VOTE 18   Edited Script

Vote 18 is an interactive voting lesson run by the teacher/facilitator. The following script will enable you to effectively facilitate the experience.

Objectives

1. Teach students the history and importance of voting in the US

2. Promote discussion of current events

3. Teach students how to fill out a voter registration form

4. Register eligible voters

5. Promote civic participation
Lesson Plan Overview

Part I. Interactive History of US Voting 10 minutes

The lesson starts with the facilitator taking the role of King George the III of England. The facilitator leads the students on an interactive journey through the history of voting. As students get the right to vote based on historical events they are invited to join the facilitator as members of the voting public. The section concludes with all students empowered with the right to vote.

Part II. Mock Elections & Analysis 20 minutes

This year we will be doing a mock election for Suffolk County Legislator.

(Although a presidential mock election may be more energizing, we are doing a state or congressional election as that is election we are having this year and it is IMPORTANT for students to know every election is important)

After picking two candidates the facilitator leads the class in a discussion of current political events.

Candidates then make a presentation to the class on what their positions are and why they think they should be elected.

Right before the vote takes place the facilitator picks 50% of the class and tells them they can’t vote. The vote is taken, a winner declared and the facilitator leads a discussion of what happened in the election and why. It is particularly good when candidate wins by one or two votes.

Part III. Registering to Vote 10 minutes

Part IV. Encouraging Civic Participation (Only if time permits) 5 minutes

The lesson concludes by inviting the students to vote and get involved in their communities.
Lesson Script  (This is general idea. Facilitator ad libs it)

Part I.  Interactive History of Voting in the US  (5 minutes)

.Tell the students to close their eyes and then ask them to imagine:

“Imagine there are no computers, no Facebook or emails. There are no cell phones or even land lines. Imagine there are no automobiles, no trains and no Wal-Mart or Whole Foods to purchase the supplies you need. Imagine you live in a rural farming community with limited contact with the outside world. Imagine the year is 1775 and you are living in the colonies under the rule of the King and now open your eyes.”

Crown

Let me introduce myself –It is 1775 and I am King George III of England and you are the colonists. As it stands today I make all the laws, appoint the governors, set and collect taxes as I see fit, give land to citizens if I choose, declare which religions can be practiced and make virtually all decisions affecting your lives.

Do you think this is right? Do you trust me to make 100% of the decisions affecting your future?

Do you think I will make choices based on what’s best for you or do you think I will make choices based on what is best for me?

Who has the power?

Do you like it?

Like you, the citizens of the time did not like this. They felt the King made decisions that were not in their best interests. In fact they were so angry that in 1776 with the signing of the ….. (Declaration of Independence) they put their lives on the line so they could have a say in running their communities and determining how their society should function. What did the Declaration of Independence say to the king? This led to the start of the .... (Revolutionary War)....”

What would have happened to the signers of the Declaration of Independence if they had lost the war? (They would have been tried and hung for treason). So they felt having a right to participate in the running of their communities was so important they were willing to risk their lives to get it. Hence the Revolutionary war was fought and how many people died fighting for the right to vote to and have a say in the running of
their communities? ... (25,324). Hostilities were officially ended and in 1783 the United States was officially formed with the signing of the .... (Treaty of Paris).

The war is over now everyone gets the right to vote and determine their future. Oops, did I say everyone? I didn’t mean everyone I meant just men. Did I say men? I meant just white men. Did I say white men? I meant just white male property owners.

(At this point we use to have all the white males come to the front of class if all students were standing or if students sitting, white men stand up. Now because of sensitivity league members had to some students and the fact that the numbers would only be 20% who could vote, we are saying if class were the colonists only 20 % of you would be able to vote. Member can figure out what number that would be based on size of class. Explain there is no more King but power is still held by a limited group of people).

Speaking to class now who are women, white males who did not own land and people of color:  
*Do you think this is right? Do you trust the 20% to make 100% of the decisions affecting your future? When push comes to shove, do you think we will make choices based on what’s best for us or best for you?*

*Who has the power?*

*Do you like it? Is it fair?*

*Like you many people felt this was unfair so in 1861 what was fought the ... (Civil War). This time how many people died trying to earn the right to vote?... (620,000). In fact more Americans died in this war than all other US wars combined.*

*In 1865 the civil war ended and five years later in 1870, what was passed giving everyone the right to vote?...... (15th Amendment to the Constitution)*

*Did I say everyone? I didn’t mean everyone I just meant men. So if you’re a man please come up if all students already standing (or can have them stand at their seat) as a member of the voting public.*

Speaking to the women:

*“Ladies, do you think this is fair?*

*Who has the power?*

*Do you trust men to make all the decisions for you? Will your interests be fairly represented?”*

*What did women do about it? Beginning in 1848 at Seneca Falls in NY and women rallied & protested. Some were killed, others were thrown in jail, but they continued to fight for the next 72 years for the right to vote and to be counted as equal citizens under the law through the Women’s Suffrage Movement. Finally, with the passage of the .... (19th Amendment to the Constitution) when? in .... (1920),women were...*
finally given right to vote.

Have all women come to front of room (or stand at their seat)
So now everyone has the right to vote? Is that correct. Well, everyone may have had the right but NOT the power. Many states put barriers in place to discriminate and not allow certain populations to vote. There were Jim Crow Laws mandating literacy tests, poll taxes etc. Then in 1965 the voting Rights Act sought to end discrimination in voting.

So after 1965 would all of you had the right and power to vote?

Why? Because until 1971 how old did you have to be to vote? ... (21). When did this change? In the late 1960’s and early seventies we were in another war. Does anyone know which war that was? Viet Nam. During this war with what method was the government finding soldiers to fight? The draft, right. Boys 18 years old were drafted. They were old enough to fight for their country and die for their country but not vote.

Is this right?

Is this fair?

People your age at the time didn’t think it was fair either and they protested and also worked with leaders in congress to pass the ... (26th Amendment to the Constitution in 1971), reducing the voting age to 18 in all states.

So now, look around you. In the United States today every person regardless of their race or gender everyone has the same right to vote. You have the power. One person one vote! Do you know what percentage of people actually vote in a presidential election ( about 60%) Do you know which age group votes the least (Young) 50% and it is much lower in a local election. Do you know which state has one of the lowest voter turnout? New York ranks 41/50 in low voter turn out So you are in age group that votes the least in state that has one of lowest voter turnout. The good news is that NY use to be 49/50 so we are moving in the right direction and improving. The other good news is that young people are also getting involved and making a difference as we can see from the Never Again movement.

Voting is your power. You can make a difference.

Have the students return to their seats.

**Part II. Mock Election FOR OFFICE THAT IS ON BALLOT (15 minutes)**

Ask the class for two volunteers to run for office in a mock election.

From the students who raise their hand, choose two volunteers to run for office. Bring the two volunteers with paper and pencil to the front of the class. At this point you want to find out what the class thinks. Instruct the candidates they should only listen and take notes they are not allowed to participate in answering the questions at this part of the game. Candidates often change their speeches depending whom they are talking to.
Start by asking the class their opinion on current political issues.

The goal is to get the class to express strong feelings and opinions on the issues. There are no right or wrong answers.

**Sample Issues for state election**

1. What should NY do to make our schools safer?
2. Should NY enact stronger gun control?

**Sample Issues for Congress**

1. Should there be stricter gun control?
2. What can federal government do to keep us safe?
3. Should dreamers be able to earn a path to citizenship and if so how. What about undocumented immigrants?
4. Many states have already legalized marijuana. Should it be legalized throughout the country?

Speaking to the class:

*Who has the power now you or the candidates? Who will have the power after you elect*
one of them?

Speaking to the candidates:
If you want to get elected and implement your ideas what do you have to do?

Speaking to the class:
You have to decide if you like what the candidates are telling you and decide if you believe they can get the job done.

(Stump speeches) Pick one of the candidates to speak first and give each candidate one minute to state their positions on why they should be elected.

We are almost ready to hold the vote but prior to voting there is one thing I need to do first.

Pick 50% of the class at random and take away their right to vote in the election and send them to the back of the class.

You can't vote: You can't vote: You can't vote: ...

Vote - pass out pieces of paper for the voting students to write down their vote. Someone tallies the votes after they are collected, A winner is declared, and given a prize. ( book marker ) This is either before or after voter registration form are completed.

Speaking to the excluded voters:
How did you feel about not being able to vote?

I'm sorry you couldn't vote but in this game but you represent the approximately 50% of the US population BETWEEN AGES OF 18 AND 30 that has the right to vote but in spite of the fact we've seen that hundreds of thousands of people died for the right to vote, and in spite of the fact that their vote is their power, they choose not to.

Speaking to the excluded voters:
What would you say to those that aren't exercising their right to vote?

Thank all of them for participating and allow them to return to their seats.

PART III. Registering to Vote (10 minutes)

When you turn eighteen, do you intend to vote?
Pass out voter registration forms and index cards

Now we are going to go through the exercise of filling out a voter registration form.

Go through the form with them line by line starting in the top left hand corner. Emphasize how easy it is to register.

For those of you who are US citizens and will be 18 years of age before the next election you will be eligible to vote and we encourage you to vote. Studies show that first time voters often forget which is why we have given you an index card. If you write your name, birth date, and email on it we will collect them and email you a reminder to vote before election days, even the school board.

PART IV. Closure: Getting Involved (5 minutes) or use this time for questions

Whether or not you can register to vote today, how else can you make sure your voice is heard in your community? How can you get involved?