

Civics in U.S. History

Chapter 1 Additional Activities

What Is Power? (RH.6-8.7, SL.7.1, SL.7.2)

30 MIN

Materials Needed: Internet access; capability to display Internet in the classroom



Note: This activity addresses the EAD driving question “What is power?”

Remind students that people in democratic societies give power to government so that the government can organize citizens and resources to meet society’s needs. This differs from authoritarian governments in which leaders seize power without the consent of citizens. Note that different types of government distribute power in different ways. The Articles of Confederation were criticized for not giving the national government enough power, and the Constitution was criticized for giving the national government too much power. But what is power? Explain that in this activity, students are going to watch a video about power and then have a class discussion about the ideas in the video.

Display the TED-Ed video “[How to Understand Power](#)” (07:02).

After the video, guide a class discussion around these questions:

- How is *power* defined?
- What are the three laws of power? How does being aware of these help you?
- Which sources of power do you think are the most valuable? Why?

Chapter 3 Additional Activities

Women’s Voices and the Making of the Constitution

(RH.6-8.7, SL.7.1, SL.7.2)

30 MIN

Materials Needed: Internet access; capability to display Internet in the classroom



Note: This activity addresses the following EAD driving questions:

- How did debates about the new U.S. government play out among those who were not formally incorporated into decision-making?
- What sorts of ideas about all of these questions were articulated by people who did not have a role in formal decision-making?

Remind students that all of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were men, but there were other people in the United States who had opinions about the government and the new Constitution. Explain that in this activity, students will watch a video about the role of women in the political debates of the time and then have a class discussion about the video.

Display the American History Video “Women Participate in the Constitution Ratification Debate, by Professor Rosemarie Zagari” (03:47).

After the video, guide a class discussion around these questions:

- In the 1780s, what was a woman politician? How does this compare to women politicians today?
- How did women participate in the political process during the time of ratification?
- What were the views of Mercy Otis Warren, and how did she communicate them?
- How might the Constitution have been different if half the delegates to the Constitutional Convention had been women?

Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 1–3 (L.7.4, RI.7.4, RH.6–8.4)

30 MIN

Activity Page



AP 3.1

Materials Needed: sufficient copies of Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 1–3 (AP 3.1)

Distribute Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 1–3 (AP 3.1), and direct students to fill in the blanks with the terms from the word bank.

This activity may be assigned for homework.

Chapter 4 Additional Activities



The Fight for the Right to Vote (RH.6–8.7, SL.7.1, SL.7.2)

30 MIN

Materials Needed: Internet access; capability to display Internet in the classroom



Note: This activity addresses the following EAD driving questions:

- How has the right to vote in the United States changed over time?
- How did people who could not vote organize to gain the right to vote?

Review with students the importance of voting as a right and a responsibility in the United States, noting that it is the main way that citizens keep the government accountable. Remind students that throughout U.S. history, different groups have been denied suffrage, which is the right to vote. Explain that in this activity, students will watch a video about the fight for voting rights and then have a class discussion about the video.

Present the TED-Ed video “The Fight for the Right to Vote in the United States” (04:31).

After the video, guide a class discussion around these questions:

- Who is eligible to vote in the United States today? How does this compare to the United States in 1789?
- What events and actions influenced the expansion of suffrage between 1820 and 1920?
- What is the connection between World War II and the civil rights movement?
- How did the Voting Rights Act of 1965 expand suffrage in the United States?

Materials Needed: Internet access; capability to display Internet in the classroom; student access to Internet or print research materials



Note: This activity addresses the following EAD driving question:

- When and where have leaders and changemakers emerged in American history? What has motivated them and prepared them for civic engagement?

Introduce the term *changemaker*, explaining that a changemaker is someone who brings about change in a society. Challenge students to identify changemakers they read about in the Student Volume.

Explain that in this activity, students will view portraits of ten changemakers in American history. They will choose one changemaker from the portraits to learn more about.

Show students the following portraits from the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian:

- [Shirley Chisholm](#)
- [Frederick Douglass](#)
- [Dolores Huerta](#)
- [Daniel Inouye](#)
- [Thurgood Marshall](#)
- [Mary McLeod Bethune](#)
- [Russell Means](#)
- [Jeannette Rankin](#)
- [Ida B. Wells-Barnett](#)
- [Zitkala-Ša](#)

Once students have chosen a changemaker, provide these questions to guide their research:

- When and where did this person live?
- What change did they fight for?
- What motivated them to fight for this change?
- What methods did they use to fight for this change?

Have students write a paragraph summarizing their research findings. You may also wish to require students to provide a bibliography or list of works cited for their research.



TALK IT OVER: How Has Political Incorporation Changed the Constitution? (RH.6-8.4, SL.7.1, SL.7.2)

30 MIN

Materials Needed: board or chart paper to display definitions



Note: This activity addresses the following EAD driving questions:

- What is the concept of political incorporation? How does it differ from assimilation?
- How have changing approaches to political incorporation over time transformed the U.S. Constitution?

Write the terms *political incorporation* and *assimilation* on the board. Explain that political incorporation happens when immigrants and the children of immigrants view themselves as Americans who have a voice in politics. Assimilation happens when immigrants become comfortable with the cultural and social practices, values, and beliefs of their new country.

After introducing the concepts of political incorporation and assimilation, guide a class discussion or debate around these questions:

- How are political incorporation and assimilation important to a society?
- How are political incorporation and assimilation different?
- How has political incorporation in the United States changed over time?
- How have changing approaches to political incorporation led to constitutional changes?

Chapter 6 Additional Activities

Majority Rule and Minority Rights (RH.6-8.4, SL.7.1, SL.7.2, W.7.10)

45 MIN

Materials Needed: Internet access; capability to display Internet in the classroom; sufficient copies of Worksheet: "Tyranny of the Majority"; teacher copy of Lesson Two Worksheet (Teacher Version): "Tyranny of the Majority"

Note: Before implementing this activity, review the entire NEH EDSITEment lesson plan "Lesson Two: The Tyranny of the Majority" and download the student and teacher worksheets. The teacher version of the worksheet includes helpful notes for guiding students through the text. You may also wish to adjust the lesson to fit your students and your available time.



Note: This activity addresses the EAD driving question "How have mechanisms of majority vote interacted with minority-protecting mechanisms over time?"

Write the terms *majority rule* and *minority rights* on the board. Remind students that majority rule means that elections are decided in favor of whoever gets the most votes. People who are not in the majority lose the election and do not get what they voted for. But the Constitution protects minority rights and places limits on majority rule. Voters in

the minority are still guaranteed their individual rights, including the right to express their opinions and the right to seek redress in court. Explain to students that the tension between these two ideas of majority rule and minority rights is a characteristic of the U.S. political system.

After this introduction, implement the NEH EDSITEment lesson plan "[Lesson Two: The Tyranny of the Majority](#)".



What Is Pluralism? (RH.6-8.7, SL.7.1, SL.7.2)

30 MIN

Materials Needed: Internet access; capability to display Internet in the classroom

Introduce the term *pluralism*, a system in which two or more things coexist. Explain that in this activity, students will watch a video about pluralism and then have a class discussion about the concept of pluralism.

Present the American Enterprise Institute video "[What Is Pluralism?](#)" (00:55).



After students watch the video, organize the class into small groups to discuss the EAD driving question "What is pluralism, and how is it relevant to the American experience?"

Invite volunteers from each group to share their findings with the class.

Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 4–6 (L.7.4, RI.7.4, RH.6-8.4)

30 MIN

Activity Page



AP 6.1

Materials Needed: sufficient copies of Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 4–6 (AP 6.1)

Distribute Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 4–6 (AP 6.1), and direct students to use the words in the word bank to complete the crossword puzzle.

This activity may be assigned for homework.