Voices and Votes Lesson Plans and Educational Resources

Many organizations and institutions, including the Smithsonian, offer lesson plans and educational resources too numerous to list here. This short list of materials related to themes and topics found within the exhibition is just the starting point! Inquire with schools, universities, and libraries near you about other materials they may have available for use. The descriptions below are provided by the original source.

Democracy & Me, Cincinnati Public Radio

United States Elections: History of Voting Rights & Public Policy
Middle to high school
https://www.democracyandme.org/lesson-plans
Students will investigate and be able to explain how the United States Constitution can be changed from time to time through both formal and informal processes (e.g. amendments, court cases, executive actions) to meet the needs of its citizens or political groups.

Reading Your Rights
Middle to high school
https://www.democracyandme.org/lesson-plans
Students will identify the historic and contextual rationale behind the inclusion of each of the Amendments in the Bill of Rights from the 18th century perspective and discuss the role of each right in our political culture today.

Create a Candidate
Middle to high school
https://www.democracyandme.org/lesson-plans
Each student will research the stances on major policy issues held by both political parties, debate the issues from the point of view of one party, and create a hypothetical political candidate by developing a campaign strategy.

Basic Principles Defining American Government
Middle to high school
https://www.democracyandme.org/lesson-plans
Students will exercise the processes of persuasion, compromise, consensus-building and negotiation as they contribute to the resolution of conflicts and differences.

EDSITEment

https://edsitement.neh.gov/
The National Endowment for the Humanities' EDSITEment website offers online lesson plans in literature and language arts, foreign languages, art and culture, and history and social studies. EDSITEment is easily searchable by subject matter, grade levels, etc. There are several online lesson plans for high school students related to themes within *Voices and Votes*.

Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United State Senate

Pathways to Citizenship
Middle school
https://www.emkinstitute.org/explore-the-institute/dynamic-educational-experiences/senator-in-training/pathways-to-citizenship
Students are charged with building a bill that defines a pathway to citizenship for four groups of undocumented immigrants: DREAMers, farm workers, refugees, and a general undocumented population.

Seat at the Table, Project Guide and Lesson Plan
Middle to high school
https://www.emkinstitute.org/explore-the-institute/dynamic-educational-experiences/senator-in-training/seat-at-the-table
Invites individuals, schools, and community organizations to think about why diversity of representation is vital, and what necessary contributions we each bring to the table when we pull up a chair. Inspired by Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm's famous words and life story.

Conference Committee
Middle to high school
https://www.emkinstitute.org/explore-the-institute/dynamic-educational-experiences/senator-in-training/conference-committee
Focuses on legislative negotiation. The 2-hour simulation puts students in the role of a member of the Senate or House of Representatives engaged in Conference Committee, the process Congress uses to reconcile differences the two chambers may have on a bill. Students consider issues of policy and learn fundamental concepts of negotiation such identifying the core interests of others, developing political empathy, and using creative means to find common ground.

Miller Center, University of Virginia

Presidents
High school
https://millercenter.org/president
For each president, this site provides an historical overview, in-depth essays, featured insights, links to speeches, and featured books and publications.

National Archives / DocsTeach

25 Assorted Lesson Plans, The Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives
Middle to high school
https://www.archives.gov/legislative/resources/education
These lesson plans are designed to assist teachers with using primary source materials to integrate Congress into history, government and civics classes. Lesson Plans are available on a wide variety of topics including Congress, the Constitution, civics, women's suffrage, and political cartoons.

Finding American Symbols
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/finding-american-symbols
Students will identify symbols used in the original design of the Great Seal of the United States (1782) and assess how the symbols connect with important American ideas.

Monumentos Nacionales Expresan Valores Nacionales
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/monumentos-nacionales-expresan-valores-nacionales
En esta actividad, los estudiantes identificaran y analizaran monumentos y edificios nacionales para descubrir cómo representan al pueblo norteamericano, sus ideas e instituciones.
(In this activity, students will identify and analyze national monuments and buildings to discover how they represent the American people, their ideas and institutions.)

Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Fight for Civil Rights
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/martin-luther-king-jr-and-the-fight-for-civil-rights
Students will discover that Martin Luther King, Jr. and other activists fought for civil rights by exercising their First Amendment rights.

Examining Where Rosa Parks Sat
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/examining-where-rosa-parks-sat
In this activity, students will examine a diagram of the bus in which Rosa Parks took a seat. Ms. Parks's name has been blacked out. Students will analyze and evaluate the document, then apply prior knowledge to discern what this document is and why it is important.

Assimilation of American Indians
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/assimilation-of-american-indians
In this activity, students will analyze primary sources to determine the role and activities the federal government undertook to "Americanize" or assimilate Native Americans.

Checks and Balances in Action
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/checks-and-balances-in-action
In this activity students will analyze documents that span the course of American history to see examples of "checks and balances" between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches in action. Students will then match the documents they have examined with an appropriate description of the branches of government involved in the action.

Road to Revolution: Patriotism or Treason?
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/road-to-revolution-patriotism-or-treason
Students will examine the causes of the American Revolution and examine them from various points of view. Perspectives include the Sons of Liberty, loyalists living in the colonies, patriots, and British citizens living in England.

Separation of Powers or Shared Powers
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/separation-of-powers-or-shared-powers
In this activity, students will identify and draw conclusions about the relationship between the legislative, executive and judicial branches by critically analyzing primary sources.

The Suffrage and the Civil Rights Reform Movements
Middle school
https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/the-suffrage-and-the-civil-rights-reform-movements
This short comparative analysis activity involves comparing and contrasting two images of marches for freedom: a 1917 a Bastille Day march for women's suffrage, and the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Random House

American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith, by the National Museum of American History/Random House,
Smithsonian Books Teachers Guide
https://americanhistory.si.edu/sites/default/files/Democracy%20Teachers%20Guide.pdf
Traces the unfolding of America's experiment with government "of, by, and for the people" and illustrates the fact that democracy involves civic engagement and participation. High school history teachers will appreciate the rich primary source materials and clear, concise narratives, with special focus on the American Revolution and women's suffrage. Government teachers can review and reinforce essential aspects of citizenship with students through historical examples and personal narratives. Instructors in both content areas will find this a useful resource to enrich classroom instruction.

Random House for High School Teachers
High school
http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/subcategory.pperl?cat=325&top=285
List of books and resources under the topic Social Studies: Government and Law that are available for purchase.

Sandra Day O'Connor Institute

Civic Learning Resources
Middle to high school
https://www.oconnoreln.org/resources/
Resources for understanding American civics, including links to historical publications and speeches, suggested American novels, links to notable Supreme Court cases, and recommended places to visit.

iCivics
Middle to high school
https://www.icivics.org/teachers
Resources ensure every student in America receives a quality and engaging civic education and graduates from high school well prepared and enthusiastic for citizenship. More than 170,000 teachers and 5 million students in all 50 states utilize iCivics' innovative and free online resources.

Test Your Civic Knowledge
https://www.oconnoreln.org/test-your-knowledge/
This quiz pulls 10 random questions from the U.S. Citizenship Test, changing the questions each time through.

Smithsonian Institution

Smithsonian's History Explorer
All grade levels
https://historyexplorer.si.edu/
Smithsonian's History Explorer, the Museum's online portal for K-12 educators. Helps teachers find hundreds of free, standards-based social-studies resources designed and produced by the National Museum of American History. Educators can search on resource type, grade level, and other parameters. New online resources are launched regularly throughout the year.

What Will You Stand For? Video Resources, NMAH Education Learning Lab
Middle to high school
http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/Wx9864BskEyyLuC0
Throughout American History, young people have led, influenced, and defined the outcomes of our elections and politics. By organizing, lobbying, advocating, protesting, and voting, young voices supply our democracy with a never-ending source of fresh ideas, concerns, and hopes. This tradition continues today, as voters ages 18 to 24 make up the biggest potential voting bloc in modern elections. This Learning Lab collection can be used in conjunction with a short video that challenges young people to reflect on and discuss "What will you stand for?" Find the video and additional resources here: https://historyexplorer.si.edu... This video is part of a series of short films from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History that looks at how young people have historically shaped public opinion and outcomes. These brief videos help young people learn from the civic actions of youth in the past to become thoughtful, informed, and active participants in their democracy today. Through historical stories of youth engaged in our elections and politics, these videos show how youth have made history through civic action and challenge today's young people to continue shaping their democracy.

National Youth Summit 2019. Woman Suffrage: The Ballot and Beyond, NMAH Education Learning Lab
Middle to high school
http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/bnyEVHC2huRzk1t7
Suffrage marked an important moment in the progression of women's participation in American democracy and civic life. Yet it was an imperfect victory, and one that stands neither as a beginning nor an end, but as an important milestone in the fight for equality, justice and representation. The 2019 National Youth Summit will look at woman suffrage as an example of how groups with limited political power have shaped and continue to shape our democracy using tactics and tools, like public protest and the vote, to give voice to issues and galvanize fellow Americans into communal movements for change. Use this collection to examine the legacy of the woman suffrage movement and explore the guiding question: **What can we learn from the tactics of the suffragists?** Download the conversation kit and learn about the 2019 National Youth Summit webcast here.

Voices and Votes: Faces of Change in American Democracy, SITES Museum on Main Street Learning Lab
Middle to high school
http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/Jx6e3ToPtGJB80Gi
This learning lab introduces students to individuals who have shaped and participated in American democracy over time. Using a variety of resources, take in the stories and impact of Thomas Jefferson, Molly Pitcher, Thomas Paine, Richard Allen, William Apess, Wong Chin Foo, Alice Paul, Ella Baker, and Dolores Huerta.
Voices and Votes: Democracy in America is an exhibition from Museum on Main Street traveling to rural American from 2020-2025. *Voices and Votes* is based on the exhibition *American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith* at the National Museum of American History. This learning lab can be used in conjunction with the exhibition or as a stand alone resource on the history of democracy.

Voices and Votes: Power of the Press, SITES Museum on Main Street Learning Lab
Middle to high school
http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/xPH3mf59KNrnB5yH
The press and media have influenced America even before it was a country. The goal of this learning lab is to show the effect media has played on our democracy. It is also important to understand the bias that media and press can have on us everyday. Realizing this influence can make all of us better citizens.

Stories of Freedom & Justice: Learning Resources
Middle to high school
https://americanhistory.si.edu/freedomandjustice/learning-resources
Includes Join the Student Sit-Ins: Videos & Teacher Guide, and additional learning resources on civil rights. See next page for this lesson plan.

The Suffragist
Middle to high school
https://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/suffragist This set of three classroom videos and educators guide examines the actions taken by suffragists in 1917 as they fought to win the right to vote. Students meet Rebecca, a historical character from Takoma Park, Maryland, who is grappling with the decision of whether, and if so how, she will join the movement. Through this, students analyze and discuss the suffragists' arguments and strategies, and investigate the guiding question: What did it take for women to win the vote?

Preparing for the Vote
Middle to high school
https://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/
Preparing for the Oath is an online study guide for the civics portion of the U.S. Naturalization Test.

Winning the Vote: How Americans Elect Their President
Middle school
https://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/winning-vote-how-americans-elect-their-president
Explore the American presidency and elections in these four activities from Smithsonian Education's *Art to Zoo*. Each of the four activities focuses on a different skill in social studies: examining maps, using timelines, studying collections, and using primary sources. The activities are enhanced with printable handouts for students, discussion questions for the class, and suggestions for additional resources.

Many Voices, One Nation
All ages
https://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/many-voices-one-nation
Many Voices, One Nation takes visitors on a chronological and thematic journey that maps the cultural geography of the unique and complex stories that animate the Latin emblem on the country's Great Seal and the national ideal: *E pluribus unum*, Out of many, one.

American Experiments for the Classroom
All ages
https://historyexplorer.si.edu/major-themes/theme/american-experiments
Examine collections of the Museum's key resources on major themes in American history and social studies teaching. Additional resources can be found in the main search areas of the website.
The American Experiments suite of educational games build off of this question by challenging students to think about their roles and responsibilities within their democracy.
Where Do You Stand? Protest: https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/american-experiments-where-do-you-stand-protest/BsDP1VxB0TkHsY04#r
Where Do You Stand? Voting: https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/american-experiments-where-do-you-stand-voting/n1xco7j23wBGYFvo#r

Join the Student Sit-Ins (Videos and Lesson Guide)
Middle to high school
https://amhistory.si.edu/docs/JoinTheStudentSitInsTeacherGuide.pdf
In this activity, students will watch and discuss a 22-minute video of a theater presentation created by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The activity could also include an in-classroom simulation, extension activities, and a sing-along performance of a freedom song.

Let's Do History Tour
https://historyexplorer.si.edu/dohistory
The Smithsonian's *Let's Do History Tour* brings Museum staff to school districts nationwideto share effective, exciting teaching techniques and K-12 resources *free of charge*. We also help with substitute teacher costs.To learn more about the tour and bring it to your state or district, please review our program description and contact us at historyteachers@si.edu. The training supports social studies instruction and integration. We work with not only social studies teachers but also English, science, art teachers, and more, as well as coaches, librarians, and other resource teachers. It's an opportunity for educators across grades and disciplines to learn from one another and collaborate.

United States Capitol

The U.S. House of Representatives and the Gag Rule
http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/documents/lesson-plan/gag-rule.pdf
The House of Representatives used the "gag rule" to end discussions and debates about petitions
calling for an end to slavery. This activity engages students in analyzing documents, participating in discussions and conducting research to determine the outcome of using the gag rule and Representative Adams' role in ending it.

Philip Reid and Freedom
https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/documents/lesson-plan/philip-reed-civil-war.pdf
Students learn about an enslaved laborer and his contribution to building the Capitol while contemplating how freedom is depicted in art and architecture.

Congressional Biography
Middle school
https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/documents/lesson-plan/congressional-bio.pdf
The Constitution lays out minimum requirements for becoming a senator or a representative and guidelines for what kinds of responsibilities Congress holds as the nation's single lawmaking body. For more than 200 years, members of Congress have represented the American people. Today, there are 435 voting representatives, 5 delegates and one resident commissioner in the U.S. House of Representatives, and 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. The House of Representatives and the Senate make up the legislative branch of our federal government. This lesson invites students to research and explore the stories of our congressional representatives. After discussing the narrative elements of a biography, students research one member of Congress about whom to write a biography. Students conduct research, develop a biographical story, engage in peer review and then publish their final writing. While intended for 8th grade students, the lesson can be adapted for other grade levels.

United States Census Bureau

Puerto Rican Women's Labor Movement
http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson16/lesson16.php?c=plans&s=0
High school
Official documents, census data, newspaper articles, and photographs from this time period in Puerto Rico's history shed light on the complicated roles women have played in Puerto Rican society. This lesson provides students the opportunity to evaluate the role of women in the workforce and the global economy using a variety of sources.

George Washington and the First Census of Agriculture
http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/lessons/upper/census.pdf
Middle school
Students will read excerpts from a letter George Washington wrote about agriculture in the United Sates in 1771 and compare his evaluation with agricultural data over time.

Census: The Constitutional Count
https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/census-constcount.pdf
Elementary
This lesson will acquaint students with Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, which calls for an enumeration of the population every ten years. Students will explore the reasons for the census and participate in a variety of activities designed to involve them in the census process. This lesson is multidisciplinary involving math, art, language arts, and social studies skills.

Statistics in Schools
All ages
https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis.html
SIS brings school subjects to life using real-world Census Bureau statistics to create materials for use year after year at all grade levels.