

Educator: Matt Crawley		Grade Level: High School	
Unit Title:	Expanding Democracy		
Unit Narrative:	<p>This two-day lesson is part of a larger unit on the early nation (post-Revolutionary War) in American History. The content of the lesson would follow after material on the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the early presidencies. This lesson explores the evolution of democracy and voting rights throughout American History and compares the current expression of democracy in the European Union to the United States.</p>		
Standards:	<p>North Carolina Essential Standards for American History I.1.6 Taking Informed Action: Generate ideas through which the inquiry facilitates change. Devise a plan to enact change based on the results of the inquiry. AH.C&G.1.1 Explain how various views on freedom and equality contributed to the development of American political thought and system of government. AH.H.3.2 Use historical empathy and contextualization to deconstruct multiple perspectives of individuals and groups within various turning points.</p>		
Objectives			
<p>→ Discuss the concept of “government by the people.”</p> <p>→ Identify voting rights of the early nation, and then trace the evolution of those rights throughout American History.</p> <p>→ Compare the voting requirements between the United States and the European Union. → Create an argument on whether democracy still needs to expand within the United States.</p> <p>→ Voting requirements</p> <p>→ Democracy in the United States</p> <p>→ Democracy in the European Union</p>			
Essential Questions			
<p>→ Who should have a “voice” in a democracy?</p>			
Learning Acquisition and Assessment			

Students will know... (content/concepts)

Students will be able to... (skills, performance tasks)

→ The voting requirements of the early nation,
including their inherent inequalities.

→ Discuss ideas

→ The changes in the voting population from
1783 to the present day.

→ Work with partners or small groups

→ Compare across cultures

→ The formation and changes of voter
participation in the European Union.

→ Construct a written argument

Formative Assessments

→ Sorting Activity

→ Day 1 Exit Ticket

Summative Assessments

→ "Take A Stand" Writing Activity

Learning Activities (2 days): Lesson introduction, body, and closing

Day 1:
Voting
Rights

→ Introduction:

- o Begin by posing the following question to students: “What does democracy mean?” Student responses could be shared as a group discussion, written into a journal or exit ticket, or digitally captured.
- o Potential responses may hit on concepts like participation in government, having a voice, choice, or say in the government, or bringing many diverse interests into one.
- o Consider potential follow-up questions:

- Does a citizen need to vote to have a voice in the democratic process?
 - What does it mean for democracy to expand?

→ Who originally had the right to vote in the United States?

o Pose this question to students. See if they can identify the requirements to vote on their own, and guide them to the correct response, if necessary. In the United States, each state determined who was eligible to vote. While there were some differences, it is helpful to discuss voting on a national scale. In the early nation, that resulted in white men who owned property (and were at least 21 years old). With those restrictions in place, approximately 6% of the U.S. population had the right to vote in those early elections.

o Discuss who was left out. Talk about why those groups may have been excluded.

- Women generally had few legal rights in that time period. Women’s voices were considered to be represented by the men in their life (husband, father, brother, son), in the same way that children’s welfare is overseen by their parents.
- African Americans fell into two categories. Enslaved individuals were considered to be the responsibility of others, and free individuals were excluded as well.
- The property-less, or lower class, were deemed unsuitable for participating in the government because of a lack of education or ability. Without those skills, the lower class may be unable to read the ballot, unable to stay informed on the issues, or generally unable to understand the significance of their choices. Education access was limited during this time period, with New England states just starting to establish the first public schools in the 1780s.
 - Keeping the voting population small enabled an elite group to maintain control over the government and its decisions.

- The historical context, however, was that the United States had the most inclusive democracy in the world at that time. The thoughts on class, sex, and race were not unique to the U.S., but the American system allowed for greater social mobility than the other democracies of that time. *

*When evaluating the early American voting system, it's crucial to recognize the level of inclusivity was relative primarily to other Western democracies. Many cultures and societies worldwide operated under tribal democracy or other democratic structures without the influence of European perspectives on race, class, or gender. It is also important to consider the nature of social mobility during this period. Who had access to it, and what was required for an individual to change their social status? Were these opportunities available to women and people of color? Could women or people of color attain voting rights, and if so, under what conditions?

→ How did democracy expand?

- o Ask students to sort the following groups in order of when they gained the right to vote in national elections. In other words, which group gained the right to vote first? Who gained suffrage next? Scramble the order and let students sort. Additionally, have

Day 2:
EU

students predict when these changes occurred. (e.g., 0-50 years after the Constitution, 51-100 years after, 101-150 years, 151-200 years, 200+ years).

- White men without property
- African American men (achieved with the 15th Amendment in 1870, though not entirely guaranteed until the Voting Rights Act in 1965)
 - Women (completed with the 19th Amendment in 1920)
- Indigenous Americans (guaranteed by the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924)
 - Asian Americans (granted full citizenship rights by the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952)
- 18-20 year olds (granted by the 26th Amendment in 1971)
 - o Go over results, adding context and elaborating as you see fit

→ Closing: Exit Ticket

- o Which of the expansions of democracy do you think was most significant in American history? Why?
- o Has democracy fully expanded in the U.S.? Are there any groups that still should be adding to the voting population in the U.S.?

→ Introduction:

- o Review the class discussion and key points from Day 1
- o Present the groups that students suggested in the Day 1 exit ticket. Ask students to pick the most needed expansion. If students need prompting, consider examples like citizens living in U.S. territories, 16-17 year olds, or convicted felons. Allow time for discussion of results.

→ European Union example

- o The European Union is a much more recent democratic society than the U.S. This [video](#) gives a brief explanation of what the EU is and how it is organized.
- o How has democracy expanded within the European Union?
 - Increased membership over the years (six original members, nine additional members from 1973-1995)
 - End of the Cold War and the subsequent nations added from the former Communist bloc (13 additional members added from 2004-2013, many formerly communist; UK left in 2020)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision by some states to lower the voting age (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Malta, and Greece) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Focus on the Lowered Voting Age ▪ Listen to the NPR report on 16 year old voters in Germany and Belgium. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why do you think those nations chose to lower the voting age?
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working in partners or small groups, have students create a pro/con chart. Students can list potential benefits and potential challenges. There are additional resources on youth voting linked at the end of the lesson, if you feel like additional context is needed. ▪ Would the inclusion of younger voters in the U.S. be similar to the European nations? Or would there be some cultural differences? <p>→ Closing: Take a Stand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students will respond to the following question, “Should the United States lower the voting age to 16?” o Distribute the attached handout to students, or provide them with a digital version. Students will have to take a stand by checking “yes” or “no” on the sheet. Then, they will provide three supporting points that explain their response. Finally, students will write a concluding statement that brings these points together. o Assess student understanding. Do students respond to the question? Do they provide clear points to support their point-of-view? Do their points incorporate the content covered within this lesson?
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Resources and Materials	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Take a Stand student handout → The Right to Vote (Library of Congress) → Voting Rights for Native Americans (Library of Congress) → “What Is the European Union?” (YouTube) → “How European Elections Work” (European Parliament) → Voting Age for European Elections (European Parliament) → “Youth Participation in European Elections” (European Parliament)

→ [“Helping to Decide the Course of the EU at 16”](#) (German Federal Foreign Office)