

Lesson Overview

How many days are needed to teach this lesson?	2 -3 days
Grade Level(s)	12th
Subject(s)	American Government
Lesson Summary	In this lesson, students will analyze a Pulitzer story on Black voter access, compare it with a local story, and create a social media campaign to advocate for voting rights.
Standards	Alabama American Government Standards - SS10.USG.6 Analyze the expansion of suffrage for its effect on the political system of the United States, including suffrage for non-property owners, women, African Americans, and persons eighteen years of age. - SS10.USG.7 Describe the process of local, state, and national elections, including the organization, role, and constituency of political parties
Focus Pulitzer Center news story and news outlet	“Do Wisconsin’s Black Voters Have an Equal Voice?” by Molly Beck and Eva Wen
Identify the theme/idea/issue connecting the Pulitzer Center article to your community	Voter access
What additional news outlet(s) in your city/state/region will students learn about in the learning experience?	Students will look at local (Selma Times Journal or Selma Sun) or regional news (Blackbelt News, WSFA, or WAKA)
Notes on Context	My students come from a community with family roots connected to the history of civil rights activism. The Selma Voting Rights movement is always mentioned in connection to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. While most are aware of this legacy, they may not always see its connection to current voting issues. This lesson is designed to bridge that gap by helping students see how historical struggles for voting rights are still relevant today. Comparing a national (Wisconsin story) to a local story will help them make that connection. The use of

	social media also meets students where they are, encouraging authentic engagement and empowering them to use their voices for civic change.
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Lesson Plan

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will learn how news stories show problems with voting access and will create a social media post to raise awareness about voting issues in their own community.
Focus Pulitzer Center News Story/Stories
“Do Wisconsin’s Black Voters Have an Equal Voice?” by Molly Beck and Eva Wen
Introducing the Lesson
This lesson centers on the power of journalism to expose barriers to voting and elevate voices often left out of the democratic process. Using “Do Wisconsin’s Black Voters Have an Equal Voice?,” students will investigate modern voting challenges and connect them to similar issues in their community. By analyzing the news stories, comparing local and national contexts, and creating social media content, students build critical thinking, media literacy, and civic engagement skills.
Warm-up/Opening
<i>In preparation for the opening activity, the classroom should be labeled with four sections: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.</i> Students will begin class with a Four Corners activity using the following statements: • Everyone in our country has equal access to voting • Your zip code can determine how much your vote counts • Young people have the power to shape the outcome of elections After reading each statement aloud, students will move to the labeled corner that best matches their opinion. For each round, they’ll have 1–2 minutes to discuss their reasoning with others in the same corner. Afterward, ask 1–2 volunteers from each group to explain their group’s perspective. After the four corner activity, students will watch the following video by Rep. John Lewis:  Rep. John Lewis on the Right to Vote . After the video, have students do a quick-write (3–5 minutes) responding to this prompt: “After watching the video, reflect on John Lewis’s message about voting rights. What does his story or the message in the clip make you think or feel about the importance of voting today? Why do you think some people still face barriers to voting, and what can be done about it?”

After writing, have students turn and talk with a partner to share their thoughts. This will help activate prior knowledge and connect historical struggles to modern issues, setting the stage for deeper exploration through journalism.

Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

Before reading “[Do Wisconsin’s Black Voters Have an Equal Voice?](#)” by Molly Beck and Eva Wen, students will review key concepts such as redistricting, voter suppression, and civic participation. The mini lesson will also include terms such as gerrymandering, poll access, and voter ID laws, using real-world examples from both national and local contexts. After the mini lesson, we will discuss the role of journalism in a democracy.

Exploring the Resource(s)

For the reading activity, students will analyze “[Do Wisconsin’s Black Voters Have an Equal Voice?](#)” by Molly Beck and Eva Wen by completing a [The Impact of Local Voices: Local & National Inquiry](#) organizer. Students will highlight unfamiliar vocabulary and define terms using context clues or refer to a class glossary. To check comprehension, students will answer the following questions:

- What specific barriers to voting do Black residents in Wisconsin face, according to the article?
- How has redistricting affected representation in Milwaukee’s Black communities?
- What role do local organizers and community members play in addressing these challenges?
- How does the journalist use interviews and data to build the story?
- What emotions or reactions did the article bring up for you, and why?

Next, students will identify a local news story about voting access in our area. Students will analyze it using similar questions. They include:

- What is the issue described in the local article?
- Who is most affected by this issue in your community?
- How is this similar to or different from the Wisconsin article?
- What voices or perspectives are included – or missing – in the local story?
- What action or response does the article suggest, if any?

Processing the Resource(s)

Students will work in small groups to complete a “[Then & Now, Here & There](#)” comparison chart with two columns labeled Wisconsin Story (There) and Local Story (Here). In these columns, students will compare and contrast key elements such as barriers to voting, the groups most affected, community responses, media coverage and tone, and proposed solutions or civic actions. After completing the

chart, each group will present a brief summary of their findings to the class. The lesson will conclude with a whole-class reflection that invites students to connect what they've learned to their own lived experiences, identities, and roles as active citizens in their communities.

Additionally, students will have a journalist from the Selma Sun, who has a nonprofit called [Foot Soldiers Park](#) speak to them about the importance of voting.

Performance Task(s)

Students will create a social media campaign to help raise awareness about voting access in their community. Using the [checklist](#), students will design a post for Instagram that includes a short but powerful caption, a picture or graphic (something they make or find and give credit for), and a message that connects what they learned from both the Wisconsin article and a local news story. Along with their post, students will write a short explanation describing the issue they are focusing on, why it's important, and how their post encourages people to care and get involved. This project helps students practice media skills, understand local and national voting issues, and use their voice to make a difference in their community. It shows them how journalism and action can come together to create change. Students will use the hashtag #EveryVoteMatters.

Assessment

Students will be assessed based off of the completion of their graphic organizer, t-chart, group summary, and social media post.