

# Lesson Plan

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(Updated Jan, 2009)

**Vote 18 is an interactive voting game run by the teacher/facilitator. The following script will enable you to effectively facilitate the experience.**

## **Objectives**

1. Teach students the history of voting in the US
2. Demonstrate to students the economic value of their vote
3. Promote discussion of current events
4. Teach students how to fill out a voter registration form
5. Register eligible voters
6. Promote civic participation

## **Materials**

1. Voter registration forms
2. Presidential candidate winner reward: recommended \$1 cash  
Other options: extra credit, gift certificates etc.
3. Voter rewards: 10 mini size candy bars for every 30 students
4. Print or write on the board Debate Questions and Candidate Responses Chart (see chart below)
5. Optional – homework assignment or a class discussion on the debate questions chart

## **Lesson Plan Overview**

<b>Part I.</b>	<b>Interactive History of US Voting</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>Part II.</b>	<b>Mock Elections &amp; Analysis</b>	<b>20 minutes</b>
<b>Part III.</b>	<b>Registering to Vote</b>	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>Part IV.</b>	<b>Encouraging Civic Participation</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>

## Procedure

### I. Interactive History of Voting in the US (5 minutes)

#### **Section Overview**

The game starts with the facilitator taking the role of King George the III of England. The facilitator leads the students on an interactive journey through the history of voting. As students get the right to vote based on historical events they are invited to join the facilitator as members of the voting public. The section concludes with all students empowered with the right to vote.

#### **King George III**

##### **Facilitator:**

Have all the students stand and come up to the front of the class and stand on the opposite side of the class from you. Tell the students to close their eyes and then ask them to imagine:

“Imagine there is no FaceBook, video games or email, imagine there are no automobiles, no trains and no Wal-Mart or Whole Foods to purchase the supplies you need. Imagine you live in a rural farming community with limited contact with the outside world. Imagine the year is 1775 and you are living in the colonies under the rule of the King and now open your eyes.”

##### **Facilitator:**

Let me introduce myself the year is 1775 and I am King George III of England. As is stands today I make all the laws, appoint the governors, set and collect taxes as I see fit, give land to citizens if I choose, declare which religions can be practiced and make virtually all decisions affecting your lives.

##### **Facilitator Prompts:**

***Do you think this is right?*** Do you trust me to make 100% of the decisions affecting your future?

Do you think I will make choices based on what’s best for you or do you think I will make choices based on what is best for me?

***Who has the power?***

***Do you like it?***

#### **American Revolution**

##### **Facilitator:**

Like you, the citizens of the time did not like this. They felt the King made decisions that were not in their best interests. In fact they were so angry that in 1776 with the signing of the (prompt)... **Declaration of Independence** they put

their lives on the line so they could have a say in running their communities and determining how their society should function. What did the Declaration of Independence say to the king?

This led to the start of the (prompt)... **Revolutionary War.**”

**Facilitator:**

Ask the class what would have happened to the signers of the Declaration of Independence if they had lost the war? **(They would have been tried and hung for treason)**. So they felt having a right to participate in the running of their communities was so important they were willing to risk their lives to get it. Hence the Revolutionary war was fought and (prompt) **25,324** people died fighting for the right to vote to and have a say in the running of their communities. Hostilities were officially ended and in 1783 with the signing of the (prompt)... **Treaty of Paris** the United States was officially formed.

**Facilitator:**

The war is over now everyone gets the right to vote and determine their future. Oops, did I say everyone? I didn't mean everyone I meant just men. Did I say men? I meant just white men. Did I say white men? I meant just white male property owners.

## **White Men Only**

Have the white males come over and join you as the facilitator on his/her side of the room with the women and people of color on the other side. Explain there is no more King but power is still held by a limited group of people.

**Facilitator to women and people of color:**

***Do you think this is right?*** Do you trust us to make 100% of the decisions affecting your future? When push comes to shove, do you think we will make choices based on what's best for us or best for you?

***Who has the power?***

***Do you like it?***

***Is it fair?***

## **Civil War**

**Facilitator:**

“Like you many people felt this was unfair so in 1861 the (prompt)...**Civil War** was fought. This time (prompt) ... **620,000** people died trying to earn the right to vote. In fact more Americans died in this war than all other US wars combined.”

## 1870 Passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment - All Males

### Facilitator:

In 1865 the civil war ended and five years later in 1870, the (prompt) 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was passed giving everyone the right to vote. Did I say everyone? I didn't mean everyone I just meant men. So if you're a man please come join us on this side of the room as a member of the voting public.

## 1920 – Women's Suffrage - Passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment

### Facilitator to women:

*“Ladies, do you think this is fair?”*

Who has the power?

Do you trust men to make all the decisions for you? Will your interests be fairly represented?”

### Facilitator to women:

What did women do about it? Beginning in 1848 at Seneca Falls, women rallied & protested. Some were killed, others were thrown in jail, but they continued to fight for the next **72 years** for the right to vote and to be counted as equal citizens under the law through the Women's Suffrage Movement. Finally, in (prompt) 1920, with the passage of the (prompt) 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution women were finally given right to vote.

Have all women come over to the facilitator's side of the class.

## The Civil and Voting Rights Acts (of 1964 and 1965)

### Facilitator to African Americans in class:

Let me ask the African Americans here, though the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment gave you the right to vote in 1870 did you have the **power** to vote? (Prompt) No. Voting is so powerful that many states used voter suppression efforts like literacy tests and other means to keep your voice from possibly changing the way things were in your communities. It wasn't until the civil rights movement and the eventual passage of the **Civil Rights Act in 1964** and the **Voting Rights Act in 1965** that you had the **power** to vote, backed up by the authority of government. Without the power of enforcement any right is no more than just words on a page. And any right, not used, is equally as impotent.

### Facilitator:

So here we are, the late 1960's and yet still none of you can vote. Why? Because until (prompt) **1971** how old did you have to be to vote? (prompt)

21. But what was happening in the late 1960's and early seventies? We were at war, right? And during this war with what method was the government finding soldiers to fight? The draft, right. So you're telling me that at 18 you were old enough to die for your country but you weren't old enough to take part in the decision to elect those people who were going to send you to fight?

***Is this right?***

***Is this fair?***

People your age at the time didn't think it was fair either and they protested and also worked with leaders in congress to pass the (prompt) **26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in 1971**, reducing the voting age to 18 in all states.

**Facilitator:**

So now, look around you. In the United States today every person regardless of their race or gender everyone has the same right to vote. You have the power. One person one vote!

***Is this fair?***

***Do you like it?***

Have the students return to their seats.

## **Part II. Mock Presidential Elections (15 minutes)**

### **Section Overview**

The facilitator first lets the students know there will be a reward for the winning candidate and then asks the class for volunteers to run for elected office in a mock election.

→ **NOTE!** During presidential election years we recommend that office be President of the United States. In off years, please choose **local offices** up for election such as **city council, mayor, senator** or **governor**.

After picking two candidates the facilitator leads the class in a discussion of current political events.

Candidates then make a presentation to the class on what their positions are and why they think they should be elected. Right before the vote takes place the facilitator picks 20% of the class and tells them they can't vote. Candy bars are then given to the candidates for distribution to the class. The vote is taken a winner declared and the facilitator leads a discussion of what happened in the election and why.

**Facilitator:**

Ask the class for two volunteers to run for office in a mock election. Before they decide, let the class know that the winner will win a prize (\$5 cash or extra credit is recommended).

**The Facilitator chooses two students to run for Elected Office.**

From the students who raise their hand, choose two volunteers to run for president. Bring the two volunteers to the front of the class. At this point you want to find out what the class thinks. Instruct the candidates they should only listen and take notes they are not allowed to participate in answering the questions at this part of the game.

**Facilitate a Discussion of Current Political Issues**

Start by asking the class their opinion on current political issues such as those shown in the Sample Questions Chart below.

**→ NOTE! If the election is for local office, please choose topics that reflect the type of important decisions made at the local level: education, local taxes, water, public safety, etc)**

The goal is to get the class to express strong feelings and opinions on the issues. There are no right or wrong answers, your goal as facilitator is to develop opposing positions among the students. Don't spend a long time on any one topic, your goal is to get the students thinking about and discussing opposing positions. For example if one student thinks the US should pull out of Iraq, ask if anyone else feels differently and give the person the floor to briefly explain why.

\* Note on promoting debate: If you have a class with diverse political opinions you can ask the question in the format: **Who** thinks higher taxes are a good idea? Why? **Who** thinks higher taxes are a bad idea? Why?

If most students in the class have similar opinions you may be more effective in drawing out both sides of an issue by asking: **What** are some of the reasons higher taxes are a good idea? **What** are some of the reasons higher taxes are a bad idea? This encourages students who might not agree with a position to state positions on both sides of an issue.

## Sample Questions and Candidate Response Chart

**NOTE:** Between Presidential Election Years, discuss topics decided at the local level: public safety, local taxes, immigration, education, etc.

**Candidate 1  
Position**

**Issue**

**Candidate 2  
Position**

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Should illegal aliens living in the US be granted citizenship?  
If yes, under what conditions?

Should there be universal healthcare for everyone?  
If yes, how should we pay for it?

Should the city/state/country rebuild our infrastructure or leave it to private industry?  
What are the pros and cons of each method?

Should a draft be instituted to relieve the troops in Iraq?

Should the US pull out of Iraq?

Should taxes be raised to pay for programs and national debt?

If yes, whose taxes should be raised?

Should the government require a minimum fuel efficiency of 35mpg on all new cars sold?

Should we pass an Amendment to the Constitution defining marriage as being only between a man and a woman?

Should gay couples have the same rights as heterosexual couples in areas such as inheritance, healthcare, and taxes?

Should a woman have the legal right to an abortion?

## **Candidate Speeches:**

### **Facilitator to class:**

Who has the power now you or the candidates? Who will have the power after you elect one of them?

This is basically how our democracy works. It is the sharing of power between the people and those we elect to temporarily represent us.

What do candidates need to win? Your vote. They can have all the money in the world but without your vote they cannot win.

### **Facilitator to candidates:**

If you want to get elected and implement your ideas what do you have to do? (Get the votes of the class.) So you have to convince them that your ideas are good.

### **Facilitator to class:**

You have to decide if you like what the candidates are telling you and decide if you believe they can get the job done.

Pick one of the candidates to speak first and give each candidate two minutes to state their positions on why they should be elected president. Hold questions until both candidates have spoken and then take about three questions from the students allowing both candidates answer the questions.

Students will often state their opinions when they ask questions. The moderator should let them go on a little bit so they become invested in their positions, but then cut them off and tell them they must ask the candidate a question. Once the question has been asked and the candidate has answered there will be a tendency for debate to open up with candidates and students wanting to continue to talk. Stay on a topic only long enough to get them excited and then move on or you will run out of time.

## **Show Don't Tell: Connecting The Power of Their Voice to Their Vote**

### **Facilitator:**

Tell the class you are almost ready to hold the vote but prior to voting there are two things you need to do first.

- 1. Pick 10 - 20% of the class at random and take away their right to vote in the election and send them to the back of the class.**

Have the students get out of their seats and send them to the back of the room. It's a good idea to pick a couple of students who felt strongly on issues. Don't explain to them at this point why they can't vote, just send them to the back of the room.

**2. Give out 3 - 5 mini candy bars** (depending on the size of the class) **to each of the candidates and tell them to distribute them to the students.**

If they ask, tell them they can give them to whomever they want. For later discussion, note how many of the candy bars go to the students who can vote and how many go to the students who can't vote.

### **3. Vote**

Pass out pieces of paper for the students to write down their vote. Tally the votes, declare a winner, and give the winner their prize. Thank the candidates and give them both a round of applause before returning them to their seats.

## **Analysis & Discussion (5 minutes)**

### **Teacher to candidates:**

How come you gave all (or almost all) of the candy bars to the students that could vote?

### **Facilitator to class:**

**\*\* Do you think this happens in the real world?**

What do the candy bars represent?

**Jobs, money, support of specific issues or policies, flow of money to selected programs, policies that effect specific industries, appointed judges, etc.**

\*\* In the real world do you think the politicians know who votes and who doesn't vote? Of course they do. In fact they have copies of exactly who is registered to vote and who isn't. You saw what happened in our mock election.

If you are a campaign manager are you going to spend your limited time and resources talking to those people you know aren't going to vote? No, of course not. You need votes to win. Can you see based on what happened in this class the politicians HAVE to be that way or they won't get elected?

### **Facilitator to excluded voters:**

How did you feel about not being able to vote?

Explain to them that you're sorry they couldn't vote but in this game they represent the approximately 40% of the US population that has the right to vote but **in spite of the fact we've seen that hundreds of thousands of people died for the right to vote, and in spite of the fact we've seen that resources**

are distributed based on who votes they choose not to exercise their right to vote.

**Teacher to excluded voters:**

What would you say to those that aren't exercising their right to vote?

### **PART III. Registering to Vote (10 minutes)**

**Facilitator:**

When you turn eighteen, do you intend to vote?

Challenge them here. You all say you're going to vote but only 33% of adults between the ages of 18 and 25 voted in the 2000 election. Why should I think you'll be different? First of all, if you intend to vote, do you know where to get a voter registration form?

Board of Elections, Libraries, Post Office, School, online.

**Pass out voter registration forms.**

**\*\* Explain that we are going to go through the exercise of filling out a voter registration form. You are not obligated to submit the form, but we ask that you do submit those for students who are eligible.**

Whether or not a student is old enough to vote, we want them to have the experience of filling out the form so they understand it and see how easy it is to register. (Over 60% of young non-voters say they don't vote because they don't know how to register.)

**Facilitator:**

For those of you who are US citizens and will be 18 years of age before the next election year you will be eligible to vote and we encourage you to turn in the form for delivery it to the Board of Elections for you.

Go through the form with them line by line starting in the top left hand corner. Answer any questions they might have. Emphasize how easy it is to register.

### **PART IV. Closure: Getting Involved (5 minutes)**

The game concludes by inviting the students to vote and get involved in their communities and the political process.

Explain to them how they and their communities will benefit by getting involved.

**Facilitator:**

**\*\* Whether or not you can register to vote today, *how else can you make sure your voice is heard in your community?***

Can you think of an easy way for you to affect the political process?

1. Even if you can't vote yourself, take home voter registration forms to your parents, friends, legal guardians, and neighbors. **Make sure they vote.** Your family is just as much a voice in your community. Don't let your parents and your older siblings be those people standing in the corner of the room while others dictate to them what happens in your community.

2. Volunteer:

Examples:

- Elected office campaigns
- Issue Advocacy campaigns
- Community Service

**Facilitator prompt:**

\*\* How many people here want to make a lot of money when you get older?

How do people move up in life? (Education, people they know, networking)  
Political campaigns and community organizations are excellent places to meet people where you can make a difference and at the same time meet people who can help you achieve your goals.

Campaigns are loaded with community leaders, business executives, managers, and other influential people. When you work on campaigns, especially local ones, you work closely with these people, you get to know them.

And later, when you need a letter of recommendation to get into a better grad school, do you think that the congressperson you helped elect is going to write you that letter?

When you are looking for a job, do you think that the executive you knocked on doors with for two weeks is going to pass your resume around to his network of other execs? Yes.

So I'm not here talking about intangibles like civic virtue or patriotism. I'm talking about having influence in your community and your quality of life.

***How can you get involved? How can you make a difference?***

**Get involved with our partners like the League of Women Voters. Visit [Vote18.org/resources.php](http://Vote18.org/resources.php) to find more ways where you can get involved at the local or national level.**

**Vote 18: Working with America's Youth  
to Create Lifelong Voters and  
Empowered Citizens**