

# SUFFERING FOR SUFFRAGE

At a Glance

**Time:** 45 m

**Grade Level:** 2–12

**Description:** To go along with the new interactive Civil Rights exhibit at the Capitol museum, this lesson plan reviews the histories of the Suffrage and Civil Rights movements. It also gives participants the chance to discuss the importance of voting.

**Standards:** SS2CG1, SS3CG1, SS4H4, SS4H6, SS4CG1, SS4CG2, SS4CG3, SS5CG3, SS8H6, SS8H7, SS8H11, SS8CG1, SSCG1, SSCG4, SSCG5, SSCG6, SSCG7, SSCG15, SSCG16, SSSocIC1, SSSocIC2, SSUSH13, SSUSH16, SSUSH20, SSUSH21

**Objectives:**

Participants learn how hard past generations worked to gain the right to vote.

Participants learn some of the methods past activists used to gain the right to vote

Participants discuss how contemporary opinions of activists compare with how we remember these groups and their movements.

**Supplies:** Paper and/or slideshow

**Essential Questions:**

1. Why do people want to vote?
2. Why is it important to vote?
3. What is a protest?
4. How did the Women's Suffrage Movement and the Civil Rights Movement differ?

# Sample Script

Good morning! Today we are going to be talking about two groups of people who protested to win the right to vote. To begin, let's talk about voting.

**Intro discussion:**

**Why is it important to vote?**

**Who gets to vote?**

**Where do we find the laws about voting?**

**Who oversees voting at the state level?**

*In Georgia, the Secretary of State is responsible for organizing and overseeing elections.*

**What decisions are made through voting?**

*Elected leaders*

*Federal officials like president, senators, and members of Congress; statewide officers like governor, lieutenant governor, and secretary of state, county officeholders like sheriffs and commissioners; municipal officials like mayor, city council, and school board members; as well as superior, appeals, and supreme court judges.*

*Tax rates*

*Some local and state legislation*

**What groups have been historically prevented from voting?**

Although suffragists convinced some state and local governments to grant women more rights, many states did not allow women to vote until the U.S. Congress ratified the 19th amendment in 1920. This was a huge win for women, but it did practically nothing for women of color who still faced tremendous obstacles to voting. The 15th amendment (1870) should have removed race as a barrier to voting, but state legislation like poll taxes and literacy tests, along with local intimidation and terrorism prevented many people of color from voting. The 19th amendment (1920) did nothing to address those issues. Despite threats of violence and discriminatory laws, people of color made countless attempts to vote throughout the 1800s and

1900s. By the 1940s and 1950s, the Civil Rights movement began to gain traction in the federal courts and some state legislatures. Black Americans used their first Amendment rights (freedom of speech, assembly, and petition) to protest discrimination. The Civil Rights Movement fought more than just discriminatory voting laws, but the Voting Rights Act of 1965 represents one of the movement's most lasting achievements.

### **Who was involved in the Civil Rights Movement?**

**When were they active?**

**How did they protest?**

*Marches*

*Newspapers (Appeal for human rights, letter from Birmingham jail)*

*Fashion (buttons, t-shirts)*

*Sit-ins*

*Voter registration drives*

*Attempting to vote*

*Boycotts*

*Riding buses (Freedom Rides)*

**How did they organize?**

*NAACP*

*Urban League*

*CORE*

*SCLC*

*SNCC*

*Conferences*

*Churches*

*Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs)*

**What opposition did they face?**

*Activity 1: Plan a Protest*

**Your class has decided to protest some of the less appetizing school lunches. Break into groups and form a plan to change school policy. Have students answer the following questions.**

*Who is in charge of school lunch?*

**School board, principal, state legislator, governor, district nutritionist**

*Who can influence those who create the school lunch menus?*

**Parents, teachers, the media**

*What specific policy change do you want to make?*

*What protest strategies will you rely on to make change? Think about the different types of protests we've discussed already.*

**Discussion Questions:** These are basic discussion questions to facilitate a dialogue with students. Teachers should not feel limited to these questions.

**How did you choose your method of protest?**

**How did you decide on the policy you wanted put in place?**

**To whom did you decide to make your case? Why?**

## Activity 2: Lunch Election

Your class has won the right to choose your own school lunch this Friday! Establish some rules for an election so that you can make the choice fairly. If you have time, then you can hold multiple elections with different rules.

*Some example rules:*

*Everyone submits an idea for lunch. The submissions are read aloud by the teacher/elected student leader and voted on by the class. The students must vote publicly.*

*The class elects a leader who comes up with two options for lunch. The class then votes between those two options. The students must vote publicly.*

*Everyone submits an idea for lunch. The submissions are read aloud by the teacher/elected student leader and voted on by the class using numbered ballots (rank your top 5 choices).*

*The class chooses a leader. The leader makes the decision about lunch.*

*The teacher assigns committees. These committees of students must all agree on one dish to submit for voting. The committees must present their submissions and accept questions about their decision. The entire class votes on these committees' submission.*

**Discussion Questions:** These are basic discussion questions to facilitate a dialogue with students. Teachers should not feel limited to these questions.

**Did you feel this election process was fair?**

**How do you know your vote counted?**

**How would you do it differently?**

**Take Home Activities:** *Included in word document*

**Elementary School Activity**

Have students design a slogan, protest sign, ribbon, or button for their school lunch movement. Make sure they are thinking carefully about the colors and words they choose.

**Middle School Activity**

Choose a slogan or tactic from one of the protest movements today that you thought was very effective. Explain what made it work so well.

**High School Activity**

Conduct research on what legislation, and what government officials/school officials control lunch programs in your school. Draft a piece of legislation that would ensure your desired changes get made. Support your argument with language found in the legislation that already exists.

*Alternative*

Research the history of voting in the United States. Based on your research, choose one thing you would change if you could (electoral college, digital/analog voting, two party system, make it easier/more difficult to vote, extend/retract popular vote). Explain why this change should happen, and/or how to implement the change.

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