

To Vote or Not to Vote

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Grade Level: 3rd – 5th grade

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Introduction:

The goal of this lesson is to teach students the importance and process of campaigning and voting in the United States. The students will also conduct a small class election, voting for class leaders for their grade level.

Guiding Questions:

- What is “campaigning” and what are some steps a person must take to campaign and run for and elected office?
- Define a “democracy” and analyze what a democratic government looks like.
- What is the purpose of campaigning for votes?
- Describe the voting process of a democracy. Explain the requirements there are for running for certain offices such as state representative, governor, president, etc.
- What is an election and what is the process of conducting an election?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will...

- View two Brain Pop videos on democracy and the voting process.
- Create a graphic organizer on the voting process based on the content in the videos.
- Read the book “Election Day” by Patricia J. Murphy.
- Conduct a mock election to elect class leaders.
- Write campaign speeches to persuade other classmates on why they would make a great class representative and deliver the persuasive speeches to the class.
- Cast votes for their choice of class representative(s).
- Count the ballots and announce their class officers.

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Curriculum Standards:

W.4.1 Write opinion pieces on topics, or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

L.4.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.4.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

RI.4.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.

Note: Other standards can be covered with extension activities and primary source document analysis. See below lesson activities.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper
- Brain Pop videos
 - [Democracy](#)
 - [Voting](#)
- “Election Day” by Patricia J. Murphy
- Podium for speeches
- Mock ballots for class officers
- Tally sheet to count votes

Background:

- [Kids.gov – How to Become President of the U.S.](#)
- [USA.gov – Voting and Elections](#)

Lesson Activities:

1. Open the lesson with a discussion about campaigning and the meaning behind the word.
 - a. What are steps that an individual needs to take to begin a campaign to run for an elected office?

- b. What examples of campaigning have you seen in your own neighborhoods or communities?
 - c. Chart student responses.
2. Watch two Brain Pop videos: “Democracy” and “Voting.” Students will create a word wall using vocabulary words such as candidate, voting, rights, responsibilities, ballot, election, debate, elected official, duties. The students will use these words throughout the lesson and in their persuasive writing speeches.
3. The teacher will read the book “Election Day” to the students stopping to discuss relevant points throughout the book.
4. Explain to the students that they will be having a class mock election to let class representatives for their grade level. The teacher will explain to the students that each student will have the opportunity if they chose to run for the class representative and that they will be writing a persuasive speech to read to the class in hopes of becoming an elected official.
5. The teacher will read and show famous speeches to the class to model to the students an example of a speech and the elements that it needs to include. Some examples to show could be:
 - a. Kid President
 - b. “I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - c. Excerpts from “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” by Patrick Henry
 - d. “The Gettysburg Address” by Abraham Lincoln
 - e. “Tear Down This Wall speech” by President Ronald Reagan
6. After the students have viewed and heard speeches in class they will then begin the process of creating persuasive speeches to convince their classmates why they are the best choice to be a class representative.
7. The students will then begin a “campaign” in order to gain votes for their chance to be elected. The students will be allowed to create posters, write persuasive pieces, and give speeches to the class. (This process may take 2-3 days). Other students could also have the chance to make “endorsement” speeches if they are not running for the office.
8. The students will then “vote” for their favorite candidate by filling out private ballots and turning them into a ballot box. After the votes are in, two designated classmates will use a tally sheet to record the votes and to declare a winner.
9. The winners will be announced and acceptance speeches will commence.
10. The lesson will culminate with a review of the concepts taught over the past several days and transition to looking ahead to the school student mock election.

Extension Options:

- Reading groups could be established and books such as *Vote!* by Eileen Christelow, *Duck For President* by Doreen Cronin, or *Running For Public Office* by Sarah De Capua can be used to discuss and review the voting and campaigning process. Students will be reading about the voting process and learning how campaigns are established.
- Writing groups could be established amongst the class. Persuasive writing pieces should be modeled to introduce the students to the genre of persuasive writing. Examples of presidential speeches should be used to show students how to create their own speeches.
- Examine historical campaigns and how they compare to today's modern campaigns. See below standards.
 - **5.5** – Evaluate each candidate in the campaign of 1860 and analyze how that campaign reflected the sectional turmoil of the country.
 - **5.17** – Explain why Lincoln chose Andrew Johnson as his running mate in the election of 1864.

Modifications for Other Grades:

- All of the above activities align with the reading and writing standards for grades 3-5.
- Speeches to analyze included in social studies standards:
 - 4th grade: Excerpts from “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” by Patrick Henry
 - 5th grade: “The Gettysburg Address” by Abraham Lincoln; “I Have a Dream Speech” by Martin Luther King, Jr.; “Tear Down This Wall speech” by President Ronald Reagan