

Engagement Activity



VIDEO SEGMENT A NATION COMMITTED TO INCREASING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

“If you think about some of the major struggles we’ve had in our society, some of the major laws that have been passed, one of the things you realize is how much of that activity has been focused on increasing political participation, [passing laws] designed to expand the right to vote, or protect the right to vote.”

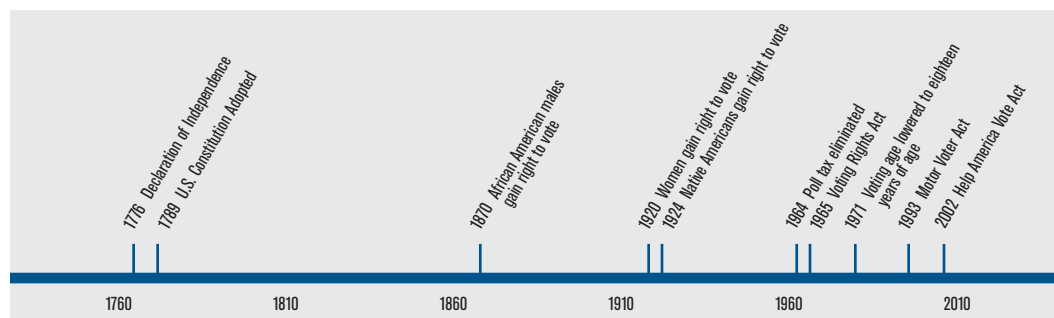
—PROFESSOR ANTHONY CORRADO

SOURCE OF QUOTE

Video Segment 6, Professor Corrado Gives an Inspiring Talk on the History of Political Participation in America.

INSTRUCTIONS TO TEACHER

This activity asks the students to pair themselves with a classmate to role-play a fictional character from the past in debate with a fictional character from the present. The character from the past lives prior to suffrage, while the character from the present, who has the right to vote, chooses not to participate in the electoral process. What would these characters say to one another about their respective positions? Distribute copies of the sheet *For Students: Engagement Activity–Time Travel Role-play 12*.



ACTIVITY VOTING RIGHTS–TIME TRAVEL ROLE PLAY

- Many laws have been passed to grant different segments of the population the right to vote, or greater access to the polls. In particular, the following six groups have gained greater access to political participation because of legal measures.
 - African American men
 - Native Americans
 - Women
 - Eighteen-year olds
 - Low-income people
 - People with limited education
- Choose three groups from the list above and create a fictional character to represent each group. Write a brief first-person narrative for each character that describes what it is like to be denied the right to vote. Example: “My name is Thomas. I live in 1865. I am a former slave. I am free but I cannot vote. This is not right because....”.
- Time Travel Role-play: You will now portray one of your characters while your partner will portray a modern-day counterpart of that character (sharing the same ethnicity, age, gender, etc). It is important that the modern-day character is someone *who does not vote and does not care to vote*, even though they could. For example, the character Thomas in the previous example will be speaking with an African American male from today who *has chosen not to vote* for whatever reason. In your debate, you must try to convince one another of your position or behavior with respect to voting. You will then choose a second character and trade roles.



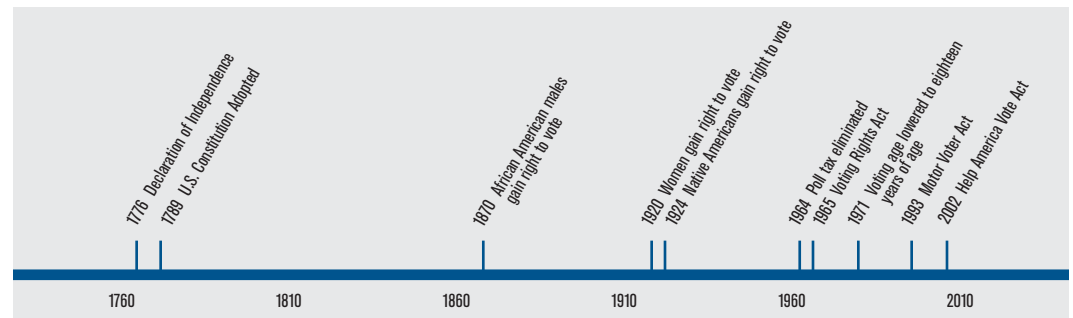
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Focus Question



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SOURCE OF QUOTE

Video Segment 6, *Professor Corrado Gives an Inspiring Talk on the History of Political Participation in America*.

INSTRUCTIONS TO TEACHER

For this activity, we suggest using a small group discussion format. After viewing *Professor Corrado Gives an Inspiring Talk on the History of Political Participation in America*, play the excerpted video segment containing the quotation cited above, located in the DVD main menu. Immediately following the video segment, a transcript of the quote will appear on the screen. You may pause or stop the DVD here. Distribute copies of *For Students: Focus Question 12*, located in the PDF folder in the DVD main menu. You may choose to distribute one copy for each student or one copy for each group.

FOCUS QUESTION

Review the table below. What new laws do you think could be passed or new policies implemented that might increase political participation in this country? Explain your answers.

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION CONTENT

Although not discussed in the video, you may wish to mention the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986, which gave Americans living overseas the right to vote. Also, students may be invited to debate provisions in the Fourteenth Amendment that allow states to deny voting to felons and ex-felons, whether paroled or on probation. Currently, forty-eight states deny prison inmates voting rights, while thirty-three states deny the vote to paroled ex-felons, and twenty-nine states deny voting rights to felons on probation.

The table below shows the examples cited by Dr. Corrado.

| Legislation | Year | Effect on Political Participation |
|---|------|---|
| Fifteenth Amendment | 1870 | Extended voting rights to African American men. |
| Nineteenth Amendment | 1920 | Extended voting rights to women. |
| Twenty-fourth Amendment | 1964 | Eliminated the ‘poll tax,’ which required people in some states to pay a fee to vote. |
| Twenty-sixth Amendment | 1971 | Lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years of age. |
| Indian Citizenship Act | 1924 | Extended voting rights to Native Americans. |
| Voting Rights Act | 1965 | Outlawed discriminatory voting practices such as literacy tests. These tests had been used to deny voting rights to many African Americans. |
| Motor Voter Act (The Natl. Voter Registration Act) | 1993 | Allowed eligible voters to register to vote when applying for or renewing their driver’s license. |
| Help America Vote Act (HAVA) | 2002 | Implemented new vote-counting procedures and oversight to ensure that all votes would be counted if properly cast. |



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