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## **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY OR ASSIGNMENT - The Constitution and Voting: A Guided Reading Tool**

Megan VanGorder  
*Governors State University*

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## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY OR ASSIGNMENT

# The Constitution and Voting: A Guided Reading Tool

### RATIONALE

The United States Constitution contains 4,543 words, which makes it approximately half as long as an academic history article in a peer-reviewed journal. However, this short document contains layers upon layers of debate and political philosophy that has served as fodder for centuries of interpretation and the development of political, social, and cultural doctrines. What does the Constitution have to say about voting? As James Madison said, “The right of suffrage is a fundamental Article in Republican Constitutions. The regulation of it is, at the same time, a task of peculiar delicacy.” This activity structures the reading of the Constitution to focus reader attention on the ways in which the Constitution does - and does not - address voting.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Students will read and comprehend the text of the United States Constitution.
2. Students will engage and compare secondary historical source material to foundational primary sources.
3. Students will analyze the cause and effects of the Constitution’s construction.

### PRE-READING

Keyssar, Alexander. 2000. “In the Beginning.” In *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, 3–25. New York: Basic Books.

## Instructions

Using the graphic organizer below, determine the extent that the United States Constitution explicitly deals with enfranchisement (voting). For the “Text Reference,” provide citations of where the answer to this question can be found in the constitution. If the answer is “none” or “not applicable,” please write that in the “Text Reference” column and explain in your analysis. The “Analysis” should be a concise assessment that explains and analyzes the construction of the text.

| Article 1—The Legislature   |                |                      |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

| Article 2—The Executive   |                |                      |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

| Article 3—The Judiciary   |                |                      |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

| Article 4—Relationships Between States  |                |                      |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

### Article 5—Amending the Constitution

| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

### Article 6— Prior Debts, National Supremacy Clause, and Oaths of Office

| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

| Article 7—Ratification  |                |                      |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

| Amendments  |                |                      |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Guiding Question  | Text Reference | Summary and Analysis |
| What are the powers discussed in this article?                                    |                |                      |
| What is the relationship of the federal government to the states in this article? |                |                      |
| What does this article say about voting?  |                |                      |

## Reflection and Synthesis

After reading Keyssar’s chapter, “In the Beginning” from *The Right to Vote: A Contested History of Democracy in the United States* and conducting a guided reading of the United States Constitution, reflect on the Constitution’s references to voting. Did the Founders go far enough to guide the nation in regard to voting? What were the causes of this construction? What have been historical effects of the decisions of the founders to frame the Constitution this way?