



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2019 Volume III: American Democracy and the Promise of Justice

The Right to Vote: Empowerment and Civic Engagement in our Democracy

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In this curriculum unit, written for a 9th-grade history class, students will study and learn about the foundational principles of American democracy. This unit will focus on historical and cultural events. Fundamentals of democracy, The Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, civil rights, and significant constitutional voting rights amendments will be studied throughout the unit. The historical foundations of voting rights in the United States will be taught through the analysis of primary sources (documents, speeches, bills, laws and the Constitution).

These frameworks will lay the groundwork to teach about the right to vote and civic engagement in our democracy. Voting rights and civil rights are hotbed issues right now with the approaching Presidential Election in 2020. Now more than ever in our history, it is so important for students to be educated on our government policies at the local, state, and national levels. Students will study what constitutes a democracy. Further, we will explore apparent inequalities in our system of government and the “coexistence of democracy with substantial inequality.”

A voting rights timeline will be included in the unit as a historical and visual guide. The unit will culminate with a “get out the vote” campaign and the need to be informed and educated on the issues. Essential questions are, how did voting rights transform America and create the cornerstone of today’s democratic society? How can the right to vote continue our democracy in the future?

(Developed for U. S. Government/Civics, grade 9, and U. S. History, grade 10; recommended for U. S. Government, grade 9, and U. S. History, grade 10)

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