

ACTIVITY PLAN



Ensuring Voting Rights

! NOTE: Please read “How To Use These Materials” for additional support in teaching and adapting this media literacy activity.

Grade Level: High School and College

Objective Options:

- Students will reflect on the roles of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government in protecting constitutional rights.
- Students will compare the points of view of three sources for how they deal with the issue of voting rights.
- Students will cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of a video producer’s message.
- Students will consider how their own bias might influence how they see the credibility of each message.

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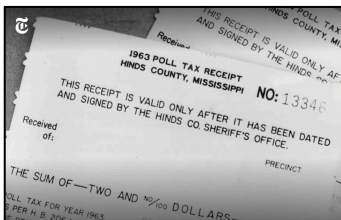
Standards Options

C3 Framework Social Studies Concepts	D2.Civ 4.9-12
	D2.Civ 10.9-12
Common Core ELA Standards	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1
	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1

Vocabulary:

Voting Rights Act, voter ID law, poll tax, disenfranchisement, battleground state

Media Type(s): online videos



A History of Voting Rights,
Online News Video, 2016
3:09 min



Voting: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, TV news Satire Program, 2016
2:41 min



Va. Gov. McAuliffe Restores Voting Rights of 13,000 Felons,
Local TV News Report, 2016
3:10 min

Preparation and Materials:

*All materials can be downloaded from the PLS website <http://www.projectlooksharp.org>

Preparation:

- Download and review the *How to Use Materials* section associated with this activity.

Materials for the Lesson:

- Three *video clips*

Additional Support:

- From the website, view [Media Decoding Examples](#) demonstrating classroom media analysis.
- Download the [Key Questions for Analysis](#) for supporting questions.
- [The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy](#) and the [Do-It-Yourself](#) online guide are both available from the homepage.

Time: 20-40 minutes (dependent on number of questions used)

Activity Procedures:

- Select among possible questions on the next page based on your objectives in teaching to social studies content and/or ELA/Media Literacy skills.
- Use the selected questions to lead students through a constructivist media decoding process of the three videos. Background information about the media documents is included at the bottom of the next page. Example student answers are included on the last page.

CONNECTIONS

Connections to *Media Construction of Presidential Campaigns* Lessons on Voting Rights

1832 "Aristocrat/Workingman" cartoon
1840 Democratic Republican newspaper
1868 "The First Vote" magazine cover
1868 "White Man's Government" cartoon
1932 "The Girl I Love is a Democrat" sheet music
1964 Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party televised testimony

DECODING Q'S

Possible Questions for Media Document Decoding

Select among these based on your teaching objectives. Make questions document-based (i.e. According to this image or video...)

Social Studies

- According to the video, what are some of the roles of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government in protecting constitutional voting rights?
- How have voting rights evolved over the recent and distant past in the United States?

ELA

- How would you describe the point of view of this media source in terms of how it deals with the issue of extending or restricting voting rights?
- What is the main message about voting rights in the video and what evidence in the document supports your conclusion?
- What beliefs and behaviors are required to enable you to work with your peers to promote civil, democratic discussions about a potentially contentious issue like voting rights?

Media Literacy

- How does your own bias influence how you judge the credibility of each message?
- What questions should you ask to judge the credibility of each message?
- What are the differences in the credibility of news received from these different sources: a national newspaper, a television news satire program and a local TV news report?

Follow up Evidence Questions & Comments

- Where do you see that?
- Say more about that
- How do you know that?
- What makes you say that?
- Does anyone have a different idea?

BACKGROUND & SOURCES

Teachers might want to suggest that student's access additional information about voting rights issues from other media sources.

A History of Voting Rights. Dir. Vijai Singh and Sam Tanenhaus. New York Times, 25 June 2013. Web.

Va. Gov. McAuliffe Restores Voting Rights of 13,000 Felons. By Tom Fitzgerald. Fox5 DC, 22 Aug. 2016. Web.

Voting: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver. HBO, 14 Feb. 2016. Web.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Social Studies

Question: According to the video, what are some of the roles of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government in protecting constitutional voting rights?

Possible Answers: A History – Presidents make proclamations about voting rights. (Lincoln, Johnson) Congress and state legislative bodies pass Constitutional Amendments granting voting rights. (14th, 19th Amendments) Congress passes voting rights laws. (Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act) Supreme Court rules on the constitutionality of voting rights laws proposed by state and federal legislators. (Shelby County vs. Holder) **Voting: Last Week** – State legislatures pass laws to make voting easier. (mail voting, online registration) **Va. Gov. McAuliffe** – State governors can restore voting rights by executive order. (Virginia governor restoring felon voting rights.)

ELA

Question: How would you describe the point of view of this media source in terms of how it deals with the issue of extending or restricting voting rights?

Possible Answers: History – The creators of the video support extending voting rights by focusing on successful grassroots campaigns (March on Washington, Selma protest) leading to federal legislation to extend voting rights (Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act). They discredit those who oppose voting rights by showing a photo of a Klansman with a noose with the voice over: “In the south there were even whites-only primaries.” **Voting: Last Week** – The creators of the video support extending voting rights by criticizing state efforts to restrict voting (“Sadly, other (states) have gone in the opposite direction”) and criticizing the Supreme Court decision “to weaken the Voting Rights Act.” **Va. Gov. McAuliffe** – The creators of the video oppose extending voting rights by focusing on Republican criticisms of the Democratic governor’s decision to extend voting rights to convicted felons for political purposes. (“Republicans have been suspicious since the governor first tried this... Republicans are crying foul about all of this...(The governor) is a close personal friend of Hillary Clinton.”)

Media Literacy

Question: How does your own bias influence how you judge the credibility of each message?

Possible Answers: My personal political and economic views are likely to shape my judgment on the credibility of these reports. If I am a Democrat I’m more likely to support extending voting rights to African Americans, who are more likely to vote for Democrats, and thus I may view the first two videos as more credible. If I’m a Republican I’m more likely to be suspicious of Democratic efforts to extend voting rights as a political effort to “pad the vote” as suggested in the third video. I’m thus likely to view the third video as more credible than the first two videos.

Question: What questions should you ask to judge the credibility of each message?

Possible Answers:

On the authority of the message: Who are the reporters and producers who created this report? What are their credentials? Is the media source recognized as unbiased?

On the accuracy of the information: Can the information be cross-checked with a reliable source? Does the video posting include source references?

On the objectivity of message: Does the information show a minimum of bias? Who links to the site where the video is posted? Are there paid advertisements?

On the currency of the information: Is this report dated? If so, when was the last update?