy

1. I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people.
2. I think I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.
3. I don't often feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government.
4. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
5. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.
6. Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

External Efficacy

1. There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.
2. If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen.
3. Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.
4. People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

Given which statements you most agreed with, do you have high or low efficacy? Check one:

- High internal and high external
- High internal low external
- Low internal and low external
- Low internal and high external

Looking to the future, what could change your internal or external political efficacy?

Worksheet 3.3

Who Votes?

Part 1: *Examine the data on voter turnout in on The United States Elections Project's website:*

<https://www.electproject.org/national-1789-present>

<https://www.electproject.org/election-data/voter-turnout-demographics>

<https://www.electproject.org/2022g>

According to the graphs, who is most likely to vote in the US?

- In terms of race/ethnicity?
- In terms of age?
- In terms of education level?

What do you think are the reasons for these differences?

Look at the way the graphs were made. How could you change the x or y axis to affect the impression a person gets from reading the very same data?

Part 2: *Now take a look at how 2020 differed from the past. According to the Census Bureau, here's how the election went:*

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/2020-presidential-election-voting-and-registration-tables-now-available.html>

In what ways did voter turnout in the 2020 election differ from prior elections?

What do you think will be the trends in the November 2024 general election?

Part 3: *There is a wide range of democratic systems around the world. Take a look at the voter turnouts of some of these countries, then do some analysis. Start with the Council on Foreign Relations Brief:*

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-does-us-voter-turnout-compare-rest-world>

How does the U.S. voter turnout compare to the rest of the world?

According to the article, what factors affect voter turnout?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of low voter turnout in a democratic nation?

Part 4: *According to their website, “FairVote is a nonpartisan organization seeking better elections for all. We research and advance voting reforms that make democracy more functional and representative for every American.” This organization proposes several ways to increase voter turnout. Take a look:*

https://www.fairvote.org/voter_turnout#how_can_we_increase_voter_turnout

Which of these reforms do you think would be effective, if any?

Is there something else you think needs to change to get more Americans to vote?

Worksheet 3.4

Interview Form

Interviewer Name:

Date of Interview:

Interviewee Name (optional):

Interview method: _____ in person _____ phone/text _____ email

1. What is your role in the community (student, parent, business person, volunteer, teacher, etc.)

2. Age?

3. Education level?

4. Do you plan to vote in the May 21, 2024 Primary Election? (circle one): YES / NO
How about in the November 5, 2024 General Election? (circle one): YES / NO

5. What are your thoughts on Oregon's vote by mail system?

6. Why do you or don't you participate in elections?

7. Who/what influences your political opinions?

8. What do you think the biggest issue will be for voters in the 2024 elections (either in Oregon or the whole country)?

Section 4
Lesson 4.1

Voting Rights Unit

Essential Questions:

- How have voting rights changed throughout U.S. history?

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- discuss how the U.S. Constitution and federal legislation address voting rights
- identify major moments in the history of voting rights in the U.S.
- explain current debates around voting rights in the U.S.

Vocabulary:

suffrage: the right to vote, especially in a political election

act: a formal decision, law, or the like, by a legislature, ruler, court, or other authority; decree or edict; statute; judgment, resolve, or award

amendment: an addition or change made to a constitution, statute, or legislative bill or resolution

clemency: the process by which a governor, president, or administrative board may reduce a defendant's sentence or grant a pardon

disenfranchisement: the state of being deprived of a right or privilege, especially the right to vote.

felon: anyone who's been convicted of a serious crime

gerrymandering: manipulation of the boundaries of a voting district so as to favor one party or class.

incarcerated: to be confined by public authority or under due legal process serving a criminal sentence in a correctional institution

poll tax: a tax of a fixed amount per adult person that is often linked to the right to vote.

Who Can Vote?

Opener

Begin with a **Four Corners** exercise to get students thinking about major voting issues in U.S. history. Place four signs (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) at different points around the room. Ask students to stand up, and each time you read a statement, they should move to the part of the room that most aligns with their beliefs. It's important to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers in this activity—this is a chance for students to share their views or, if these are things they've never thought about before, start to make sense of their own opinions. Here are statements for the teacher to read and for students to respond to by walking to the sign that fits their reaction:

1. *If people want to vote, they should have to pass a basic literacy test in order to do so.*
2. *I think that the system we have for voting in Oregon (with mail-in ballots for all) is a more reliable way to get more people to vote.*
3. *I believe that voter fraud is a real problem that needs to be addressed in current and future elections.*
4. *Only people who are educated on the issues should be able to vote.*
5. *The more people who vote, the better chance there is that views like mine will be adopted.*
6. *Voting is so important to the functioning of our society that if people don't vote, they should be required to pay a fine, do community service, or spend time in jail as a consequence.*

After discussing each of these points, provide students with an overview of what you'll be focusing your conversations on around voting rights. Explain some basic background on each of these points:

1. there used to be literacy tests for people to vote (primarily to exclude Blacks from voting);
2. states with mail-in voting consistently have much higher rates of voter participation than those where people have to vote in person;
3. there was virtually no fraud at all in the 2020 election (one election official said the odds of voter fraud were about as likely as a person being struck by lightning), and despite vocal debates about voter fraud, it has been documented over and over that it is exceedingly rare in the U.S.;
4. historically, landowners or people with a certain level of wealth could vote since the general public wasn't trusted to make good decisions;
5. there isn't any hard and fast evidence in one direction or another about rates of voter participation—sometimes high rates of participation lead to conservative/Republican policies, other times high rates of participation favor more liberal/Democratic policies;
6. voting has never been required in the history of the United States—it has never been widely discussed that people should be required to vote.

Historical Analysis:

This activity asks students to delve into the history of voting in the United States. Students will read over a comprehensive timeline of the history of voting and color code each milestone as an expansion or contraction of voting rights using Worksheet 4.1 Voting Rights Expansion & Contraction in the U.S.

Voting Laws: The Current Landscape

Overview:

Each election cycle brings on a new set of legislative proposals to expand or restrict voting rights at the state level. As partisanship intensifies and recent Supreme Court rulings have relaxed several key oversight provisions of the Voting Rights Act, the most intense battles over who gets to vote have happened more locally. This lesson provides students with an up-to-date overview of voting laws in advance of the 2024 elections and asks them to consider some of their own views about laws recently enacted or currently under consideration.

Survey:

Hand out the Worksheet 4.2 Voting Issues Survey: Expansionist or Restrictionist? and have each student complete the survey individually and silently.

After students have finished the survey, provide them with the following key so they can understand what their responses to these questions say about their voting beliefs:

If your score is 10–16, you tend to hold views similar to Voting Expansionists.

If your score is 17–23, you tend to hold views of both Voting Expansionists and Voting Restrictionists.

If your score is 24–30, you tend to hold views similar to Voting Restrictionists.

Then, ask students about their views on some of the statements. In addition to inquiring about what views they took on specific statements, question students about which policies they would be most likely to pursue or be against if they were an elected lawmaker.

Inquiry:

Provide a brief overview about the role that lawmakers play in setting voting laws. From the previous activity, students may remember that the Voting Rights Act (passed in 1965 and most recently reauthorized in 2006 for 25 years) provides federal guidelines over voting. In 2021, two key pieces of legislation (the Freedom To Vote Act and the John L. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act) passed the House but failed to receive enough votes in the Senate. While these debates played out at the national level, states took an active role in determining the rules for their own elections.

Students should read the [Brennan Center's 2023 Voting Laws Roundup](#) for a recent analysis of state-level legislation. As they read, have them categorize voting proposals addressed in the article as Expansionist or Restrictionist using Worksheet 4.3 Inquiry: Voting Rights Roundup.

Because this is a long article, consider dividing students into groups or assigning different parts of the article to individual students. Students can do a jigsaw or complete mini-presentations to share what they learned in the section of the article they read in order to move quickly through detailed information.

Decide: Should 16 Year Olds Have the Right To Vote?**Overview:**

As far back as 1971, when the 26th Amendment gave 18 year olds the right to vote, some activists have argued that the voting age should be even lower. In this activity, students will read two articles (both of which include input from high-school students) and analyze the arguments behind different perspectives.

Opener:

Begin by showing CBS San Diego's video: Why is the voting age 18? about the history of the legal voting age in the United States: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7D638F6QK0>.

Activity:

Using Handouts 4.1 and 4.2, have students read two contrasting opinion pieces about whether or not to lower the voting age. As they read the articles, have them complete Worksheet 4.6 titled "Analysis: Should 16 Year Olds Have the Right To Vote?"

After students have completed their analysis, have each student stand up at their seats and give a one-sentence speech (micro-testimony!) in support of their own belief. It can be as simple as saying, "I believe 16 year olds should/should not have the right to vote because _____."

Geographic Study: Disenfranchisement for Crime**Overview:**

All but four U.S. states and territories have some prohibitions on the voting rights of people who are incarcerated, on parole, or who were formerly in the criminal-justice system. In all, over 5 million people in the United States were deemed ineligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election due to

their status within the criminal justice system. Among the many proposals to expand voting rights in the United States, ex-felon re-enfranchisement remains one of the most controversial ideas.

Opener:

Begin the activity with a quick poll. Almost all U.S. states and territories have rules preventing people in prison with felony convictions (murder, armed robbery, sexual assault, etc.) from voting. Over half of all states extend the prohibition on voting to people who have completed their sentences, who are on parole, or who are no longer part of the criminal justice system.

There are 4 approaches to this issue currently in practice in the United States:

1. Felons never lose the right to vote
2. Right to vote is lost only while incarcerated and is automatically restored after release
3. Right to vote is lost until completion of sentence (parole and/or probation, fines, fees and restitution) and is automatically restored afterwards
4. Right to vote is lost until completion of sentence, with additional action required for restoration

Students: *Hands up showing which number best fits your opinion at this point in time. You can change your mind at any time.*

Inquiry:

Have students complete Handout 4.7 Mapping Disenfranchisement for Crime using the information in the Table 1 from the National Conference of State Legislatures on Restoration of Voting Rights for Felons: <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights>

Media Literacy:

Have students complete Worksheet 4.8 Evaluating a Source on The New York Times video story: Why Florida's Ex-Felons Should Be Able to Vote. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCNIyHid5LM>

Supplementary Background Reading:

“Voting Rights in the Era of Mass Incarceration: A Primer,” Joyce Chung, The Sentencing Project, July 28, 2021. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/voting-rights-in-the-era-of-mass-incarceration-a-primer/>

Redistricting

Overview:

The results of the 2020 Census changed the distribution of seats in Congress to reflect population changes. Redrawing the boundaries of each voting district is a process that differs from state to state and never pleases everybody. Inevitably, critics of new boundaries will accuse map designers of **gerrymandering**. The process of **redistricting** in Oregon was predictably contentious. Lawsuits were filed, ballot measures and legislative changes proposed, but the issue remains heated.

Concept Attainment Lesson: What is gerrymandering?

1. Show this film clip then ask students to turn to a partner afterwards and try to explain the concept of gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering: Controversial Political Redistricting Explained, History Channel
<https://youtu.be/Fm9hi1QkLVQ>

Give them Handout 4.9 What Is Gerrymandering? so they can read about the concept as well as hear about it.

2. Break students into groups of four to chunk and then share the reading aloud of this article: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/redistricting-battles-could-determine-control-us-house-2024-2023-08-03/>

Then have the groups discuss the situation: *In most of these situations, the courts will determine if a map is valid or not. Why are the outcomes of these cases so important to American democracy? Explain what is at stake?*

3. Show this news clip on Oregon's redistricting maps. Link: <https://youtu.be/3mRxvA9-qSs>
Then brainstorm as a class: *Do you think there's a better way do this whole redistricting process? If so, what would it be?*
4. For additional context: "Redistricting Commissions: What Works" (Brennan Center for Justice, July 24, 2018):
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/redistricting-commissions-what-works>

Voting Rights Expansion & Contraction in the U.S.

Highlighting key: *indicate here what color you will use for each by highlighting the key*

- Expansion of voting rights
- Contraction of voting rights

1776 – White men with property can vote. Free Black men can vote in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut. (In Maryland, between 1776 and 1783, free Black men could vote; after 1810, no Black men at all were allowed to vote.)

1789 – First U.S. government under the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution, as originally written, did not define a citizen. Any citizen of a state was deemed a citizen of the nation. At the time, most states only granted the right to vote to white male property owners. Poor people, women, Native Americans, and African Americans cannot vote.

1790 – 1790 Naturalization Act. The right to vote is tied directly to citizenship status; it is only for whites who have lived in the country for two years. In 1798, the law was changed so immigrant whites have to live in the U.S. for 14 years before they can become citizens. This changed to five years after 1902.

1820 – The property laws are taken off the books and whites could vote even if they do not own property. But they must pay a poll tax or be able to read, and, in some places, they must pass religious tests before they can vote.

1848 – The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War. The treaty guarantees citizenship to Mexicans living in the newly acquired territories of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, and Nevada. However, Mexican-Americans are not allowed to vote despite having U.S. citizenship. Property laws, language, and literacy requirements are the favored way of keeping people from voting. There were also the Night Riders who use intimidation and violence.

***** 1861 – 1865 – U.S. Civil War *****

1865 – 13th Amendment. In the aftermath of the Civil War, three amendments (collectively known as the Reconstruction Amendments) were ratified that expressly addressed the role of Blacks in America: the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. The Thirteenth Amendment was the first step towards full suffrage for Black adult males, because it abolished slavery in the U.S.

1866 – Civil Rights Act of 1866 grants citizenship to native-born Americans but excludes Native Americans.

1868 – 14th Amendment. The Fourteenth Amendment defines the U.S. citizen, and thus clarifies who may vote: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.” Children of immigrants, even illegal immigrants, are citizens and may vote when they come of age. However, this amendment does not expressly grant suffrage to non-whites and women. It does set the legal age for voting at 21. This amendment also allows a state to remove the right to vote for “participation in rebellion, or other crime.” As a result, most states still ban incarcerated felons from voting, and several states extend that ban to ex-felons.

1870 – 15th Amendment. The Fifteenth Amendment forbids the federal government and the states from using a citizen’s race, color, or previous status as a slave as a disqualification for voting. By this amendment, suffrage is granted for Black adult males, but not females. Many in the women’s suffrage movement condemned the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments as unfair to women.

1870 – After the 15th Amendment established the right of African American males to vote, states (especially in the South) found ways to keep most African Americans from voting, both through legislation and through violence and intimidation. Methods included: poll taxes, reading requirements, physical violence, property destruction, hiding the polls, and economic pressures. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is a major part of the violence and intimidation used to keep African Americans from voting.

1882 – The Chinese Exclusion Act bars people of Chinese ancestry from becoming citizens. They cannot vote.

1887 – The Dawes Act gives citizenship only to Native Americans who give up their tribal affiliations.

1920 – 19th Amendment. By the turn of the century, women were voting in many western states, but most states still banned them from the voting booth. In 1920, after several failed attempts, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. This amendment prohibits states or the federal government from restricting suffrage based on gender; however, due to state laws and both state and extralegal violence against African Americans in many states, the Nineteenth Amendment only guarantees white women the right to vote.

1921 – The Sons of America are organized to fight for equality and the rights of Mexican Americans as citizens, including the right to vote. It will be 1975 before the right to vote is available to all Mexican Americans.

1922 – In the case of *Takao v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court upholds the 1790 Naturalization Act that barred Asian Americans from becoming citizens. This enforces the policy of no voting rights for Asian immigrants.

1923 – A court ruling decides that Asian Indians are eligible for citizenship. Technically, as citizens, they can now vote. However, almost all immigrants who are people of color continue to be denied the right to vote.

1924 – The service of Native Americans during World War I helps to bring about the **1924 Indian Citizenship Act**. The Act grants Native Americans citizenship, but many western states refuse to allow them to vote. Some of the tactics used to discourage voting include physical violence, destruction of property, economic pressures, poll taxes, hiding the polls, and reading requirements.

1943 – The Chinese Exclusion Act is repealed, making immigrants of Chinese ancestry eligible for citizenship.

1946 – Filipinos are now allowed to become citizens.

1952 – The McCarran-Walter Act repeals racial restrictions of 1790 Naturalization Law. First-generation Japanese can now become citizens.

1961 – 18th Amendment. This amendment, for the first time, grants District of Columbia voters the ability to participate in presidential elections.

1964 – 24th Amendment. In the century that followed the Civil War, racial tension persisted. Five southern states still had a poll tax, which was eliminated by this amendment. The Supreme Court declared that even a \$1.50 poll tax was an unfair burden.

1965 – The Voting Rights Act. After Blacks were granted the right to vote in 1871, literacy requirements, physical violence, property destruction, hiding the polls, and economic pressures still kept many Blacks from voting, particularly in the South. In some states, a voter could vote in primary elections only if his grandfather had been able to vote in primaries; other states only allowed whites to vote in the primaries. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted in direct response to the Civil Rights movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. The Act bans literacy tests in the Deep South and provides federal enforcement of Black voter registration and voting rights. This Act affects Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. It also applies in Alaska.

1970 – The 1970 Voting Rights Act banned literacy tests in 20 states, including New York, Illinois, California, and Texas.

1971 – 26th Amendment. The 26th Amendment gives voting rights to 18 year olds in response to protests about men under 21 drafted for the Vietnam War but not able to vote. This amendment sets the voting age at 18 across the nation for all elections.

1975 – Voting Rights Act Reauthorization. By 1972, most adult citizens of the U.S. had the right to vote based on provisions in the Constitution. Congress amended the Voting Rights Act in 1975 to include language assistance for minority voters, who often could not vote if ballots and instructions were only available in English. Because of the Reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, the right to vote is now available to all Mexican Americans.

1990 – Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA addressed the need for physical access to the ballot and to the polls for all Americans.

2000 – Vote fraud scandals in Florida and elsewhere. Thousands of eligible voters are prevented from voting. Over one million ballots are never counted.

2001 – Help America Vote Act (HAVA) is passed and requires states to upgrade to electronic voting.

2013 – In the Supreme Court’s 5-4 decision in *Shelby County v Holder*, the 1965 Voting Rights Act was altered to remove restrictions on states which historically had limited voter access and immediately states began enacting policies that limit access to voting polls.

2023- In the case *Allen v Milligan*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld that Alabama’s 2021 redistricting plan for its seven U.S. House seats violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, and that the district court correctly applied binding Supreme Court precedent to conclude that Alabama’s redistricting map likely violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Chief Justice John Roberts authored the majority opinion of the Court.

Sources: *CNN’s Student News One Sheet: The Right To Vote*; Karen Rouse

Your Analysis:

Use this space to interpret the history you just read. What trends did you notice? What were the common causes and effects?

Your Responses:

What do you think/feel about these historical trends?

Your predictions:

What do you think will happen in the future to voting rights?

Worksheet 4.2

Voting Issues Survey: Expansionist or Restrictionist?

The following are voting policies that have been proposed or enacted in different states throughout the country. For each statement listed below, please enter a score based on how much you agree with the statement.

3: Agree

2: Neutral

1: Disagree

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Score</i>
1. Voters should be required to show a photo ID when they cast their ballot.	
2. In states where people vote in person, Election Day should not be a holiday—if voting is important to people, they need to make the time to go to the polls.	
3. Mail-in voting creates too many opportunities for voter fraud. States should not be allowed to use it, and people who vote need to do so in person, at a polling location.	
4. Poll workers should not be able to pass out water and snacks to people who have to wait in long lines. There is too much risk of influencing people’s votes.	
5. In many places currently, when elderly people or people with disabilities are unable to get to the polling locations themselves, they can give an absentee ballot and have someone else deliver it. (It’s sometimes known as ballot harvesting.) This is another practice that encourages voter fraud, and it should be outlawed.	
6. When people turn in their ballots, their vote should be disqualified if their signature does not match exactly to the one that’s on file.	
7. Voting hours should be the same everywhere, even if it means shutting down polling locations at times when some people can’t vote.	
8. College students need to vote from their parents’/guardians’ home address. They should not be able to vote from campus, even if it means they need to return home in order to vote.	
9. Anyone who wants to observe voters as they wait in line should be able to ask people questions to help make sure that no one is cheating or casting a ballot for another person.	
10. Ballot drop boxes (similar to large metal blue mailboxes) create too much risk of fraud and should therefore be outlawed.	
TOTAL SCORE (add your score from lines 1–10)	

Worksheet 4.3

Inquiry: Voting Rights Roundup

As you review the [Brennan Center's 2023 Voting Laws Roundup](#) summary, track the different proposals mentioned in the article.

Issue/Proposal	State(s) Proposed	Brief Description	Expansionist (E) or Restrictionist (R)?



Handout 4.1

Give Young People the Vote

Jeremi Suri, Samuel J. Abrams (with contributions by Zachary Suri), *The Hill*, December 28, 2021

(Source: <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/587055-give-young-people-the-vote/?r=1>)

Since the start of the pandemic, many 16- and 17-year-old Americans have proven that they possess the social responsibility and political maturity to help elect better leaders. Their future is at stake — perhaps more than ever — in the decisions our society makes about climate change and global health. An aging electorate has not shown that it can make better choices.

The United States should do what the new governing coalition in Germany, Europe’s largest democracy, has pledged to do: lower the voting age to 16. It is time to give younger voices — more than 8 million men and women — a chance to be heard.

The challenges of COVID-19 have hit Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) particularly hard. They have endured separation from peers, online Zoom schooling and confinement during the years they most seek independence and adventure. Many have become primary caregivers for siblings, parents and other relatives, or have had to confront the mortality of loved ones. They have learned to vaccinate, mask up, socially distance and adopt other protection measures.

We have only begun to understand the social effects of these experiences, but no one can deny the pervasive resilience and sense of interdependence among those attending high school. They understand the tough realities of our world from the personal trials few of their predecessors endured. They have earned a say in our elections.

The time has passed for arguing that 16- and 17-year-olds are “not ready” to vote. They are better prepared to address crucial issues confronting our democracy than any generation since those who returned from World War II.

Every 50 years, Americans have expanded the eligible voting electorate as historical circumstances support a pragmatic and moral claim to enfranchise more of the population. There is nothing sacrosanct about race, sex or age when it comes to voting. The Civil War opened voting rights for Black men. Industrialization and World War I helped women gain suffrage. World War II and the Vietnam War pushed the voting age down from 21 to the age of military service at the time: 18. Today, men and women under 18 serve in all of our military branches (the legal age is 17), as well as on the frontlines in hospitals, grocery stores and other essential facilities that are high-risk for COVID.

Reducing the voting age is something we can do, despite partisan gridlock. The Constitution does not set a minimum age for voting. The 26th Amendment, ratified in 1971, stipulates that 18-year-old citizens cannot have their right to vote denied “on account of age.” It does not prohibit those under 18 from voting, and some states allow 17-year-olds to participate in primaries.

States should take the lead as they did before the passage of the 19th Amendment, when women voted in 27 states. State legislatures set requirements for voting in elections within their borders, and they can reduce the minimum voting age to 16 through legislation. Congress can do the same for federal elections, but it is not necessary, since American elections are primarily run by the states.

These changes should begin before the 2022 elections. Opening the electorate to younger voters will help to reverse the recent efforts in some states to restrict voting. A larger, younger population of voters may break apart some of the partisan divides, forcing statewide candidates to address issues that Generation Z cares about. Several gerrymandered congressional districts might become more competitive.

Fourteen states with Democratic legislatures and governors — California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Illinois, Delaware, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine and Hawaii — could set a new voting age. We would expect moderate and young Democratic candidates to benefit most. This would be especially true in the battleground states of Nevada and Maine where new voters might tip elections to Democrats. In a closely divided Senate and House of Representatives, younger voters in a few areas could make a difference in determining which party holds the majority. This is also true for presidential elections.

Republican states soon would face pressures to enfranchise their own 16- and 17-year-olds. Which parents would accept that their high schoolers remain locked out of voting booths? Younger voters in Republican states could help break the extremists’ stranglehold on the party, pulling some candidates back to centrist positions on the environment, health and social issues.

In one way, Generation Z already has entered politics. After George Floyd's killing by a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020, many young people took action to try to reverse the country's history of racism. They participated in peaceful demonstrations. They gained hands-on experience with organizing, lobbying and community-building. And they inspired a racial awakening that reverberated through media, government, education and business. Young people demand that diversity, equity and inclusion are mainstream subjects in our society. They have proven they can make change, even involving controversial issues.

Zachary Suri, a student at Liberal Arts and Science Academy High School in Austin, Texas, a published poet and co-host of the podcast This is Democracy, contributed to this report.

Climate change and health disparities are potential apocalypses that confound older voters and their elected representatives. Congress has remained deadlocked while the planet warms with extreme weather events; more than 800,000 Americans have died from COVID; and life expectancy has declined in parts of the United States. Recent surveys show that members of Generation Z take these issues seriously and they are determined to make a difference. Why should those in high school stay content to watch their elders do little? They have a strong moral claim on choosing leaders who might help save the planet and prevent more pandemics.

The rise in mass shootings in the United States, particularly in schools, also deserves mention. Recent policy decisions about policing and gun ownership have failed to reverse the frequency of domestic massacres. Students may die because of inaction from politicians; shouldn't students have some say in who holds elected offices?

Lowering the voting age is not a cure-all for the many challenges confronting the American political system. It will expand the electorate by only about 3 percent, but that may encourage additional attention to neglected citizens. It could make our elections more representative of our nation as a whole. New voters promise new possibilities when advanced democracies, such as the United States and Germany, need them most.

Jeremi Suri is the Mack Brown Distinguished Chair for Leadership in Global Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin and the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. He is the co-host of the podcast This is Democracy.

Samuel J. Abrams is a professor of politics at Sarah Lawrence College and a nonresident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Handout 4.2

Commentary: Why voting age should not be lowered

Ilona Van der Linden, *San Diego Union Tribune*, September 11, 2019

(Source:

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/story/2019-09-11/why-voting-age-should-not-be-lowered>)

Political literacy is very important to me. I've always had a fascination with history, government and how laws worked, prompting me to join programs such as Model United Nations and California YMCA Youth and Government. I've had some wonderful history and English teachers who have taught me the importance of thorough research, rhetorical analysis and source-checking, helping me maintain a well-rounded understanding of both sides of an issue.

I consider myself to be fairly well-versed in political history and current events, but I know this isn't the case for many of my peers. Most California teenagers don't have access to the experiences and resources that I have. Though some have taken the extra steps to become engaged in our democracy, most don't sufficiently understand its nuance — and many students simply adopt the political beliefs of their parents without a second thought.

Yes, there are voting adults who cast their votes in a disinterested or uninformed manner, but they are the ones paying the taxes and being directly impacted by the laws passed by our elected officials. They should, by all means, legally have a say in issues that directly affect them and their money.

As a teenager, I'm unable to work without a special permit, don't pay a single penny in taxes and can't legally enter contracts without a guardian's permission. At the end of the day, I'm widely unaffected by our legislators. At 18, I can say that I am fully affected by every decision made by those in power, and should have a full and complete say in who gets to control the government.

It can be argued that many 17-year-olds are just as intellectually mature as their 18-year-old counterparts. However, if intellectual maturity is what we're seeking, then the voting age should really be 25, when the prefrontal cortex and the brain's reward system fully develop and balance out, respectively.

Yet that isn't the case as maturity has nothing to do with the voting age. Intelligence also can't be used as a qualifier. Adults with mental disabilities are still guaranteed the right to vote under the same qualifications as everyone else. In short, there's no concrete developmental basis for why 18 is the age we're old enough to vote at all.

The voting age may be a legal construct, but it ties into the fact that 18 is the age at which teenagers acquire the vast majority of their rights as adults. Take, for example, the most recent national lowering of the voting age. This came in 1971, when the U.S. government lowered it from 21 to 18.

Though some attribute the lowering primarily to student protests due to the tensions of wartime, it wasn't the deciding factor. At the time, 18-year-olds were enlisting and being drafted into the military, laying down their lives overseas in the Vietnam War. The individuals who were being drafted were incredulous that they were being denied the right to choose the political leaders who were determining the battles they fought.

Yes, 16 is the general age at which teenagers gain a new relationship with the law. Minors are given certain rights that enable them to become responsible for themselves. They're able to work, get emancipated and attain a driver's license (in most states), but there's both logical and legal initiatives behind all of these.

Though the voting age may be an arbitrary legal standard, it takes into account the completion of a high school education, the full opportunity to be versed in government, legal independence, and coming into one's complete rights as a U.S. citizen. Changing it would be akin to suggesting that all of the factors that have led to it being set at 18 in the first place simply don't matter.

Van der Linden is a senior at Canyon Crest Academy

Analysis: Should 16 Year Olds Have the Right To Vote?

Give Young People the Vote

As you read this editorial, list the three most persuasive points made in favor of giving young people the right to vote.

a.

b.

c.

Commentary: Why voting age should not be lowered

As you read this editorial, list the three most persuasive points made against lowering the voting age.

a.

b.

c.

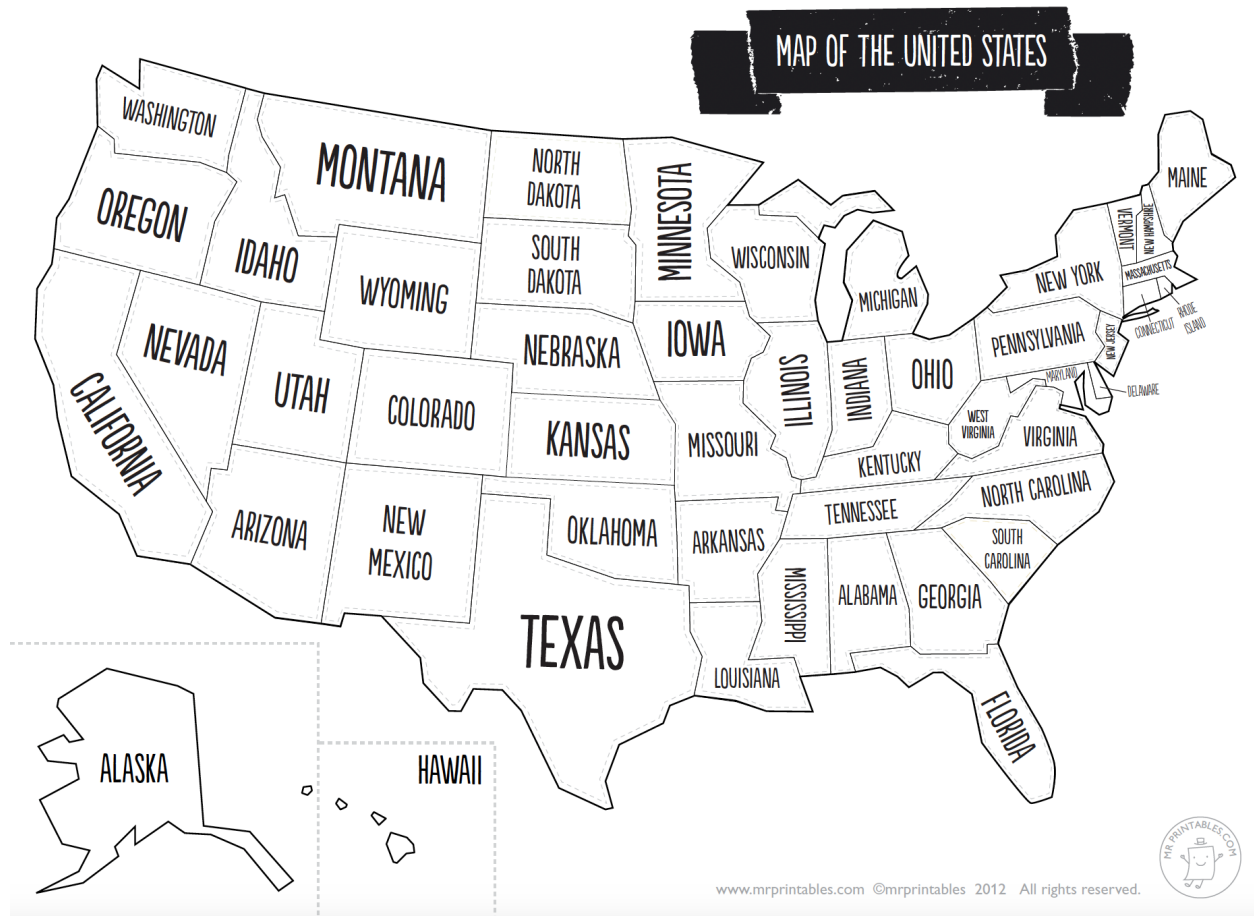
Your take: Do you believe that the voting age should be lowered from 18 to 16? What arguments would you make to convince others of your perspective?

Handout 4.7

Mapping Disenfranchisement for Crime

Students: Color code the map of the states using the data found on Table 1 from the National Conference of State Legislatures on Restoration of Voting Rights for Felons:

<https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights>



Key:

- Felons never lose the right to vote
- Right to vote is lost only while incarcerated and is automatically restored after release
- Right to vote is lost until completion of sentence and is automatically restored afterwards
- Right to vote is lost until completion of sentence, with additional action required

Analyze:

What geographic trends do you notice?

What do you think influences these approaches to voting rights?

Media Literacy - Evaluating a Source

For years, the State of Florida has been a major battleground in the debate over restoring voting rights to ex-felons. In 2018, almost 2/3 of Floridians voted in favor of a ballot initiative to give ex-felons the right to vote. Since then, the Florida state legislature and governor have instituted additional rules that have made it difficult for ex-felons to vote. Just prior to the 2018 vote, *The New York Times* created this video story: [Why Florida's Ex-Felons Should Be Able to Vote | NYT - Opinion](#). Evaluate that opinion piece using the following worksheet.

<p>Author and Origin: Who created this? What can you find out about the author? How could the author’s background affect their perspective? When and where was this published?</p>	
<p>Audience and Purpose: Who is the targeted audience? What is the intent of the author and publisher with producing this piece? How do you know?</p>	
<p>Content: What did you learn from this source? What information is missing? Did it broaden your understanding of the subject? In what ways could it have been more effective?</p>	
<p>Context: What is the context or setting in which the event is happening? In other words, what was going on at the same time/place that is relevant to understanding this source? Historical background?</p>	
<p>Tone: What is the attitude of the author toward this subject matter? How does the author’s word choice convey their tone? How does that affect your perception of the subject matter?</p>	
<p>Inquiry: What questions do you still need answered to fully understand this topic? Where would you search to find the answers? Whose perspectives are missing from this source?</p>	

Handout 4.9

What Is Gerrymandering?

At the writing of the Constitution, the Framers decided to leave it up to the states to decide how they would pick their Representatives for Congress. The only requirement was that it had to be based on population. The population count is to be updated every 10 years, according to the Constitution.

Many states took to dividing up voting districts to favor certain political parties or interest groups. In 1812, the word “Gerry-mander” was created to describe Massachusetts Governor Gerry’s contorted drawing of voting districts to favor his political party. The “mander” part of the word was taken from the fact that his newly drawn districts looked like a strange salamander

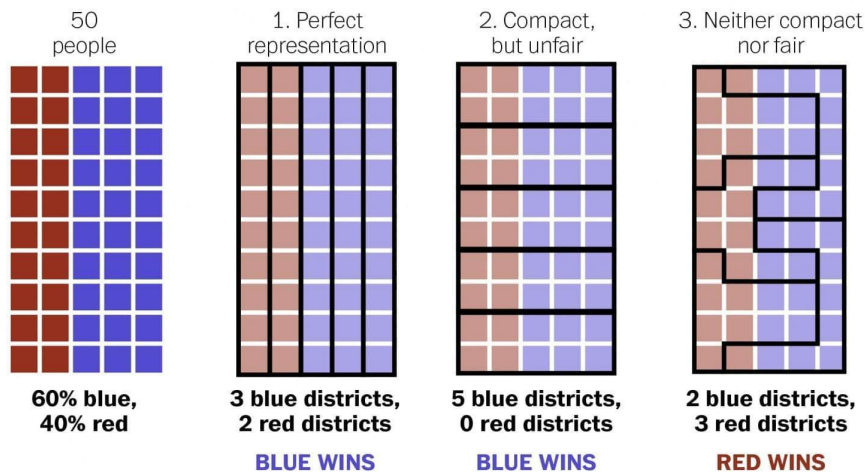
From then on, the practice of trying to draw voting district lines to favor a group has been known as “gerrymandering.”

Imagine a state as a geographical grid with a certain number of voters. Say a certain percentage of them traditionally vote Republican (often represented with the color red), and the other half vote Democratic (often represented with the color blue). After receiving its new census numbers, there are several ways a state could divide these voters up:



Gerrymandering, explained

Three different ways to divide 50 people into five districts



WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WONKBLOG

Adapted from Stephen Nass



Section 5

Culminating Assessment: Writing an Opinion-Editorial Teacher Directions

Essential Question:

- How do written opinion pieces contribute to the free press in a democratic society?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Distinguish between a news article and an opinion piece
- Identify language choices and persuasive devices used in Op-Eds from different sources and perspectives
- Distinguish between the role of the press in a democracy vs. autocracy.
- Identify an important current issue and research solutions
- Defend a claim using evidence and reasoning

Vocabulary:

democracy: rule by the people

autocracy: a form of government in which a country is ruled by a person or group with total power

free press: If a country's newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations are able to express any opinions they want, even if these criticize the government and other organizations:

editorial: an article that expresses the opinion of the person who or organization that wrote it.

Opener:

Show students where the Editors publish their opinion pieces in newspapers (both print and digital versions) and how they also include a variety of opinions from readers and experts. Point out the difference between the *Opinion-Editorials* and *Letters to the Editor* in response to something in the newspaper.

- *Opinion-Editorials* are usually longer and written by experts, but *Letters to the Editor* are usually short and written by readers of the paper.
- Show how different this part of the paper is from the news articles.

Teachers should explain the difference between summary writing and persuasive/argumentative writing and discuss as a class the importance of both in a democratic society. Students may think their voices don't matter until they are old enough to vote. But, they can be heard through a guest Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor.

Inquiry:

Discuss with your class how liberty to share and publish opinions works in autocracies vs. democracies. Take a look at this Reporters Without Borders world tally of how free the press is by country: <https://rsf.org/en/index> and look at the methodology here:

https://rsf.org/en/methodology-used-compiling-world-press-freedom-index-2023?year=2023&data_type=general

Direct Instruction:

Show this brief animation video (“Writing an op-ed or letter to the editor,” published by AGU, an affiliate of the National Academy of Sciences in 2020) about the key elements of Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor: <https://youtu.be/oxNPt5eQd00>

Read some examples of pieces written by guest contributors. Look at the Letters to the Editors too. The best examples would be from your local community newspapers. Next best would be topics your students are interested in and that are very current.

Review the format of the written piece using the Template for Writing an Op-Ed. There is a nice overview of the structure of a good opinion piece at [The Op-Ed Project’s website](#) and there is a blank worksheet in this document for students to use. For a simplified format depicted in a prompt form, visit this [Harvard Kennedy School Communications program Webpage](#)

Guided Practice:

Students write an Op Ed using the student directions and worksheets that follow.

Teachers can either decide all students will write an OpEd on the same topic or have students pick one they are interested in.

Assessment:

Formative - KWL Charts, Peer input on the students’ Op Ed drafts, Teacher input on the drafts
Summative - Final student writing of the Op Ed

Extension:

Have students nominate Op Eds to send to the publisher.
Starting a school newspaper would be an ambitious extension!

Handout 5.1

Student Directions for Writing an Opinion-Editorial

Selecting a Topic

Pick a topic that affects people's lives in your community. What topics interest you? Think about things that are going great in your area that you'd like to show your support for or think of something that needs attention you'd like to weigh in on.

Browse topics at the state level at the sites below or you can go to your local newspapers' websites.

- Oregon Public Broadcasting www.opb.org
- Oregon Live from The Oregonian <https://www.oregonlive.com/news/>

Pre-Writing

Use a K-W-L chart to identify what you Know about the topic, what you Want to Know about the topic and then take notes as you research on what you Learned about the topic.

Research

Select relevant, credible sources for the evidence to support your argument. Use data, expert opinions, and recent studies to bolster your point. Ensure you have explored multiple perspectives on the issue so you are aware of the complexity and can address opposing arguments with an excellent counterpoint.

Drafting

Follow models given for writing pieces: [The OpEd Project](#) or [The Harvard Kennedy School Communications Program](#) or use the template provided by your teacher.

What's your point of view on this issue? What specific actions would you like to see taken that aren't currently being taken? What personal experiences have you had with this issue? What unique perspective do you bring to the conversation?

If you are writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE), make sure to reference the original piece or issue you are responding to and follow the publication's word limit. LTEs are usually quite short so you'll have to get the point right away.

If you are submitting a full guest Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed), there will likely be a longer allowance for the word count. You can give a more robust introduction to give context to your point of view.

Peer Input

Trade drafts with someone in your class. After reading each other's drafts use the handout's sentence stems to debrief with your partner.

Revision

Repeat the peer feedback with other students or even your teacher if you want more input. Then make the changes you think would improve your piece. Spell check and grammar check before you turn it in.

Submission

In addition to submitting this to your teacher, you could submit to the publication too!

Worksheet 5.1

K-W-L PreWriting Chart

Students: Once you have picked a topic, write down everything you already know about it in the K column. Then brainstorm questions to research in the W column. After your research process, fill out the L column.

K: What I Already Know	W: What I Want to Know	L: What I Learned

Worksheet 5.2

Template for Drafting an Opinion-Editorial

Context (what's going on, what's the problem, why people should care):

Examples and Evidence:

Acknowledgments of what's working and good ideas on the other side:

What you think should be done to address the situation:

What you want others to think/do about the issue (call to action):

Worksheet 5.3

Peer Feedback on Draft Opinion-Editorials

My name:

My partner:

I like how you...

While I was reading your piece I wondered...

Have you considered...

Overall, I would suggest...

Peer Feedback on Draft Opinion-Editorials

My name:

My partner:

I like how you...

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Overall, I would suggest...