



VOTING BARRIERS

(45 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students consider the barriers to voting today, including their causes and the impact they have.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Remind your students that a democracy is a form of government in which policy is decided by the majority of the citizens' votes.
- ✓ Break your students up into five evenly sized groups. (There will be one group for each of five voting barriers the students list.)

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Tell your students that they are going to explore the reasons why some people do not vote.
- ✓ Have your students brainstorm five barriers (one for each group) that prevent adults from registering and voting, such as:
 - ✓ Polling hours and the fact that elections are held on a workday.
 - ✓ The fact that you need to vote in the precinct where you lived at the time of registration.
 - ✓ The inconvenience of registering and the need to be registered a certain length of time before an election.
 - ✓ Being a convicted felon, a non-citizen, or merely uninformed.

- ✓ Assign each group a barrier.
- ✓ Have each group identify the causes and effects of their barrier and state their opinion on whether or not the barrier is justified.
- ✓ In class, the same or following day, have each of the five groups present their ideas and opinions to the class. When each group presents, make sure the rest of the class is brainstorming a list of questions to ask the presenters.
- ✓ Allow the class to ask questions of each group after they present.
- ✓ End the activity with a class discussion of voting barriers using the discussion questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What were some of the causes of the voting barriers we identified?*
- ★ *What were some of the effects of the voting barriers we identified?*
- ★ *In your opinion, do some of these voting barriers need to exist? Why or why not?*
- ★ *In your opinion, are some of the voting barriers not justified? Why or why not?*