

Gerrymandering – How States Influence National Elections

OBJECTIVE: Students will investigate and be able to defend an argument pertaining to historical policies and practices that have influenced the outcomes of state and federal elections.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How does gerrymander at the state level impact national elections?

STANDARDS:

- RI.9-10.9 Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.
- RI.9-10.10 By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- RI.9-10.10 By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
 - Primary and secondary sources are used to examine events from multiple perspectives and to present a position.
- RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

RESOURCES:

History Matters <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/browse/makesense/>

This site provides students with strategies to analyze various primary and secondary sources.

Optional documents to use in exercises vary to allow for diverse readability:

DeLancey, Billy. “Is an old political trick the root cause of our government’s dysfunction?.”

Blog at Lobbyists4Good. February 4, 2017. Available online at

<https://www.lobbyists4good.org/single-post/2017/01/23/Is-this-the-root-cause-of-our-political-dysfunction>

Change Illinois. Nonpartisan education and advocacy organization. January 14, 2016. Available online at <http://www.changeil.org/blog/new-research-answers-important-questions-about-partisan-redistricting-in-illinois/>

and summary of research outcomes article about Arizona & California Redistricting Reforms available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/250171223/Redistricting-Reformed>

The National Archives <http://www.archives.gov/education/>

This website is a source of free primary source documents.

MATERIALS:

Access to historical documents or hard copies if available online. See above.

SEQUENCE

- 1) Warm-up: List what you already know about how state and national elections are carried out.
- 2) Students are given a set of documents and maps (see Resources) about the history and practices used by state legislators to impact their state's outcomes in national elections.

Students highlight unfamiliar words as they read the documents silently to themselves. When finished reading, students generate questions they have about the contents and vocabulary in the documents. These will be useful for ongoing formative assessments throughout the unit and as they analyze and debate the issues.

- 3) Student teams then cut out main ideas and supporting evidence for each point of voice presented in the documents. Sorting the piles into relevant/insignificant/strong/minor supporting evidence/arguments, gives students a visual representation while they are learning to focus on one argument or point of view at a time.

- 4) Student pairs research answers to the class questions, recording definitions and pro/con arguments.
- 5) This lesson will take multiple class periods and can be adjusted to the class timeframes.

Extended Learning: Project-Based/Service Learning

- A. Students create a National History Day project by researching multiple perspectives and then develop and defend a thesis based on their research. Information on Ohio History Day can be found at <http://www.ohiohistory.org/historyday>.
- B. Students analyze primary and secondary sources to develop and write a historical narrative from multiple perspectives. Students will present and defend their historical narratives. (This could be a written, oral, or visual presentation.)
- C. Students write editorials about the practices used by politicians and others to influence the outcome of elections. Submit to state legislatures, newspapers, or magazines.

Additional lesson plans on this topic:

<https://www.edteck.com/lessons/gerrymander.pdf> Excellent exercise by Peter Pappas here.

<https://ww2.kqed.org/lowdown/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2017/03/Gerrymandering-lesson-plan-updated.pdf>

<http://documents.mccormickfoundation.org/lesson-plans/redistricting-lesson-plan.pdf>