



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2016 Volume III: Citizenship, Identity, and Democracy

The Citizenship Complex: Why the Vote Matters in the Race for Freedom and Equality for All

Guide for Curriculum Unit 16.03.02
by Vancardi Dwight Foster

Not all people are born equal or free but there is an expectation of both when you are a citizen of the United States. Our struggles to earn the base level of representation are quickly forgotten as we look for another group to demonize. In my unit we will discover why George Washington was ahead of his time with his warning about "factions" and how their existence makes freedom and equality harder to bridge. As we trek through time highlighting issues such as the abolition of slavery, support for women's suffrage, and the challenges that face Asian and LGBTQIA communities my hope is that student understand the sacrifices made to be accepted and to earn the right to vote but more importantly the difficulty in being welcomed into American society.

The "Citizenship Complex" is the process by which groups gain full inclusion. To understand it, one must look to the intersection of law, citizenship and the Constitution. The unit aims to provide a more complex history of our nation, to tell a more earnest story of how the American identity became a mosaic of human struggle, and to offer a more robust and enlightening study of these issues so that as students recognize the power of citizenship they will take a more hopeful view of what our nation will look like in the future. By engaging in the sophisticated discussions of the past, identifying why some groups supported each other and scapegoated others, and learning about the importance of supporting efforts at inclusion, our students should become more informed, open-minded, and ready for the globalized world of the 21st Century.

The unit will focus on four groups that have experienced the "Citizenship Complex": African-American slaves, women, Asian immigrants, and the LGBTQIA community. By comparing these groups over time, we will really be able to unearth the cycles behind the Citizenship Complex and understand that American citizenship means at different times in our country's history.

(For use with U.S. History and Civics classes but can also be used with the Facing History and Ourselves Curriculum)

Keywords: government, supreme court, citizenship complex, citizenship, freedom, equality, federalism, republicanism, civics, amendments, identity, democracy, self-determination, the other, disenfranchisement, voting, gender, Civil Rights, Constitution, and rights

(Developed for United States History, Facing History and Ourselves, grades 10-11; recommended for United States History, Civics, Facing History and Ourselves, grades 9-12)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>