

VOTING RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP

CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR GRADES 7 & 8

A NEW DOCUMENT-BASED CURRICULUM USING PRIMARY SOURCES AND TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES, DESIGNED TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE NEW YORK STATE GRADE EIGHT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES EXAM

VOTING IS POWER

The common understanding is that the United States was founded on democratic principles which were the reigning idea of the American Revolution. The reality is more complex. For most leaders of the American Revolution, direct democracy or direct participation of citizens in government was a radical idea that threatened the stability and order of society. Most leaders preferred a republican form of democracy, which is based on representation through elected officials. Moreover, many leaders assumed that certain groups would not be allowed to vote, including women, slaves and men without property. In 1790, the year after the U.S. Constitution went into effect, ten states required property ownership to vote, and 1/6 of the nation's population were African-American slaves who also could not vote.

Why did those with power fear democracy and prevent members of certain groups from voting? And why did people struggle to gain this right? Voting is about power. People without the vote have no say over how they are governed and are easily oppressed by individuals with power.

Voting is a right today, but it was won only through struggles in which many people risked and, in some cases, lost their lives. It is a right which can never be taken for granted.

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MILESTONES IN VOTING HISTORY

1700's

- July 2, 1776** The New Jersey state constitution allows “all inhabitants . . . who are worth fifty pounds” to vote, including women and people of color. In 1807, the requirement is rewritten to specify only white men.
- Aug. 6, 1787** The Constitutional Convention finishes writing the U.S. Constitution.
- Feb. 4, 1789** George Washington is elected first president of the United States by the Electoral College, with all 69 electoral votes.
- Jan. 1, 1790** Ten states have property requirements for voting (Connecticut, Delaware, Rhode Island, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, New York, Massachusetts and South Carolina).

1800's

- Dec. 3, 1800** Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tie for president in the Electoral College. With no provisions existing for this situation, the House of Representatives votes for the president, electing Jefferson on February 17, 1801.
- June 15, 1804** The 12th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, requiring separate Electoral College voting for president and vice president, and reducing from five to three the number of candidates from which the Electoral College can choose.
- Nov. 10, 1821** New York State ratifies its second constitution. Property requirements are dropped for whites, but “men of color” must have for one year “seized and possessed” a freehold over the value of \$250.
- July 19–21, 1848** The first Woman’s Rights Convention is held in Seneca Falls, N.Y. The goal of women’s suffrage is first expressed in Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s Declaration of Sentiments.
- March 6, 1857** Dred Scott v. Sanford: The U.S. Supreme Court rules that Dred Scott, a slave brought to a free state by his master, remain a slave.
- Sept. 22, 1862** Abraham Lincoln, as commander-in-chief, issues the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Dec. 6, 1865** The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, abolishing slavery in the United States.
- April 9, 1866** The federal Civil Rights Act of 1866 is passed, declaring that all persons born in the United States are now citizens, without regard to race, color or previous condition of servitude.
- March 23, 1867** The federal Reconstruction Act of 1867 is passed, dividing former Confederate States into five military districts that would not be readmitted into the Union until they (a) enacted state constitutions with African Americans given the right to vote, and (b) ratified the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- July 9, 1868** The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, establishing citizenship and ensuring equal protection under the law.
- May 22, 1869** The National Woman Suffrage Association (N.W.S.A.) is formed in New York City, with Elizabeth Cady Stanton as its first president.
- May 27, 1869** The American Woman Suffrage Association is formed in Boston by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell and Julia Ward Howe. The A.W.S.A. and the N.W.S.A. join in 1890.
- Feb. 3, 1870** The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, declaring that citizens cannot be denied the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”
- Feb. 25, 1870** Mississippi Republican Hiram Revels becomes the first African American to be elected a U.S. Senator.
- Feb. 28, 1871** The federal Enforcement Act is passed, providing criminal penalties for interfering with suffrage under the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- Nov. 5, 1872** Susan B. Anthony and 11 other women are arrested in Rochester, N.Y., for voting in the presidential election.
- May 10, 1872** Victoria Woodhull becomes the first woman to run for president.
- March 1, 1875** The federal Civil Rights Act is approved by the U.S. Congress. It banned racial discrimination in hotels, theaters, public transportation and jury selection. The Act is nullified by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883.

MILESTONES IN VOTING HISTORY

- March 5, 1875** Mississippi Republican Blanche K. Bruce, son of a slave mother and a white planter, becomes the first African American elected to the U.S. Senate to serve a full term, 1875 to 1881.
- March 2, 1877** The Electoral College declares Republican Rutherford B. Hayes the President of the United States over Democrat Samuel Tilden, thus deciding the 1876 election.
- May 6, 1882** First Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese laborers from entering the United States, restricted the number and type of other Chinese from entering the country, and barred Chinese immigrants from becoming citizens through naturalization. It was renewed on May 5, 1892, and April 29, 1902.
- Nov. 3, 1884** The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Elk v. Wilkins* that American Indians, although born in the United States, are not wholly subject to the jurisdiction of the United States government and therefore are not protected by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- April 4, 1887** Susanna Medora Salter is the first woman elected mayor of a town in the United States – Argonia, Kan.
- July 10, 1890** Wyoming becomes the first state to grant women full suffrage rights.
- May 18, 1896** *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In a 7-2 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that “separate but equal” public facilities are constitutional, ratifying Jim Crow segregation laws.
- April 12, 1892** The Meyers Voting Machine, the first mechanical-lever voting machine, is introduced in elections at Lockport, N.Y. The machine was designed to prevent voter fraud.

1900's

- May 8, 1906** The Burke Act is passed by the U.S. Congress, granting citizenship to American Indians who were allotted land through the Dawes Act.
- March 13, 1913** The North American Women's Suffrage Association leads the Women's Suffrage Parade in Washington, D.C. More than 6,000 participate.
- April 8, 1913** The 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, setting the number of Senators of the U.S. Senate at two from each state, elected by popular vote instead of selected by state legislatures.
- Oct. 23, 1915** Twenty-five thousand women march in New York City for the right to vote.
- Nov. 7, 1916** Jeannette Rankin, Republican of Montana, is the first woman elected to Congress.
- Jan. 10, 1917** Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party begin picketing the White House. Picketing would end in November 1917 after New York State granted women full suffrage rights.
- Nov. 6, 1917** North Dakota, Ohio, Indiana, Rhode Island, Nebraska, Michigan, New York and Arkansas grant women suffrage.
- Nov. 4, 1919** New York State voters pass an amendment to the state constitution allowing for absentee voting.
- Feb. 14–16, 1920** League of Women Voters is founded, with Maud Wood Park elected as president.
- Aug. 19, 1920** The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, guaranteeing suffrage for women.
- Nov. 13, 1922** Supreme Court rules, in *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, that people of Japanese heritage are not eligible to become naturalized citizens.
- June 2, 1924** The federal Snyder Act, or Indian Citizenship Act, grants American Indians the full rights of citizenship of the United States without having to give up their tribal affiliations. However, many western states restrict voting by American Indians.
- Nov. 4, 1924** Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming and Miriam A. “Ma” Ferguson of Texas are the first women elected governors.
- July 12, 1932** Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas becomes the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate in a special election to succeed her deceased husband.
- Jan. 1, 1938** Reform New York City Charter goes into effect, abolishing the Board of Aldermen and establishing the City Council.
- Dec. 17, 1943** The Chinese Exclusion Act is repealed by the U.S. Congress, making people of Chinese ancestry eligible for U.S. citizenship.
- June 30, 1952** The federal Walter-McCarran Act grants all people of Asian ancestry the right to become citizens. However, the act sets restrictions on the number who can immigrate.
- Dec. 31, 1953** Hulan Jack is sworn in as Manhattan borough president, the first African American to serve in that position.

MILESTONES IN VOTING HISTORY

- May 17, 1954** *Brown v. Board of Education*. In a 9-0 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Plessy v. Ferguson*, declaring that segregation in public schools is inherently unequal.
- Nov. 7, 1956** Dalip Singh Saund, a Democrat from Riverside County, Calif., is the first South Asian to be elected to the U.S. Congress.
- Sept. 9, 1957** Civil Rights Act is passed, permitting the federal government to sue on behalf of citizens and creating the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.
- Aug. 22, 1959** Republican Hiram Fong is the first person of Chinese descent to be elected to the U.S. Senate.
- April 16–17, 1960** Ella Baker, a longtime civil rights activist, invites students involved in sit-ins to a conference in Raleigh, N.C. The group organizes the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.).
- March 29, 1961** The 23rd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, granting Washington, D.C., residents the right to vote in U.S. presidential elections for the first time.
- June 12, 1963** Civil rights leader Medgar Evers is assassinated by a white supremacist in Jackson, Miss.
- Aug. 28, 1963** March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom brings 250,000 Americans to the capital, setting in motion the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. gives his “I Have a Dream” speech.
- Jan. 23, 1964** The 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, ensuring that the right to vote in all federal elections cannot be taken away by the United States or any states due to failure to pay any poll or other tax.
- June 21, 1964** Mississippi Freedom Summer Volunteers Michael Schwerner, a Columbia University graduate student; James Chaney, a young Mississippi activist; and Andrew Goodman, a student at Queens College, CUNY, are murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan after investigating a church burning.
- July 2, 1964** Major federal Omnibus Civil Rights Act is passed, making it illegal to discriminate based on race, religion, or gender in places and businesses that serve the public.
- Aug. 22, 1964** Fannie Lou Hamer, chairwoman of the integrated Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, gives testimony to the Democratic Party National Convention in Atlantic City, N.J. She unsuccessfully demands that the M.F.D.P. be seated as the Mississippi delegation in place of the racist all-white delegation. She asks on national television: “Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we are threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings?”
- March 7, 1965** The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.) and S.N.C.C. lead a peaceful demonstration against unjust voter registration tests in Selma, Ala. Under the direction of Governor George Wallace, law enforcement officers brutally attack hundreds of demonstrators with clubs and tear gas, in the infamous “Bloody Sunday.”
- March 21–25, 1965** March on Montgomery, Ala., led by Martin Luther King, Jr. The four-day march ends with a rally outside the state capitol in Montgomery on March 25, attended by 25,000 people.
- July 1, 1965** The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965 is signed into law by President Johnson on Liberty Island, eliminating the racist quota system of the National Origins Act of 1924.
- Aug. 6, 1965** The federal Voting Rights Act is passed, authorizing the U.S. Attorney-General to send federal examiners to register black voters, and suspend all literacy tests in states where less than 50% of the voting-age population had been registered or had voted in the 1964 election.
- Nov. 1, 1966** Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts is elected the first African American U.S. senator since Reconstruction.
- Nov. 1, 1966** Barbara Jordan becomes the first African American to serve in the Texas state senate since 1883. She later serves in the U.S. Congress.
- July 6, 1967** Martin Luther King, Jr. announces the S.C.L.C.’s first voter registration drive in a northern city, Cleveland, Ohio.
- Nov. 7, 1967** Carl Stokes is elected mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, the first African-American mayor of a major city.
- Nov. 5, 1968** Shirley Chisholm of Brooklyn becomes the first black woman elected to the U.S. Congress.
- April 30, 1969** Governor Nelson Rockefeller signs the New York City school decentralization bill into law, allowing for the election of community school boards by proportional representation and grants voting rights to non-citizens with children attending public schools.

MILESTONES IN VOTING HISTORY

- Sept. 29, 1969** Community College VIII in the Bronx is named the Eugenio de María Hostos Community College by The City University of New York in honor of the Puerto Rican educator and supporter of Cuban and Puerto Rican independence.
- Sept. 28, 1970** Senior College XVII in Brooklyn is named Medgar Evers College by The City University of New York in honor of the slain civil rights activist.
- Nov. 3, 1970** Herman Badillo becomes the first Puerto Rican elected to the U.S. Congress. He represents the Bronx.
- March 23, 1971** The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives 18–20-year-olds the right to vote.
- Nov. 7, 1972** Elizabeth Holtzman of Brooklyn, New York, becomes the youngest woman elected to the U.S. Congress.
- May 19, 1975** The New York State Legislature approves a bill that allows voter registration by mail.
- Aug. 6, 1975** The Voting Rights Act is amended to include rights for those speaking languages other than English.
- Sept. 28, 1984** The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and the Handicapped Act requires “access for the elderly and handicapped individuals to registration facilities and polling places in federal elections.”
- May 26, 1987** The CUNY Board of Trustees passes a resolution that all CUNY colleges must integrate voter registration into the student class registration process.
- June 1, 1990** The Hispanic Federation is founded. The Federation has registered tens of thousands of voters in New York City under the leadership of President Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez.
- July 26, 1990** Americans with Disabilities Act requires full access to voting facilities for the disabled.
- Oct. 6, 1990** The Christian Coalition of America is founded. The Coalition has registered and mobilized millions of voters.
- Nov. 3, 1992** Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois becomes the first African American woman voted to the U.S. Senate.
- May 20, 1993** National Voter Registration Act is signed by President Bill Clinton; it allows voter registration at the same time as an application for or renewal of a driver’s license or motor vehicle registration. In addition, it creates voter registration opportunities for those seeking services from all state offices and state-funded programs, and allows for voter registration by mail.
- Jan. 1, 1994** Local Law 1993/094 goes into effect in New York City, establishing term limits for the mayor, city council members, public advocate and comptroller.

2000’s

- Nov. 7, 2000** The presidential election contest between Albert Gore and George W. Bush is deadlocked when Florida’s deciding votes are subject to an automatic recount.
- Dec. 8, 2000** Florida Supreme Court orders a recount of “undervotes” in all 67 Florida counties. Bush appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Dec. 12, 2000** U.S. Supreme Court overturns the Florida Supreme Court decision, ending all recounts and establishing Bush’s victory in Florida and his election to the presidency.
- Oct. 29, 2002** President George W. Bush signs the Help America Vote Act (H.A.V.A.), which mandates funds to states to replace punch card voting systems; to establish the Election Assistance Commission to assist in the administration of federal elections; and to provide assistance with the administration of certain federal election laws and programs.
- Nov. 2, 2004** President George W. Bush defeated Senator John F. Kerry by 50.73% to 48.27% in the Popular Vote and 286 to 252 in the Electoral College vote.