Citizens, Not Spectators

Lesson 1: Who Can Vote in the United States?

Teacher Resource 1: Who Can Vote and What Offices Can They Vote for in the United States?

U.S. Constitution (Ratified July 2, 1788)

What does the Constitution say about voting and voter qualifications?

Article I

The Legislative Branch

Section 2

House of Representatives: Organization and Power of Impeachment

1. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

2. No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Section 3

The Senate: Organization and Powers to Try Cases of Impeachment

1. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen [by the Legislature thereof,]¹ for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

¹ The Constitution originally gave each state legislature authority to decide who would serve as that state’s senator. This was changed by the Seventeenth Amendment.
2. Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second year. . . .

3. No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

Article II

The Executive Branch

Section 1

President and Vice President: Elections, Qualifications, and Oath

1. The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows.

2. Each state shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

Suffrage Amendments Added to the U.S. Constitution

Twelfth Amendment (Ratified June 1804)

The Electors shall meet in their respective states and vote by ballot for President and Vice President, one of whom at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President…

Fourteenth Amendment (Ratified July 1868)

Section 1: All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.
**Fifteenth Amendment** (Ratified February 1870)
Section 1: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

**Seventeenth Amendment** (Ratified April 1913)

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures. (Changed Article I, Section 3)

**Nineteenth Amendment** (Ratified August 1920)

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

**Twenty-fourth Amendment** (Ratified January 1964)

Section 1: The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.

**Twenty-sixth Amendment** (Ratified July 1971)

Section 1: The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.