



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2008 Volume III: Democracy in Theory and Practice

I'll Vote for That, but Why? The United States Constitution and Presidential Elections

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One of the most important legacies which we can provide our students is an understanding of the importance of being informed citizens. It is easy to take the privilege of living in a democratic society for granted. I find that my students are often cynical about our government, and I worry that this will translate into future apathetic citizens. This unit will focus on what the Framers of the Constitution intended when they created the roles of the President and the Electoral College. Students will study the two major political parties, focusing on their differences and the platforms each has presented for the 2008 election. It addresses the voting process and voter apathy, culminating with a community voting drive, and school wide mock election.

Although this unit is intended to be taught prior to the 2008 election, it can be presented at anytime. It was written for eighth grade, but the information and lesson plans can be modified for middle and high school. It includes background on the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and incorporates graphs, surveys, and editorial cartoons. Students will also critique presidential speeches as they write their own. Socratic Seminars and numerous debates are used throughout the unit.

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 7, and Georgia Studies, grade 8; recommended for Social Studies and Civics, Middle and High School grades)

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