

Eckerd Theater Company

presents

VOTE?

by Eric Coble

Expanding the Classroom

VOTE?

by

Eric Coble

Commissioned by
Eckerd Theater Company



Produced by special arrangement with
DRAMATIC PUBLISHING,
Woodstock, Illinois



About the Show

Synopsis of VOTE?

It is Election Day 2012. Eighteen-year-old Nicole Harrison registered to vote when she got her driver's license but has no intention of casting a ballot today. Why bother? There are too many better things to do. As her friend stresses the importance of voicing her opinion, Nicole suddenly slips back through time into the midst of the Revolutionary War! Nicole battles to return to her own time while her compatriots battle for the very right she so casually dismisses. Tossed from one historical event to another, from the American Revolution through the Vietnam Era, Nicole stands beside women, minorities and young people all demanding the right to vote. She participates in changing the face of democracy as we all learn just how many shoulders support us every time we step into a voting booth.

VOTE? was commissioned by Eckerd Theater Company.

Eckerd Theater Company

Eckerd Theater Company (ETC) is a touring company of professional artists, educators and administrators under the umbrella of The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute, the education center for Ruth Eckerd Hall at the Richard B. Baumgardner Center for the Performing Arts in Clearwater, FL. ETC seeks to provide the finest in performance and arts education experiences to family audiences of all ages. Since its inception in 1988, Eckerd Theater Company has performed for more than one million young people and their families throughout the state of Florida and in venues as far north as Canada and as far west as the Mississippi River.

From eight local performances of its first production in 1988 through 125 performances in the 2010-2011 season, ETC has been a proud ambassador of Ruth Eckerd Hall, creating professional productions of original works, adaptations of classic literature, and the finest published scripts for the theater. ETC productions entertain while they explore such themes as diversity, multiculturalism, self-worth, loyalty and tolerance.

ETC began touring the state of Florida in 1991 and national touring began in 1993. Since 1996, the Company has been on the Florida Arts on Tour roster, a state program providing funds to allow productions to travel to remote and underserved parts of the state.

In 1998, Julia Flood took the reins as ETC Artistic Director. In 1999, a State of Florida Challenge Grant provided funds for The Florida Project, a collaborative process bringing national and Florida theater artists and educators together to develop a new theater-for-young-audiences piece about the South. ETC has been featured in showcases at both the Southern Arts Exchange (now Performing Arts Exchange), and at annual IPAY conferences (International Performing Arts for Youth).

Since February 2003, Eckerd Theater Company has made its home in the 182-seat Murray Studio Theater in The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute.

Background Information

How Does American Democracy Work?

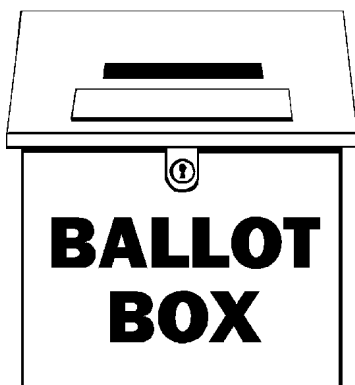
When Election Day comes in November 2012, how will a presidential candidate become the next President of the United States?

In 1787, the framers of the Constitution created an electoral system that remains a vital process of our nation. In 1783, after Britain acknowledged American independence with the **Treaty of Paris**, our Founding Fathers were faced with a daunting task. They knew our fledgling democracy needed a strong system of government. Yet they felt uneasy about giving any part of government too much power. Thus, the Constitution outlined a system of **checks and balances** between branches of government as well as between state and federal governments. In order to select a president, the framers instituted the **Electoral College**.

Initially, the framers worried about the practice of direct popular election. Transportation and communication were poor at that time, and they feared a presidential victory by overwhelming support in one particular region while other parts of the country might not be familiar with the candidate. The framers put the Electoral College in place to represent the views of the country as a whole.

Representation in the Electoral College parallels the number of congressional representatives in a state. Therefore, states with larger populations have more seats in the Electoral College. The Electoral College is meant to reflect the popular election. Therefore, the populace votes as a means of guiding the Electoral College toward the candidate of its choice.

Right now, there are 538 electors, so a candidate needs to win at least 270 of these votes to become the next President of the United States. As voters, our responsibility is to make sure those individuals representing our vote hear our voices clearly.



Brief History of American Voting Rights

In America, the right to vote has been a hard-won privilege for some citizens throughout our history. At the time of the **inception** of the Constitution, only certain white, adult male landowners were permitted to vote. In fact, only an estimated six percent of the adult male population was allowed to vote when the Constitution was drafted. The Constitution did not address these voting standards. Thus, individual states made laws clarifying who had the right to vote.

Universally, the laws **disenfranchised** slaves, **freedmen**, immigrants and women. After the Revolutionary War, **abolition** became a widely debated issue which eventually contributed to the Civil War.

The Abolitionist Movement, heralded by leaders such as Frederick Douglass, inspired the onset of the women's suffrage movement. Supporters of abolition such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton quickly realized the disadvantages of being women in politics. While attending an Anti-Slavery Convention, they were denied the right to speak because of their gender. The women's Declaration of Sentiments at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 was the first step in a long journey that finally won women the right to vote with the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.

After the Civil War, in 1869 the 15th Amendment extended voting rights to African American men, regardless of previous servitude. However, many states sabotaged this amendment by administering **poll taxes** and **literacy tests** to discourage minority voters. Unwilling to submit to **segregation**, African American leaders such as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Dubois and Martin Luther King, Jr. called upon the nation to reform. Finally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed state-imposed voting restraints on minorities.

In 1971, during the Vietnam War, the 26th Amendment expanded voting rights once again. In response to cries for reform by youth who argued that eighteen-year-olds who were expected to fight and die for this country should have a voice in its government, the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

Information courtesy of: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov>, <http://frontiers.loc.gov/learn/features/election/voters.html>, www.crmvet.org/info/votehist.htm, <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch8.htm> and www.history.rochester.edu/class/douglass/home.html

Background Information

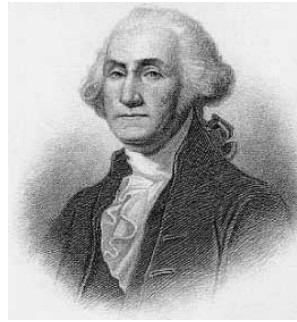
American Voting Timeline: Achievements and Amendments

- 1787—Adoption of the U.S. Constitution
- 1789—George Washington unanimously elected first President of the U.S.
- 1800**
- 1848—First women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY asks for rights and privileges of citizenship
- 1860—New York State passes expanded Married Woman's Property Act
- 1861-1865—Civil War
- 1866—Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott form the American Equal Rights Association
- 1870—The 15th Amendment grants all men the right to vote, regardless of race, but excludes women
- 1872—Susan B. Anthony arrested and tried for voting in an election
- 1890—National American Woman Suffrage Association is formed
- 1900**
- 1909—Inception of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- 1917—Jeannette Rankin, women's rights leader and pacifist, is first woman elected to Congress; serves 1917-19, 1941-43
- 1920—19th Amendment wins women the vote
- 1956—Racial segregation on buses is ruled illegal in Alabama by U.S. District Court
- 1963—March on Washington, D.C. for Jobs and Freedom
- 1964—Council of Federated Organizations launches effort to register black voters
- 1964—Civil Rights Act passed to end segregation
- 1965—Voting Rights Act passed to abolish poll taxes and literacy tests
- 1971—26th Amendment lowers voting age from 21 to 18



Note: In the following biography profiles, asterisks by names denote characters portrayed in the play **VOTE?**

George Washington*



In 1732, George Washington was born in Virginia to **plantation** and farm owners Augustine and Mary Ball Washington. At the age of 14, after the death of his father, Washington went to live with his older brother Lawrence. During these years, Washington learned the

basics of **surveying**, a skill that helped prepare him for his future battles. In 1752, Washington became a major in the Virginia militia. After delivering a warning message to French forces, Washington published a diary of his accounts which quickly won him fame. In 1754, after receiving news of an impending French raid against his men, Washington commanded what later became the first shots of the French and Indian War. Near the end of the military conflict, Washington met and married Martha Custis. In 1758, Washington was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses, where he aided in constructing laws governing the colony. He remained active in the Virginia legislature for 15 years.

After the French and Indian War, Great Britain suffered from financial difficulties. To earn more revenue, the British passed acts and levied taxes against the colonists without their representation in government. Frustrated by British rule, Washington, Samuel Adams, and other concerned colonists met at the First Continental Congress. There, they drew up a Declaration of Rights and organized a **boycott** against Britain. These actions led to the Revolutionary War, in which George Washington became the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. Throughout the campaign of war, Washington kept his troops motivated for the cause of liberty, even though they endured trials and hardships through the bitter winter. When the Continental Army prevailed, Washington was a hero to his troops and to the new nation. At that time, he made a significant stride toward democracy. Rather than seize power and kingship for himself, Washington resigned from the army. Later, he became involved with the drafting of the Constitution, and by suggestion of his peers, in 1789 George Washington became the first President of the United States. In those critical first years, Washington kept peace for the nation in foreign and domestic matters, and established himself as one of the most beloved Presidents in American history.

Information courtesy of: www.kqed.org/assets/pdf/education/digitalmedia/us-voting-rights-timeline.pdf, www.ags.uci.edu/~skaufman/teaching/win/2001ch4.htm, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_rights.htm, www.biography.com/search/article.do?id=9524786&page=1 and *Don't Know Much About George Washington* by Kenneth C. Davis

Background Information

Elizabeth Cady Stanton*



Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born in Johnstown, NY in 1815 to a self-made lawyer and his wife. As a child, Stanton learned the **injustices** of a society that favored males. Poring over her father's law books, Stanton found that upon marriage, women lost

their legal identity. Women's wages, property and children all belonged to their husbands. Stanton fought against the barriers to her gender. When her brother died in 1826, Stanton tried to comfort her father by excelling in "male" pursuits. When she brought home a prestigious Greek award, however, her father congratulated her by saying, "Ah, you should have been a boy." Hurt by her father's rebuke, Stanton firmly pledged to educate herself. She became immersed in politics, particularly in the abolition of slavery. On a honeymoon trip to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England, Stanton quickly became a champion of women's rights. At the Convention, Stanton made the acquaintance of Lucretia Mott, a **Quaker** from the U.S. who firmly believed in the equality of all men and women. After being denied a voice at the Convention because of their gender, both women resolved to hold a convention in the United States that would address the rights of women.

In 1848, Stanton and other feminist leaders held the first women's rights **convention** in Seneca Falls, NY. In her call for reform, Stanton appealed to the audience for gender equality on issues of equal pay, property rights, divorce and voting rights. In 1851, Stanton met Susan B. Anthony, and the two women formed a powerful alliance and friendship. Stanton continued to write motivating speeches and essays, and Anthony began to travel extensively to promote women's rights. Together, Stanton and Anthony formed and organized the Women's Loyal National League, the Working Woman's Association, the National Woman Suffrage Association and later joined with another suffrage leader, Lucy Stone, to create the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Throughout this time, Stanton continued to push against gender barriers. In 1866, Stanton became the first woman to run for Congress. Although suffrage didn't occur in her lifetime, Stanton remains a cornerstone of the women's rights movement in the U.S.

Susan B. Anthony

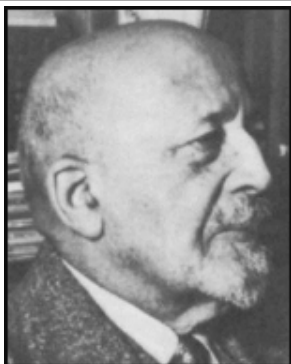


In 1820, Susan Brownell Anthony was born into a Quaker household in Adams, Massachusetts. Anthony discovered a love of learning at a young age, and she was distressed when a teacher wouldn't show her long division because she was a girl. When Anthony complained to her father about this incident, he started a home school for children in which girls were not sheltered from education. Anthony continued her schooling at a Quaker boarding school, Deborah Moulson's Female Seminary. At the seminary, Anthony heard Lucretia Mott lecture occasionally. Mott's speeches stirred Anthony, who also supported views of **temperance** and abolition. After completing her own education, Anthony taught for nearly ten years at various schools throughout the state of New York. She also became more active in lecturing on temperance. Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1851. Although women's rights had not initially been one of Anthony's causes, she quickly realized the importance of equality, particularly when she found herself unable to express her opinions at meetings because of her gender.

From 1853 to 1861, Anthony gained momentum in the women's movement as she managed several women's rights and anti-slavery campaigns throughout New York and Ohio. She fought to speak at teachers' conventions, where she called for the right of women educators to serve on committees and earn equal pay. In 1854, Anthony set out on a four-month petition drive to extend property rights to women. Six years later, after an impassioned speech by Stanton and Anthony called "A Slave's Appeal," the Married Women's Property Act of 1860 passed the New York Assembly. A small victory behind her, Anthony set out across the United States to campaign more vigorously for women's **suffrage** and abolition. From 1868 to 1870, Anthony also published a newspaper on women's rights called *The Revolution*. Anthony was one of the first women to cast a vote in the election of 1872. For her actions, she was arrested and put on trial. The judge sentenced her with a fine that he had prepared before the trial even began. Undaunted by these events, Anthony refused to pay the fine. She continued to champion women's rights until her death, saying "Failure is impossible."

Information courtesy of: <http://biography.com/search/article.do?id=9492182>, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: The Right Is Ours* by Harriet Sigerman, www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/, www.biography.com/search/article.do?id=9186331, www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAanthony.htm, *Susan B. Anthony* by Barbara Weisberg and *One Woman, One Vote* edited by Majorie Spruill Wheeler

Background Information



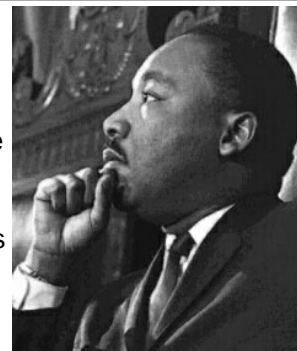
W. E. B. Dubois

William Edward Burghardt Dubois was born in Great Barrington, MA in 1868. Although the North was more **integrated** than the South, Dubois still saw effects of **prejudice** and **discrimination**. As a local correspondent for the *New York Globe*, at age 15, he began writing editorials advocating African

American rights. Although Dubois excelled in school, his family did not have enough money to send him to his school of choice (Harvard). Therefore, he attended Fisk College in Nashville, TN. Dubois' exposure to southern culture deepened his concern regarding uneasy race relations. With the help of scholarships, Dubois entered his coveted Harvard as a junior and focused his studies on philosophy. In 1895, he became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Soon thereafter, he earned a special **fellowship** from the University of Pennsylvania to research slums in Philadelphia. Dubois was fascinated with the study of the social system of African Americans and became readily convinced that racial problems were due mainly to ignorance. He called the position and treatment of African Americans "a long historic development and not a transient occurrence." For his work and research, Dubois is often referred to as the Father of Social Science.

Dubois decided to support his research findings by educating the American public. In 1909, he and members of the "Niagara Movement" formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP). Dubois became editor of the main NAACP publication, a magazine entitled *Crisis*. In his 25 years as Editor-in-Chief, Dubois outlined many of his own ideas for the advancement of his race. One of his most blistering editorials on the mistreatment of African Americans in World War II led to political reform. His article hastened the opening of African American officer training schools, the establishment of a federal work plan for returning veterans, and legal repercussions for the horrible act of **lynching**. While a member of NAACP, Dubois also encouraged **Pan-Africanism**. He believed that all people of African descent should work together for the cause of justice and equality for their race. To this end, Dubois organized several Pan-African conferences and inspired delegates from many African nations to earn racial independence and justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr.*



Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in 1929. His father was a pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. As a child, King was an early victim of segregation. One of his playmates was banned from playing with him when he entered elementary school because King was black. King went on to excel in school, but he did not forget this early injustice. At 15, he took advantage of a program at Morehouse College that admitted high school students to take the places of those who had gone to fight in World War II. Following in the footsteps of his father, King continued his education at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. After obtaining his B.D., with the aid of a fellowship, King began graduate studies at Boston University. While in Boston, he met and married Coretta Scott. In 1954, the couple moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where King accepted an invitation to become pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

As a student, King had become fascinated with the peaceful philosophy of India's **Mahatma Gandhi**. As a result, King was convinced that nonviolent protest was the way to change segregation laws. In 1955, when Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery for refusing to relinquish her seat to a white woman, King assumed leadership in the Montgomery bus boycott that lasted for 382 days. During this time, King faced arrest, abuse, and bomb threats on his home. However, when a U.S. District Court ruled racial segregation on a bus illegal in 1956, the public heralded King as a civil rights leader. In 1957, he founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to promote the drive for civil rights in the South. King also began to travel extensively to promote peaceful protest for social change. In the next 11 years, he journeyed more than six million miles and spoke more than 2,500 times. King also organized drives in Alabama to register African Americans as voters. In 1963, King directed the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. At this march, King delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech. In 1964, at the age of 35, King became the youngest male recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, yet he turned the prize money over to the civil rights movement. Through his efforts of peaceful resistance, King saw Congress pass the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Information courtesy of: www.duboislc.org/html/DuBoisBio.html, www.webdubois.org/, www.naacp.org/about/history/dubois, W. E. B. Dubois: *Biography of a Race* by David Levering Lewis, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html, www.thekingcenter.org, www.stanford.edu/group/King, <http://seattletimes.nsource.com/special/mlk> and *Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Brendan January

Vocabulary

Show Related

Abolition—the act of putting an end to; destroying; nullifying (e.g. Negro slavery in the 1700s and 1800s)

Boycott—to join together against and have nothing to do with (a person, nation, etc.) in order to coerce or punish

Checks and balances—any system of limitations in which contrary forces or powers are kept in balance

Convention—a meeting arranged for a particular purpose; gathering; assembly

Discrimination—a system of treatment that rewards or punishes differences between people, objects, etc.

Disenfranchised—deprived of rights and/or privileges, especially voting rights

Electoral College—group of people chosen by the voters to elect the President and Vice President of the U.S.

Fellowship—a position or sum of money that enables further study, given to a student at a university or college

Freedmen—emancipated slaves

Mahatma Gandhi—Indian philosopher who had a doctrine of nonviolence

Inception—a beginning or origin

Injustice—unjust act or circumstance; a wrong

Integrated—available to or serving people of all races on an equal basis; unified

Literacy tests—a system testing ability to read and write, used as a tactic to deny immigrants and African Americans voting rights prior to 1965

Lynching—putting an accused person to death without a proper trial, usually by hanging

Pan-Africanism—a movement or policy seeking the political union of all African people

Plantation—a large farm or estate where crops are raised

Poll tax—a tax levied on any adult citizen as a prerequisite to voting

Prejudice—an opinion formed without taking time and care to judge fairly

Quaker—a member of the Religious Society of Friends

Segregation—the separation of one racial group from another or from the rest of society

Suffrage—the right to vote, especially the right to vote as a citizen in local or national elections, referendums, etc.

Surveying—the business of measuring land for size, shape, position or boundaries

Temperance—abstinence from the use of intoxicating drink; moderation or self-restraint; self-control

Treaty of Paris—document formally acknowledging American independence from British rule



Art Form Related

What is Dramaturgy?

Dramaturgy is the art or technique of dramatic composition and theatrical representation. Quite simply, dramaturges are “play doctors.”

Dramaturgy typically involves two phases of development: the period before rehearsals begin, and the rehearsal/production period. Each phase has different responsibilities for dramaturges.

Before rehearsals, dramaturges prepare the text for performances. They can aid with translations and incorporate non-theatrical quotes and passages into the script. Dramaturges also compile research on the production. They research the playwright and the time and place where he or she wrote the play. This helps the dramaturge determine what local, national or domestic events may have shaped the inspiration of the playwright. He or she also researches the play’s specific setting to discern what influence that might have on character relationships and development. If there are specific references to historical events or figures, the dramaturge researches these events and issues. Most importantly, the dramaturge uses the pre-production period to become intimately familiar with the play as a whole through its composition, organization and progression of action.

During rehearsals and productions, dramaturges keep the production in line with the initial vision of the piece. They often serve as mediators between the playwright and director, and sometimes help in audience education. Overall, dramaturges are a seldom-recognized treasure behind the scenes, and their work is integral to the production of a play.

About the Dramaturge

Ms. Elizabeth Rivkin, the dramaturge of *VOTE?*, holds an MFA in directing from Virginia Tech and an MA in dramaturgy from New York University. She currently resides in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Prior to moving to the PA/NJ area via Blacksburg, Virginia, Ms. Rivkin worked as a theater director and Actors’ Equity Association stage manager for 14 years. Also, while in New York, Ms. Rivkin worked as a dramaturge at the American Place Theatre, Ubu Repertory Theater, and for award-winning playwright and screenwriter Brian Reich.

About the Playwright

VOTE?’s playwright, Eric Coble, is an award-winning playwright born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and raised on the Navajo and Ute reservations of New Mexico and Colorado. His shows have been produced Off-Broadway at Playwright’s Horizons, Off-Off Broadway at The West Bank Café and the 30th Street Theatre, and throughout the country from Chicago to Los Angeles. Mr. Coble is presently a member of the Cleveland Play House Playwrights’ Unit and a staff writer for Bill Rudman’s *Broadway Melody* on WCLV. He currently lives with his family in Ohio.

Information courtesy of www.wordcentral.com and www.dramaturgy.net/dramaturgy/

Expanding the Classroom through Discussion

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever voted or voiced an opinion in an election (for school, clubs, MTV awards, *American Idol*, etc.)? If so, on what criteria did you base your vote or opinion? How did the outcome of the election affect you?
2. Many people who called for the right to vote felt unfairly treated because of a characteristic they couldn't change (e.g. gender, race, age). In what ways do you or your friends feel unfairly treated? How could these situations be changed?
3. Are you aware that many Americans were not allowed to vote until relatively recently?

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. How did you identify with the main character, Nicole? Explain your response.
2. Stage productions are often different from film, because many components of a play (setting, additional characters, etc.) rely upon the audience's imagination to make them essentially come to life. Which scenes or elements of *VOTE?* did you feel depended upon your imagination? How did this add or detract from your experience?
3. The play *VOTE?* addresses a large span of American history. Which events or characters were surprising to you and why?



Eckerd Theater Company

The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute

1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater, FL 33759-3219

eckerdtheatercompany.com

Additional Resources

Ask your school or local librarian for help in locating these books for you and your students!

Don't Know Much About George Washington
by Kenneth C. Davis

Elizabeth Cady Stanton: The Right is Ours
by Harriet Sigerman

Susan B. Anthony
by Barbara Weisberg

Frederick Douglass: For the Great Family of Man
by Peter Burchard

W. E. B. Dubois: Biography of a Race
by David Levering Lewis

Martin Luther King, Jr.
by Brendan January

One Woman, One Vote
edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler

Check out these Internet sites for additional information!

www.kidsvotingusa.org

www.civicyouth.org

www.rockthevote.com

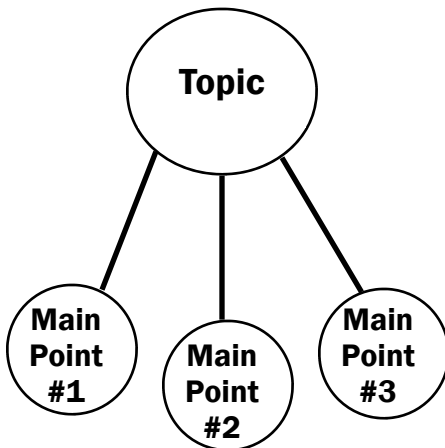
www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/

<http://thekingcenter.org>

Writing Connections

Many inspirational figures in history motivated our nation to adopt voting rights for all citizens. In your opinion, who do you think had the greatest impact and influence on the history of voting? Either in your school or local library, research an important figure of your choice and write an essay explaining his or her impact on our nation's history.

Helpful Hints



Paragraph #1—Introduction: In the first sentence, introduce your topic. In the next three sentences, state what your three major points are (one in each sentence). Finally, write a concluding sentence.

Paragraph #2—In the first sentence, tell what your first major point is. Then, in the body of this paragraph, give lots of good details about your first major point. Finally, write a concluding sentence.

Paragraph #3—In the first sentence, tell what your second major point is. Then, in the body of this paragraph, give lots of good details about your second major point. Finally, write a concluding sentence.

Paragraph #4—In the first sentence, tell what your third major point is. Then, in the body of this paragraph, give lots of good details about your third major point. Finally, write a concluding sentence.

Paragraph #5—Conclusion: Restate what you wrote in your first paragraph.

Language Arts: Writing, Information, Media and Technology Literacy;
Social Studies: History and Biography, Civics and Government

We want to hear from YOU! Write to us at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater, FL 33759

Student Guide Curriculum Connections

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Page 2 – Mathematics: Numbers; Social Studies: Civics and Government

Page 3 – Language Arts: Communication; Social Studies: Civics and Government

Page 4 – Language Arts: Communication; Social Studies: History and Biography; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques, Creation and Communication, Cultural and Historical Connections, Aesthetic and Critical Analysis, Applications to Life



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RICHARD B. BAUMGARDNER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Advocacy Supplement

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is defined in the dictionary as the act of pleading for or supporting a cause or policy. In a representative system of government like ours, an active citizen has more rights and responsibilities than simply voting for public officials. After voting for the candidate of our choice, we (the citizens) are then called to be advocates for the causes and policies that we espouse. The voting public has the responsibility to write or speak to government officials and tell them what the public wants.

How can we get involved?

There are several ways to get involved in politics, even if you are not old enough to vote. One of the most important first steps in getting involved is to educate yourself. An excellent stride toward education is awareness. Look at and listen to the world around you. Are there things about life in this country that seem unfair to you? Do you often hear parents, teachers, older siblings, family friends or the media discuss issues that you'd like to see change? Once your awareness has been awakened, research your interests. Find a specific topic on which to gather facts, such as homelessness, poverty, hunger or environmental awareness. Once you have begun your research, be certain to understand more than one point of view on an issue. Also, be wary of bias or personal opinion when you conduct your research. You should always consider the sources in research, and make certain to compare your findings. Sometimes you can't believe everything you read. Once you've completed your research, talk to others about your opinion and what you'd like to see changed or improved.

After you've found others who share your concerns or ideas, meet with them regularly to discover how you can make small steps toward social change. Most likely, organizations that share your vision on an issue have chapters near you. You can either choose to join an existing organization or you can form a club of your own. Once you've taken part with others, make your voice heard. Raise public awareness of an issue through publicized meetings, surveys, petitions and the media. You can hold fundraising events to benefit your cause or organize a drive for food, clothing or other items. After you've taken action for your cause or issue, review the results. Did you accomplish your goals, or do you have a clearer idea of how to accomplish your goals? Most importantly, establish a respectful relationship with public officials who can implement governmental change. Arrange for interviews or write letters to government officials and their staff. Make certain that you are familiar with the candidates in an election and that you understand their political platforms. If you support a candidate, make your choice known. If you can't cast a vote yet, express your opinions to those who can vote. Above all, take pride in your efforts to become an active citizen of our country. One person can make a difference!

Information courtesy of: <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn> and www.pbs.org/teachers/vote2008/blueprint/act/

Social Studies: Civics and Government
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Focus on Arts Advocacy

Did you know?

Only slightly more than half of our 50 states require some study of the arts (dance, music, theater, visual arts) for high school graduation. Yet studies have shown that exposure to the arts helps students perform better in school, have enhanced self-concept and improved understanding of others. Students with arts education generally score higher on SAT's. They also have better communication skills when compared to students with no arts education. These communication skills become very important in the work force, as self-presentation in job interviews has a great bearing on employment opportunities and advancements.

Express yourself!

Even if you are not yet of voting age, you can still influence change in policies by being an active citizen of this country. Choose an area of concern for the arts or another topic for which you would like to advocate. Following the guidelines below, write a letter to a public official who has your interests in mind. You can make a difference!

Dear (name or title of public official),*

- Identify yourself: Include your full name, grade and school.
- State your purpose: Explain why you are writing this letter. If you are addressing a specific bill or law, refer directly to it.
- Express your feelings: Clearly express why this issue or cause is important to you.
- Give suggestions for solutions to the issue or cause for concern: Tell the public official how he/she can help your cause by supporting or opposing a specific bill or law.
- Say "thank you": Make certain to thank the public official for his/her time and consideration of your letter, and state that you look forward to a response.

*You can find the addresses and names of your representatives at www.firstgov.gov/Contact.shtml

Information courtesy of: www.artsusa.org/news/national_arts_news/2007/default.asp and
http://ww3.artsusa.org/get_involved/advocacy/advocacy_004.asp

Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts: Applications to Life; Language Arts: Writing; Social Studies: Civics and Government

We want to hear from YOU! Write to us at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater, FL 33759

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Additional Resources

Ask your school or local librarian for help in locating these books for you and your students!

How to Make the World a Better Place

by Jeffrey Hollender
with Linda Catling

Take Action! A Guide to Active Citizenship

by Marc and Craig Kielburger

Generation Fix: Young Ideas for a Better World

by Elizabeth Rusch

The Activist's Almanac

by David Walls

Check out these Internet sites for additional information!

www.firstgov.gov/Contact.shtml

www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials

www.artsusa.org

www.nasaa-arts.org

<http://princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/advocacy.htm>

For Florida:

www.myflorida.com

