

Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan Constitution Day The 26th Amendment



Demonstration for reduction in voting age, Seattle, 1969. Image courtesy of MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, 1986.5.50631, photograph by Tom Barlet.



Wreaths Across America

Lesson Plan

Teacher:	Date:
Grades: 9-12	Lesson: Constitution Day

<p>OBJECTIVES: US Department of Education: Each educational institution that receives Federal funds for a fiscal year is required to hold an educational program about the U.S. Constitution for its students on September 17 (if it falls on a weekend; it should be held in the previous or next week).</p>	<p>STRATEGIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Writing/Poetry <input type="checkbox"/> Write/Pair/Share <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Primary Source Document <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Questions <input type="checkbox"/> Small Groups
<p>MATERIALS:</p>	<p>Computer/laptop; internet (with access to YouTube); Smart Board; copies of the Write-Pair-Share Activity; copies of the Vocabulary; copies of Snapshot of the 26th Amendment & Voter Legislation Timeline; copies of Excerpt of “Remarks by President Richard Nixon at a Ceremony Marking the Certification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution”; copies of Comprehension Questions “Remarks by President Richard Nixon at a Ceremony Marking the Certification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution”; copies of the Vocabulary and Voting Amendments Word Search Puzzle; copies of the Right to Vote Acrostic Poem Worksheet</p>
<p>Engage: Hook the students</p>	<p>Write-Pair-Share Activity- Students will have 12 minutes to analyze three passages about the 26th Amendment. At the end of 12 minutes, you will be paired with a partner, you will read your answers to your partner and they will read their responses to you. Hand out the Write-Pair-Share Activity.</p>
<p>Explore: Students make sense of a concept through observations.</p>	<p>Hand out copies of the Vocabulary and Snapshot of the 26th Amendment. Go over the vocabulary and the snapshot information including the timeline.</p> <p>Hand out copies of the Excerpt of “Remarks by President Richard Nixon at a Ceremony Marking the Certification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution.” Explain to your students this was a speech delivered by President Richard Nixon during the certification (signing) of the 26th Amendment. Have students “popcorn” read the excerpt of the speech aloud. Hand out the Comprehension Questions for the reading. Allow students time to complete the questions.</p> <p>Hand out copies of the Vocabulary and Voting Amendments Word Search Puzzle. Allow students time to complete the word search.</p> <p>Hand out copies of the Right to Vote Acrostic Poem Worksheet. Allow students time to write their acrostic poem.</p>
<p>Explain: Teacher introduces formal vocabulary and language to students.</p>	<p>amendment conscription protest representation propose Civil Rights election 26th Amendment suffrage Chinese Exclusion Act primaries ratify social conscience</p>
<p>Elaborate: Students apply what they have learned.</p>	<p>Students learn about the history of voting legislation, emphasizing the 26th Amendment by completing the materials and activities in this lesson plan.</p>
<p>Evaluate: assessment.</p>	<p>The teacher will determine the activities to be utilized for formal and informal assessment.</p>
<p>Enrichment/Service-Learning Project</p>	<p>Think about the quote by Jennings Randolph, "I believe that our young people possess a great social conscience, are perplexed by the injustices which exist in the world and are anxious to rectify these ills." Randolph has a lot of confidence in young voters, to cure the injustices of the world by electing officials committed to serving the common good—not their own self-interest. To download the Wreaths Across America Youth Service Project, go to www.wreathscrossamerica.org/teach</p>

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Write-Pair-Share

Less than a year after the United States became involved in World War II, President Roosevelt and his administration faced a serious problem, of the 20 million eligible men who registered for the draft, 50 percent were rejected either for health reasons or because they were deemed illiterate. The United States government needed to increase the draft numbers and move to expand the eligible ages. On November 11, 1942, Congress approved lowering the minimum draft age to 18 and raising the maximum to 37. Soon after, the slogan "Old enough to fight, old enough to vote" was born.

During the turmoil of the Vietnam War, the slogan began to resurface as the American public became disillusioned by the lengthy and costly war. In the mid-1960s the movement to lower the voting age gained widespread public support. "Old enough to fight, old enough to vote" found its way back into the American consciousness in the form of protest signs and chants.

You will have 12 minutes to analyze the following three passages. At the end of 12 minutes, you will be paired with a partner, you will read your answers to your partner and they will read their responses to you. Write on the back if necessary.

Passage 1: "For years our citizens between the ages of 18 and 21 have, in time of peril, been summoned to fight for America. They should participate in the political process that produces this fateful summons. I urge Congress to propose to the States a constitutional amendment permitting citizens to vote when they reach the age of 18." President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954 State of the Union Address. Once again, the movement to lower the voting age began to gain grassroots traction.

Passage 2: Senator Jennings Randolph, West Virginia-was an avid supporter of lowering the voting age to 18. In 1942, he introduced the first of 11 bills he sponsored on the issue to lower the voting age during his tenure in Congress. Thirty years after Senator Randolph first proposed legislation to lower the voting age the 26th Amendment was ratified and took effect on July 1, 1971. In response to its passing, the senator remarked, "I believe that our young people possess a great social conscience, are perplexed by the injustices which exist in the world and are anxious to rectify these ills."

Passage 3: "...the reason I believe that your generation, the 11 million new voters, will do so much for America at home, is that you will infuse into this country some idealism, some courage, some stamina, some high moral purpose that this Nation always needs, because a country throughout history, we find, goes through ebbs and flows of idealism. Time after time the country needs an infusion of new spirit, an infusion of youth. You are bringing that." President Richard M. Nixon, 1971, in the speech he gave during the certification of the 26th Amendment.

Passage 1:

Passage 2:

Passage 3:

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Vocabulary

Amendment - a change or alteration to the Constitution made according to the procedure outlined in Article 5 of the United States Constitution.

Civil Rights - rights to personal liberty established by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and certain congressional acts, especially as applied to an individual or a minority group.

Chinese Exclusion Act - The Chinese Exclusion Act (formally Immigration Act of 1882) was a U.S. federal law that was the first and only major federal legislation to explicitly suspend immigration for a specific nationality. The basic exclusion law prohibited Chinese laborers—defined as “both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining”—from entering the United States. The passage of the act represented the outcome of years of racial hostility and anti-immigrant agitation by white Americans.

Conscription - Compulsory enrollment of persons for military or naval service; draft.

Election - the selection of a person or persons for office by vote.

Primaries - state elections of delegates to the nominating convention that chooses a major party's Presidential candidate. In some states, delegates are elected by popular vote; in other states, party caucuses or mini conventions choose delegates.

Propose- two ways to propose (recommend) and ratify amendments to the Constitution. To propose amendments, two-thirds of both houses of Congress can vote to propose an amendment, or two-thirds of the state legislatures can ask Congress to call a national convention to propose amendments.

Protest - an expression or declaration of objection, disapproval, or dissent, often in opposition to something a person is powerless to prevent or avoid.

26th Amendment - The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

Ratify - to confirm by expressing consent, approval, or formal sanction.

Representation - having a say in government processes like the passage of legislation, by conveying authority to deputies (like Congress people or Senators) through elections.

Social Conscience-a sense of right and wrong for collective action. Social conscience compels us to insist on moral action from the wider institutions of society and to seek the transformation of social structures that cause suffering.

Suffrage- political franchise, or simply franchise, is the right to vote in public, political elections, and referendums.

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Snapshot of the 26th Amendment

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

In April 1970, Congress controversially lowered the voting age to 18 as part of legislation to extend the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Many people, including President Nixon, believed that it was the right of the states, not the Federal Government, to set the voting age. Nixon, nevertheless, signed the Act which was to go into effect January 1, 1971.

On December 21, 1970, the Supreme Court, utilizing its power of judicial review, ruled that the government had overstepped its legislative bounds in lowering the voting age. Fearing mass confusion over who could vote in the 1972 election, Congress quickly passed legislation proposing the 26th Amendment. It was ratified by the states in 100 days, faster than any other Amendment.

Timeline of Voter Legislation

- 1787: Constitution provides no federal standard for voting eligibility, decision left to states; mostly restricted to white, male, property owners.
- 1865: All states remove property ownership as a voting requirement, all white males at least 21 years old can vote
- 1868: 14th Amendment ratified, Black Americans gain citizenship, but not the right to vote.
- 1870: 15th Amendment ratified, barring barriers to voting based on race; people of color continue to be prevented from voting, often not considered citizens by states
- 1920: 19th Amendment ratified giving women the vote; women of color continue to face barriers at the state level
- 1924: Indian Citizenship Act passed, giving Native Americans citizenship; some states still deny their right to vote
- 1943: The Chinese Exclusion Acts are repealed giving Chinese Americans the right to vote
- 1961: 23rd Amendment ratified giving D.C. residents the right to vote for President and Vice-President, but not Congressional representation
- 1962: 24th Amendment ratified abolishing the poll tax as a requirement to vote in federal elections
- 1965: Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed, barring barriers to vote by state
- 1971: 26th Amendment ratified, voting age is lowered from 21 to 18

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Excerpt of Remarks by President Richard Nixon at a Ceremony Marking the Certification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution

July 05, 1971

The President was speaking to 500 members of the "Young Americans in Concert," Choir and others in attendance at the signing. The "Young Americans in Concert" Choir was getting ready for a tour in Europe. "It is a great privilege to welcome this very exciting group to the White House on the day that we celebrate our national Independence Day. It seems to me that it is particularly appropriate that on this same day we are certifying the 26th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

That Amendment, as you know, provides for the right to vote of all of our young people between 18 and 21--11 million new voters as a result of this amendment that you now will see certified by the GSA Administrator.

Now, the custom on certification of an amendment has varied through the history of this country. Always, of course, the certification is provided, but as far as witnesses are concerned, sometimes the President witnesses it--usually he has in recent years--but I understand a President has a prerogative to ask for additional witnesses if he likes.

On this occasion, therefore, I am going to ask that three of the representatives of this group who are 18 years of age or older--and I understand you range from 15 to 20, so we picked three 18-year-olds. We have worked this out so that you know it is absolutely fair, by lot, through checking with Mr. Ramsey, your choir director. They cover all parts of the country. If these three would step forward as I call their names and stand beside me on my left: first, Julianne Jones from Memphis, Tennessee; second, Joseph Loyd from Detroit, Michigan; and third--incidentally, I don't think this was an accident--we have one from California, and it is Paul Larimer from Concord, California.

If Mr. Ramsey would step forward, I am going to present the pen that I witnessed with to the director. I wish we had 500 more pens, but that is above our budget.

If I could have your attention for just a moment--this is, of course, a very historic occasion in this famous room, the East Room of the White House. I am sure that as you are here witnessing the signing of the 26th Amendment, its certification, that you must think back about all the things that must have happened in this room from the times that John Adams, who was the first President to live in the White House, lived here.

I think particularly it is significant that this group, "Young Americans in Concert," is here today, and that you are going to go abroad; you are going to be in Europe, as I understand, for 28 days.

I have been thinking about what kind of a message you would be taking to Europe, what you would be saying. You are going to be saying it, of course, in song, but you also will be saying it by your presence, by how you represent America. I think these are some of the things that we in the United States would like the people of Europe to hear from our young people, those who represent us so well, as you will be representing us in these next 28 days.

Naturally, you all know that America is the richest and strongest nation in the world. But it is not that--the fact that we are strong, the fact that we are rich--that makes America the hope of the world, that made it the hope of the world when it began, and makes it still the hope of the world today.

In other words, when we look at our strength, the thing that you can be proud of is that you can tell anybody in Europe, in Asia, Latin America, anyplace in the world, that America in this century has never used its strength to break the peace, only to keep it. We have never used our strength to take away anybody's freedom, only to defend freedom.

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You can also assure them that the strength of America in this last third of a century when you will be making the great decisions by your votes, and perhaps in your positions of leadership, that America's strength will be used to bring peace and keep peace in the world.

This is a very important thing, because many other powers, when they reach the pinnacle where we are, the pinnacle of free world leadership, still had designs on conquests. The United States of America doesn't want an acre of territory. We do not want to dominate anybody else. We want other people simply to have the freedom that we enjoy. That is what we believe in and that is what you can say as you go abroad.

Now, let me say a word about our wealth. We are a very rich country, rich by any standard that civilization has ever put for nations. But the fact that a country is rich isn't going to make you very popular abroad--not popular because, after all, people who do not have as much as we have wonder, how do we get it, how are we going to use it.

You can be very proud in that respect, too. You can point out that as far as our wealth is concerned, that it isn't something that is an end in itself. We are not proud of it because we are rich. We are proud because what we have in the way of wealth enables us to do good things.

For example, there was a terrible flood in Romania, a Communist country, a few months ago. We were able to send \$10 million to the people in that land. You all read about the terrible earthquake in Peru, you know, where 50,000 people were killed. We sent millions of American dollars to that country.

Whenever people in other lands have problems, we are able to help them. In fact, since World War II, \$100 billion has come from America to help both our friends and those who had been our enemies. We could not have done that unless we were rich.

Then here at home, what does wealth mean? Well, it isn't an end in itself; it should never be. If it does become an end in itself, then we are simply a rich country or a rich person living selfishly, thinking only of what is good for us.

But the reason that our wealth means something far more than that is that it enables us today to set out goals higher than any people in the history of the world. We can do more in building better education. We can do more, for example, in improving health care in this country. We can do more in campaigning on a program against poverty, in raising the level of all of our people, than any nation in the world, and the reason we can do it is because America is a rich country.

Therefore, we are not proud of the fact that we are rich simply because of that, but we say we--in view of the fact that we produce so much--that we are very privileged to be able to do good things, and may it always be that way.

Finally, I would like to leave this thought with you: I think more than conveying to the people of Europe, what is the truth, that America is strong and that America is rich and that we will use our strength and our wealth for good things, I think that what they would like to hear from young Americans is what I know you convey as I see you here today, and that is that we stand for something far more important than wealth and far more important than strength.

We stand for something that made this country the wonder of the world 195 years ago. Just think of it: 3 million people then, very poor, very weak by world standards, and yet Thomas Jefferson was able to say, we act not "for ourselves alone, but for the whole human race." He could not have said that and the world would not have believed him--and they did believe him--unless America stood for something other than wealth and strength.

What did it stand for? Well, first, it was a young nation, and second, it was an idealistic nation, and third, it was a nation that believed in itself, that had faith in God, and also that set very high purposes and very high goals

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for all people. That is why people came to America when they had the opportunity, because here there was more chance, more opportunity than in any nation in the world.

It is significant, incidentally, that this very desk on which we have certified this amendment was the desk that Thomas Jefferson used at the Continental Congress during the time that that Congress was meeting in Philadelphia. He used to stand up writing at that desk because while he was a relatively young man, not perhaps by your standards, but certainly by mine, only 33 years of age, he had arthritis and he therefore liked to write standing up.

Coming now to the basic theme, the reason that I believe that young Americans--you who represent the youth of America at its best--the reason that I believe that you will represent America well abroad, the reason I believe that your generation, the 11 million new voters, will do so much for America at home, is that you will infuse into this country some idealism, some courage, some stamina, some high moral purpose that this Nation always needs, because a country throughout history, we find, goes through ebbs and flows of idealism. Time after time the country needs an infusion of new spirit, an infusion of youth. You are bringing that.

As I meet with this group today, I sense that we can have confidence that America's new voters, America's young generation, will provide what America needs as we approach our 200th birthday, not just strength and not just wealth but the "Spirit of '76," a spirit of moral courage, a spirit of high idealism in which we believe in the American dream, but in which we realize that the American dream can never be fulfilled until every American has an equal chance to fulfill it in his own life.

That is what I believe. It is what you believe. And that is why, I think, we are so proud to have you in this room today on this historic occasion.

Mr. Ramsey, we have had some great stars perform in this room, of course, some of the great stars in opera and some of the marvelous singing groups, and some from the age of jazz---Duke Ellington, for example, was here--and many others that are perhaps more relevant to the group here. But I think that this room would be honored to have this group that is going to represent us in Europe sing in the White House. Could we have a number from you?"

[At this point, the "Young Americans in Concert," under the direction of William Ramsey, sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." The President then resumed speaking.]

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Comprehension Questions “Remarks by President Richard Nixon at a Ceremony Marking the Certification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution”

1. What was the significance of the age of the three witnesses who signed the 26th Amendment certification with President Nixon?
2. Why did President Nixon think the desk used in the ceremony was appropriate?
3. What American values did Nixon think the new voters represented and why did he think the United States needed it?
4. What did Nixon mean when he wrote about the "spirit of 76"?
5. Nixon says, “America in this century has never used its strength to break the peace, only to keep it.” What does he mean by that? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
6. Why does Nixon say wealth should never be an end in itself?

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ANSWER KEY

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Comprehension Questions “Remarks by President Richard Nixon at a Ceremony Marking the Certification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution”

1. What was the significance of the age of the three witnesses who signed the 26th Amendment certification with President Nixon? **The group ranged in age from 15-20. The three representatives who witnessed the certification were 18. The legislation would give them the right to vote in the next election.**
2. Why did President Nixon think the desk used in the ceremony was appropriate? **It was the desk that Thomas Jefferson used during the Continental Congress when Congress was meeting in Philadelphia to draft the U.S. Constitution.**
3. What American values did Nixon think the new voters represented and why did he think the United States needed it? **Nixon believed the new voters would infuse idealism, courage, stamina, and high moral purpose. Nixon believed a country throughout history, goes through ebbs and flows of idealism. Time after time the country needs an infusion of new spirit, an infusion of youth.**
4. What did Nixon mean when he wrote about the "spirit of 76"? **America's young generation, will provide what America needs as we approach our 200th birthday, not just strength and not just wealth but the "Spirit of '76," a spirit of moral courage, a spirit of high idealism in which we believe in the American dream, but in which we realize that the American dream can never be fulfilled until every American has an equal chance to fulfill it in his own life.**
5. Nixon says, “America in this century has never used its strength to break the peace, only to keep it.” What does he mean by that? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary.

6. Why does Nixon say wealth should never be an end in itself? **If it does become an end in itself, then we are simply a rich country or a rich person living selfishly, thinking only of what is good for us.**

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Vocabulary and Voting Amendments Word Search Puzzle

T	N	E	M	D	N	E	M	A	Q	W	E	R	P	T
T	W	E	N	T	Y	S	I	X	T	H	Y	U	R	I
O	P	E	A	Z	E	D	C	R	F	V	F	T	O	G
B	C	O	N	S	C	R	I	P	T	I	O	N	T	Y
H	N	U	I	T	K	O	L	P	Z	X	U	O	E	E
D	C	R	N	F	Y	V	T	G	B	Y	R	I	S	H
N	U	J	E	M	I	F	K	O	L	P	T	T	T	Q
A	R	A	T	I	F	Y	O	A	Z	X	E	C	S	W
W	E	R	E	T	Y	U	I	U	P	O	E	E	P	A
S	D	F	E	G	H	J	K	L	R	E	N	L	W	S
V	N	C	N	V	F	R	K	J	I	T	T	E	C	B
F	I	F	T	E	E	N	T	H	M	G	H	H	J	K
Q	X	A	H	Z	W	S	X	E	A	D	R	F	V	T
Y	O	H	N	U	S	U	F	F	R	A	G	E	G	B
M	N	T	D	T	W	E	N	T	Y	T	H	I	R	D

Compulsory enrollment of persons for military or naval service; draft	to confirm by expressing consent, approval, or formal sanction
Amendment ratified abolishing the poll tax as a requirement to vote in federal elections	a change or alteration to the Constitution made according to the procedure outlined in Article 5
Amendment ratified, barring barriers to voting based on race	Amendment ratified, lowered voting age from 21 to 18
the selection of a person or persons for office by vote	Amendment ratified giving women the right to vote
Amendment ratified giving D.C. residents the right to vote for Pres. And Vice-Pres., but not Congressional representation	state election of delegates to the nominating convention that chooses a major party's Presidential candidate
the right to vote in public, political elections, and referendums	Amendment ratified, Black Americans gain citizenship, but not the right to vote
an expression or declaration of objection, disapproval or dissent	the President who signed the 26 th Amendment into law

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ANSWER KEY

Name _____

Vocabulary and Voting Amendments Word Search Puzzle

T	N	E	M	D	N	E	M	A	Q	W	E	R	P	T
T	W	E	N	T	Y	S	I	X	T	H	Y	U	R	I
O	P	E	A	Z	E	D	C	R	F	V	F	T	O	G
B	C	O	N	S	C	R	I	P	T	I	O	N	T	Y
H	N	U	I	T	K	O	L	P	Z	X	U	O	E	E
D	C	R	N	F	Y	V	T	G	B	Y	R	I	S	H
N	U	J	E	M	I	F	K	O	L	P	T	T	T	Q
A	R	A	T	I	F	Y	O	A	Z	X	E	C	S	W
W	E	R	E	T	Y	U	I	U	P	O	E	E	P	A
S	D	F	E	G	H	J	K	L	R	E	N	L	W	S
V	N	C	N	V	F	R	K	J	I	T	T	E	C	B
F	I	F	T	E	E	N	T	H	M	G	H	H	J	K
Q	X	A	H	Z	W	S	X	E	A	D	R	F	V	T
Y	O	H	N	U	S	U	F	F	R	A	G	E	G	B
M	N	T	D	T	W	E	N	T	Y	T	H	I	R	D

Compulsory enrollment of persons for military or naval service; draft	to confirm by expressing consent, approval, or formal sanction
Amendment ratified abolishing the poll tax as a requirement to vote in federal elections	a change or alteration to the Constitution made according to the procedure outlined in Article 5
Amendment ratified, barring barriers to voting based on race	Amendment ratified, lowered voting age from 21 to 18
the selection of a person or persons for office by vote	Amendment ratified giving women the right to vote
Amendment ratified giving D.C. residents the right to vote for Pres. And Vice-Pres., but not Congressional representation	state election of delegates to the nominating convention that chooses a major party's Presidential candidate
the right to vote in public, political elections, and referendums	Amendment ratified, Black Americans gain citizenship, but not the right to vote
an expression or declaration of objection, disapproval or dissent	the President who signed the 26 th Amendment into law

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Right to Vote Acrostic Poem

Write an Acrostic Poem about the 26th Amendment utilizing information you have learned in this lesson.

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