



Introductory lesson on Voter Turnout in the United States

Common Core Anchor Standards, 6-12

Reading

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Writing

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Speaking and Listening

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and oratory.
4. Present information, findings and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

Essential Question: Why Don't More Americans Turnout to Vote?

Goal: Students will know the reasons why many Americans do not vote.

Objectives: Students will be able to; discuss and justify at least **THREE** reasons as to why many Americans do not turnout to vote.

As a Homework assignment the night before you are going to start this activity, have your students read the following article (see link below) from the New York Times:

Telling Americans to Vote or Else.

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/06/opinion/sunday/telling-americans-to-vote-or-else.html?_r=1

While reading the article students should be answering the following questions in order to effectively participate in tomorrow's class discussion on the topic of why American's do not vote?

- If voting is such an important civic responsibility why is it that more Americans serve on juries than vote in elections?
- Is the turnout in the United States truly that poor?
- How bad is it in relation to other countries?
- Is it better in some U.S. states in relation to other U.S. states?
- What are the demographic characteristics for the average U.S. voter?
- What are the implications of low voter turnout?
- How do we increase turnout? Does Rock the Vote help?
- Why is U.S. turnout consider poor?

After the teacher has gone through this introductory reading and brainstorm activity they can then go into more detail with their students in relation to the following topics:

- a. Voter registration laws
- b. Frequency of elections
- c. Voter attitudes
- d. Relatively weak political parties or mistrust of political parties
- e. Effectiveness of compulsory voting laws in other countries
- f. Polarization of political process in United States
- g. Historical voter turnout in American Presidential elections
- h. The impact of redistricting and associated gerrymandering of districts
- i. Rock the Vote and other programs/means such as using social media to promote higher youth voter registration.

Vocabulary: Compulsory, redistricting, voter registration, polarization, political parties, civic responsibility, jury duty.

Extension activity:

Students will work collaboratively in small groups, research one of the topics above and then present their findings in class. Specifically, having students look at whether or not compulsory voting in the United States should be enacted works as an excellent topic for class discussion, research and culminating debate.