

Determining Who Can Vote

Activity

ABC-CLIO Database: American Government

Time Period: Rights and Liberties

Topic: Voting Rights

Skill: Describe

Process: Define and Illustrate an Idea

Inquiry Question: How has the right to vote been limited or extended to various U.S. citizens throughout the country's history?

Objectives: Students will use the sources provided to describe examples of events that illustrate expanding or limiting voting rights, paying particular attention to the constitutional amendments that have changed who has the right to vote.

What students will discover in the sources: The reference article "Voting Rights Act" explains the history of voting rights in the United States, beginning with the founders, when only white, male property owners were allowed to vote, and including expansions of suffrage to white men without property, African American men, women, and people younger than 21 but over 18. The article also explores how suffrage has been restricted by policies such as poll taxes, literacy tests, gerrymandering, and more. A timeline of landmarks in voting rights provides additional detail on the policies that have changed access to voting rights from the establishment of the United States to the present. Together, the sources will help students understand how the right to vote has been limited and extended to various U.S. citizens throughout the country's history.

From the American Government Database

"*Eddikashun Qualifukashun* Political Cartoon (1879)," <https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1758962>.

Harper's Weekly cartoon, published January 18, 1879, illustrating how many U.S. states, particularly in the South, sought to prevent African Americans from voting through policies like literacy requirements.

"Nineteenth Amendment (Ratified 1920)," <https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/210685>.

Text of the Nineteenth Amendment, which recognized women's right to vote on the national level as well as in state and local elections.

"Reconstruction Amendments (1865–1870)," <https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1554325>.

Text of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, enacted after the Civil War, collectively referred to as the Reconstruction Amendments.

"Susan B. Anthony: Women's Right to Vote Speech (1873)," <https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/210136>.

Susan B. Anthony's 1873 speech on women's right to vote, where she speaks on her arrest for attempting to vote and her ongoing efforts to secure recognition of women's right to vote in the United States.

"Voting Rights Act (1965)," <https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/210939>.

Text of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed all forms of preconditions for voting that had been established by individual states (primarily in the South) to prevent African Americans from registering to vote.

"Voting Rights: African American Woman Votes in 1962," <https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/226912>.

Photograph of Mary Johnson, the first African American to cast a vote in her parish in Louisiana, emerging from the voting booth in 1962.

Professional Resources

"Civil Rights: Teaching Tips," History Hub, <https://historyhub.abc-clio.com/Support/TeachingHistory/?databaseId=AMGV&categoryId=245&topicId=102&subId=1024&entryId=2154147&tab=3>.

Teaching tips, activities, and key questions on the civil rights movement, including a curated pacing guide with primary and secondary sources on voting rights.

"Selma: A Civil Rights History Lesson," History Hub, <https://historyhub.abc-clio.com/Support/Content/2044918?cid=164>.

Classroom resources to accompany *Selma*, the 2014 film on the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches. Includes instruction for 6th–12th grade, key movie concepts, and scene breakdown.

"Voting and Voices Classroom Resources," Teaching Tolerance, <https://www.tolerance.org/projects/voting-and-voices/classroom-resources>.

Educator resources for civics education with a focus on elections and voting. The collection includes posters for students of all ages, along with videos, lessons, texts, and student tasks for middle school classrooms.

Reference Books

Baldino, Thomas J., and Kyle L. Kreider. *Of the People, By the People, For the People: A Documentary Record of Voting Rights and Electoral Reform*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2010.

In this book, primary source documents, including Constitutional provisions, federal and state laws, and U.S. court decisions, explain our voting rights and show how the law governs disputed elections and electoral reforms.

Jones, Mark P., ed. *Voting and Political Representation in America: Issues and Trends*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2020.

The authors examine voting trends and political representation in the United States today, with a special focus on debates over voting rights, voter fraud, and voter suppression; and election rules and regulations related to gerrymandering, campaign fundraising, and other controversies.

King, Bridgett A., ed. *Voting Rights in America: Primary Documents in Context*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2019.

Through primary sources, this volume examines the history, evolution, and major contemporary controversies associated with voting rights in the United States, devoting particular attention to demographic groups including women, young people, people of color, and poor people.

Nonfiction for Students (6-12)

Anderson, Carol, and Tonya Bolden. *One Person, No Vote: How Not All Voters Are Treated Equally*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019.

In this young adult adaptation, the authors chronicle how voter suppression works, from photo ID requirements to gerrymandering to poll closures.

Conkling, Winifred. *Votes for Women!: American Suffragists and the Battle for the Ballot*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Young Readers, 2018.

Relates the story of the Nineteenth Amendment and the nearly 80-year fight for voting rights for women, covering not only the suffragists' achievements and politics, but also the private journeys that led them to become women's champions.

Goldstone, Lawrence. *Stolen Justice: The Struggle for African American Voting Rights*. New York: Scholastic Focus, 2020.

In this portrait of the systematic suppression of the African American vote, critically acclaimed author Lawrence Goldstone traces the injustices of the post-Reconstruction era through the eyes of individuals and examines the legal cases that made the Supreme Court a partner of white supremacists in the rise of Jim Crow.

Lowery, Lynda B. *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the Selma Voting Rights March*. New York: Dial Books, an imprint of Penguin Group, 2015.

A 50th-anniversary tribute shares the story of the youngest person to complete the momentous Selma to Montgomery March, describing her frequent imprisonments for her participation in nonviolent demonstrations and how she felt about her involvement.

Literature & Film for Students

DuVernay, Ava, dir. *Selma*. Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2015. DVD.

Based on the Selma to Montgomery marches of 1965 that led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act, the film follows the story of James Bevel, Hosea Williams, and Martin Luther King Jr. as they campaigned for voting rights.

Garnier, Katja, dir. *Iron Jawed Angels*. New York, NY: HBO Video, 2004. DVD.

The story of defiant young activists Alice Paul and Lucy Burns who broke from the mainstream women's rights movement to create a more activist wing, putting their lives at risk to fight for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell. *March: Book One*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2013.

Book one of the graphic novel trilogy based on the life of civil rights leader and congressman John Lewis.

Wiles, Deborah. *Revolution*. New York: Scholastic, 2014.

This novel, a National Book Award finalist, is set in 1964 Mississippi during Freedom Summer. It tells the story of a community's response, through the eyes of its young people, when activists from the North arrive to help register African Americans to vote.

Literature & Film for Educators

Berman, Ari. *Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*. New York: Picador, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2016.

A riveting and alarming account of the continuing battle over the right to vote, from the adoption of the landmark Voting Rights Act in 1965 through today.

Brown, Donathan L., and Michael L. Clemons. *Voting Rights Under Fire: The Continuing Struggle for People of Color*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2015.

This work will provide readers with an accessible, interdisciplinary book that connects past and present issues involving political debates, public policy, and court decisions pertaining to race and voting rights in America.

Keyssar, Alexander. *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

The revised edition of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize nominated book that explores the evolution of suffrage over the course of the nation's history.

Weiss, Elaine F. *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. New York: Viking, 2018.

An account of the 1920 ratification of the constitutional amendment that granted voting rights to women traces the culmination of seven decades of legal battles and cites the pivotal contributions of famous suffragists and political leaders.

Websites & Mobile Apps

"15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Primary Documents in American History," Research Guides, Library of Congress, <https://guides.loc.gov/15th-amendment>.

Introduction, digital collections, related online resources, external websites, and print resources related to the Fifteenth Amendment.

Women's Rights: Suffrage, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/women/suffrage>.

Explore photographs, documents, essays, and other records related to suffrage in the National Archives catalog.

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Activity/2254542>

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