

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE: HOW IT WORKS AND DO WE NEED IT?

LESSON PLAN

Objectives

- Students will be able to describe how the Electoral College works.
- Students will be able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College.
- Students will be able to participate in debate/discussion on the Electoral College and popular vote.

Materials:

ARTICLE: *How Does the Electoral College Work?* [describes](#) how the system operates, plus its advantages and disadvantages.

VIDEO: *Why the Electoral College is So Important* – a [video](#) discussing three reasons the U.S. uses the Electoral College system. Related worksheets include:

- a) Debate [information sheet](#) describing three arguments for the Electoral College and 3 arguments against it.
- b) Video [comprehension quiz](#).
- c) Video [discussion questions](#).

Suggested Procedure:

1. Elicit students' prior knowledge about the Electoral College & informally discuss any impressions they may have.
2. Present the article [How Does the Electoral College Work?](#) This may be read from the internet or printed so that students can read a copy individually or in groups.
3. Ask students to brainstorm possible negative and positive traits of the Electoral College. Students may write their ideas on the attached brainstorm worksheet. Repeat the process for the popular vote. Have them report their answers.
4. Ask why students think the Founding Fathers instituted this system.
5. Show video [Why the Electoral College is So Important](#).
Suggested places to stop and ask questions:
 - 0:50 – Who elects the president of the United States?

- 1:00 – How many electors does each state have?
 - 1:05 – How many electoral votes are there in total and how many does a candidate need to win to become president?
 - 1:41 – Discuss James Madison quote
 - 1:50 – Which states have the largest populations?
 - 2:36 – Discuss Edmund Burke quote
 - 3:05 – How does the Electoral College deal with the tyranny of the majority?
 - 3:27 – Discuss Thomas Jefferson quote
 - 4:47 – Where is the Electoral College enshrined?
6. Hand out debate [information sheet](#) and allow students to read individually or as a group.
 7. Have students complete the [comprehension quiz](#).
 8. Have students complete the [discussion worksheet](#) individually or in groups.

Extension: Research Project. Highlight historical controversies where the Electoral College has conflicted with the popular vote. Students may choose one incident and write a description of what happened, how the episode was resolved, and the societal consequences.

Students may choose from the following elections:

- 1824: John Quincy Adams vs. Andrew Jackson
- 1876: Rutherford B. Hayes vs. Samuel J. Tilden
- 1888: Benjamin Harrison vs. Grover Cleveland
- 2000: George W. Bush vs. Al Gore
- 2016: Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton

Extension: Research project. Students choose a Democratic country to research and write a description of its key electoral system. Student can then compare the two systems, making note of the similarities and differences between the two countries.

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>

THE POPULAR VOTE

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>