



VOTE SMART

JUST THE FACTS

Lesson 5 - Finding Your Political Match

****Disclaimer:** This lesson is designed to use a tool called [VoteEasy](#) - this program only has information during election seasons. Check to be sure it has information by clicking the link above.**

Standards: National Council for the Social Studies

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

NCSS 4: Individual Development and Identity

NCSS 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

Objectives:

SWBAT (students will be able to) write a letter to their representative (state or federal level).

SWBAT identify with ideas and positions that resonate with them.

Subject Matter:

VoteEasy, letter writing, political identity

Materials:

- Access to Internet
- Blank lined paper
- Stamps
- Envelopes

Procedure: (~2 Days)

Set:

1. Ask students to raise their hands if they have a significant other, a boyfriend or a girlfriend (if you feel comfortable asking), and, if not, maybe just a best friend.
2. Choose a student, and if they're comfortable, ask them what traits they like about their significant other/ best friend. Do they have the same interests? What are those interests?
3. Ask students how they would choose their political significant other, in other words, how would they know who to vote for.
4. Explain that they can use [votesmart.org](#) to help them choose, based on a series of questions, who their political soul mate is.

Lesson Essential Question: How do you choose who to vote for?

VoteEasy:

1. Direct students to votesmart.org and ask them to select “Congressional” in the VoteEasy program.
2. Instruct students to click on their state. It can be the current state they live in or their home state.
3. At the bottom, type in your zip code to bring up your congressional candidates and representatives.
4. At the top there are a number of issues. Go through each issue and answer the questions to the best of your ability.
5. After answering all the questions, you will be able to see what candidate agrees with you on these issues the most. Write down that candidate or representative’s name.
6. Explain to students that they will be writing to the candidate that matched with them.

Writing Your Congressional Representative:

1. Show students an example of a well written letter.
2. Hand out the task sheet for writing your representative and go over it with students.
3. Ask students to look up the name they wrote down during the previous activity on votesmart.org.
4. Browse the profile of that representative. Look at their issue positions or the most recent bill they voted on.
5. Have students write about how well they think their representative is doing. Do you agree with the most recent bill they voted on? Do you think your representative is doing a good job representing you? Why or why not?
6. Instruct students to begin writing after browsing the profile. It should only be about a page long.
7. Have students hand in their work when they are finished for editing, then once the letters are edited, have students find the address to mail it to. Use the school address as the return address. Show students how to format an envelope (where the stamp goes, where your address and the address you are sending it to goes).
8. Mail the letters to their congressional representatives.

Close:

1. Re-ask the lesson essential question by asking students how they should figure out who to vote for.
2. Take a few answers until satisfied. Explain that students should pay attention to candidates’ positions and how they vote on bills in order to determine who to vote for. Find a candidate that aligns with their own opinions as best they can.

Assessment:

Formally assess the letters by grading before sending them to your representative either for participation, grammar, format, accuracy, etc.

Assignment:

None

Self Reflection:

Writing Your Representative

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Look at the profile of the candidate you matched with when you used [VoteEasy](#) on [votesmart.org](#). Browse your representative's profile, look at bills they have recently voted on. You will be writing to your congressional representative. You can choose what you want to write about. Is your representative doing a good job representing you? Why or why not?

Format:

The format of this should be in letter form - indented paragraphs with the proper introduction and signature, proper grammar, no contractions. Use a letter writing template if you are unsure about how to write a letter. Your letter should be approximately 1 page. (10 points)

Content:

This is your chance to tell your congressional representative how you feel about the current political climate. Do you think s/he is doing a good job representing you? Why or why not? Do you have any suggestions for your representative? (10 points)

Total: _____ / 20