

<b>Unit Title:</b>
Unit 1 - Elections and Civic Responsibility Then and Now
<b>Time Frame:</b>
September - October (12 Lessons)
<b>Standards:</b>
<p><b>Civics, Government, and Human Rights: Civics and Political Institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsPI.1:</b> Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.</li> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsPI.2:</b> Investigate different ways individuals participate in government (e.g., voters, jurors, taxpayers).</li> </ul> <p><b>Civics, Government, and Human Rights: Participation and Deliberation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsPD.1:</b> Describe the roles of elected representatives and explain how individuals at local, state, and national levels can interact with them.</li> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsPD.2:</b> Explain how individuals can initiate and/or influence local, state, or national public policymaking (e.g., petitions, proposing laws, contacting elected officials).</li> </ul> <p><b>Civics, Government, and Human Rights: Civic Mindedness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsCM.4:</b> Examine the responsibilities of differing positions of authority and identify criteria that are likely to make leaders qualified for those positions.</li> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsCM.5:</b> Investigate the lives of New Jersey individuals with diverse experiences who have contributed to the improvement of society.</li> <li>● <b>6.1.5.CivicsCM.6:</b> Cite evidence from a variety of sources to describe how a democracy depends upon and responds to individuals' participation.</li> </ul>
<b>Essential Questions:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do individuals work together to bring about changes in the government, policies, and laws?</li> <li>2. How are people from diverse communities challenged to participate and contribute to the improvement of society?</li> <li>3. What are the different roles that citizens and elected representatives play in a democracy?</li> </ol>
<b>Enduring Understandings:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In a representative democracy, individuals play a role in how the government functions.</li> <li>● Through participation in the decision-making process, people can initiate change (e.g., voting, petitions, contacting elected officials).</li> <li>● Certain dispositions help individuals contribute to the health of American democracy.</li> <li>● Collaboration is necessary in order to be an effective learner and citizen.</li> </ul>

### Project Task:

Students will write a bill to enact change within their school. This activity is a great way to have students express what is important to them. You can choose to have students create a bill/rule that would apply to your school or a bill/law that would apply to your community.

There are two sets of documents based on whether you choose to have your students write school or community bills. [Write a School Bill](#), [Bill Templates](#) .

### Consolidated Resources:

#### Materials:

Subscriptions to :  
BrainPop  
Newsela  
Epic Books  
iCivics

#### Additional Resources:

- iCivics (Teacher can create a free iCivics account and class for students to join. [www.icivics.com](http://www.icivics.com) )
- Text: The Constitution and the Bill of Rights by Roban Alarcon (also found on [getepic.com](http://getepic.com))
- [U.S. Government Kahoot](#) as a quick review of U.S. Government and Who has the power?
- ["I'm Just a Bill"](#) Schoolhouse Rock video
- **Possible Activity/Center:** [iCivics.org](http://iCivics.org) Race to Ratify to get as many bills into law as you can.

### Vocabulary:

constitution, representatives, commerce, citizen, taxpayer, juror, senator, Congress, petition, mayor, governor

### Unit Activity Lessons:

#### **Lesson 1**

**Objective** - Students will describe how the Constitution of the United States provides the structure of the government, separation of the branches of power, and checks and balances.

**Materials:** BrainPop video - [Branches of Government](#),

#### **Instruction:**

- Vocabulary - Introduce the words branches of government
- Turn and Talk: How do you solve problems at home with your family when you just can't agree? Exam[les - what to have for dinner, where to vacation, what movie to watch.
- Explain that today we will learn about how the government works together to ensure fairness.
- Class watches the [Branches of Government](#) BrainPop video. Teacher uses the stop points to ask and answer important key details.

Teacher Information:

The federal government is made up of three branches that share the power and responsibility of running the government.

- The **legislative** branch is the U.S. Congress, which has two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. One of the main responsibilities of Congress is to write and pass bills that become laws.
- The **executive** branch includes the president, the vice president, and the other people who work directly with them. Their responsibilities include carrying out laws and coming up with a spending plan for the country. They also make treaties, or agreements, with other countries.
- The **judicial** branch is the national court system. The most important court in the U.S. is the Supreme Court. It makes decisions about the meaning of laws.
- In pairs, groups, or as a whole group, print the worksheet available on this lesson. Students complete the worksheet with a partner. Share answers.
- Exit ticket - List two to three reasons why you think it's important to divide responsibilities among different branches of government.

## Lesson 2

**Objective** - Students will describe how the Constitution of the United States provides the structure of the government, separation of the branches of power, and checks and balances.

**Materials:** [debate](#), [U.S. Government Kahoot](#)

**Instruction:**

- Vocabulary - introduce the word **checks and balances**
- Remind students that in the last lesson, they learned about the 3 branches of government.
- Hand out reading about Webster-Hayne debates - [debate](#)
- Read together to learn about the two sides of the debate on if Federal or States should have more power
- Have a debate about who was right Hayne or Webster
- Exit Ticket - Why are the checks and balances a good idea to make sure things are fair.

**Additional Resources:**

[U.S. Government Kahoot](#) as a quick review of U.S. Government and Who has the power?

## Lesson 3

**Objective** - Students will seek to understand the roles citizens, senators and congressmen play in civic participation

**Materials:** [Taxes](#) BrainPop video, quiz - [Quiz: US Government - Taxes](#)

**Instruction:**

- Vocabulary - Introduce the words **citizen** and **taxpayer**
- Explain that the Constitution states that all citizens have rights and responsibilities. One responsibility is that each citizen must pay taxes to the federal government. These taxes help pay for many government jobs and services
- Watch the [Taxes](#) BrainPop video. Print out the graphic organizer Students use the graphic organizer in this lesson to jot down notes as they watch.
- Discuss each kind of tax using their graphic organizers,
- Class quiz - print or digital - [Quiz: US Government - Taxes](#)

## Lesson 4

**Objective** - Students will seek to understand the roles citizens, senators and congressmen play in civic participation

**Materials:** [mock trial](#)

**Instruction:**

- Vocabulary - Introduce the words **trial**, **juror**, and **verdict**
- Explain to students that you will be holding a [mock trial](#) for a case called Goldilocks vs. The Three Bears
- Tell the students that the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right to a trial by jury. A jury is a group of people who decide the verdict of a court case. Serving on a jury is another responsibility of a U.S. citizen.
- Choose students to fill each role for the trial and the remainder of the class will serve as the jury to determine a verdict.
- Act out the [mock trial](#) and ask the jury to deliberate and determine if the defendant is innocent or guilty of the charged crime.

## Lesson 5

**Objective** - Students will seek to understand the roles citizens, senators and congressmen play in civic participation

**Materials:** [Branches of Government](#) BrainPop video, Time for KIDS article [Congress At Work](#), [HOW TO: Contact Your Representatives About Important Issues](#) video, letter to representative [examples](#)

**Introduction:**

- Vocabulary - Introduce the words **senator** and **Congress**
- Turn & Talk: name the 1 of the 3 branches of government and a role or responsibility of that branch
- Explain that, today, we will be focusing on the legislative branch that is led by Congress, which has 2 parts: the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives.
- Tell students to think back to the [Branches of Government](#) BrainPop video. Play from 0.36 - 1.14 to review how many representatives and senators each state has to represent them. Each state has two U.S. Senators and at least one U.S. Representative; the more residents a state has, the more U.S. Representatives it is allowed. There are 100 U.S. Senators and 435 U.S. Representatives. They are decided by vote of American citizens.
- The House of Representatives and the Senate work together to make the laws for our country. They write bills that represent the people of the country and try to get the bills passed through the system of checks and balances.
- Read the Time for KIDS article [Congress At Work](#)
- But how do these representatives know what the people want? Well, YOU have to tell them.
- Watch [HOW TO: Contact Your Representatives About Important Issues](#)
- **Activity:** Explain that the students will each write a letter, email or a phone script to a congressman telling them about something important they would like to see changed or voted on. [Here](#) are some ideas and examples.

## Lesson 6

**Objective** - Students will learn about ways citizens can make changes in laws and influence

government policy

**Materials:** [Women's Suffrage petition example](#), newsela.com

**Instruction:**

- Vocabulary - Introduce the word **petition**
- Ask the students:
  - What would you do to bring about change in your community?
  - Who would you go to?
  - What steps would you take?
- Discuss these questions using the following examples:
  - Crosswalk/sidewalk needed
  - Change length of lunch/recess
  - Addition of community center/pool/movie theater (ask for additional student ideas)
- **Define petition:** a formal, written request by many people that is made to a person in authority.
- Explain that under rights given to American citizens by the Constitution, the right to petition is one of them.
- Why do citizens petition?
  - Petitions raise awareness to the public
  - Are simple and easy to understand
  - Can be more accessible than some other civic engagements, like voting
  - Can be powerful because it allows for the idea of “strength in numbers”
- Explain that during the women’s suffrage movement in the late 1800s, women used petitions to ask Congress to allow women the right to vote. By 1878, Congress had received petitions for suffrage from 30,000 women across the United States. Here is [an example](#) of one from that time, which was even signed by Frederick Douglass Jr. as a case for African American women’s suffrage.
- Explain that, today, petitions are used for many different types of changes. The types of petitions include:
  - Political petitions
  - Legal petitions
  - Public purpose petitions
  - Awareness petitions
- Instruct the students to visit Newsela.com and search using the word “petition”
- Pair, group or ask students to work independently to choose 1-2 articles from the search and learn about various reasons Americans have petitioned for change.
- To close, ask a few students or groups to share what they learned.

## Lesson 7

**Objective -** Students will learn about ways citizens can make changes in laws and influence government policy

**Materials:** BrainPop video [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#), [Laws](#) by Cassie M. Lawton, Kids in the House - [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#), [example of a flowchart](#)

**Instruction:**

- Remind students that during your last lesson, they learned about petitions for ways American citizens can participate in influencing change in their communities, states or the country.
- **Turn & Talk:** After learning about petitions, what are some things YOU might choose to petition for?

- Students will brainstorm a list of changes that they would like to see at the home, school, town, state, or national level.
- Remind students that when a law is approved, it is ratified.
- Watch the BrainPop video [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#)
- Provide the following materials for the students:
  - Kids in the House - [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#)
  - The book [Laws](#) by Cassie M. Lawton (on getepic.com)
  - BrainPop video [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#)
- Pair or group students and explain that they will create a flowchart using Google Slides, Google Drawing or poster paper that demonstrates the process of how a bill becomes a law
- Present students with this [example of a flowchart](#) which describes how to make a cup of tea.
- Closure - If time, allow students to present their work

#### **Additional Resources:**

- ["I'm Just a Bill"](#) Schoolhouse Rock video
- **Possible Activity/Center:** Modeling first, direct students to [iCivics.org](#) and have them play the game Race to Ratify to get as many bills into law as you can.

### **Lesson 8**

**Objective-** Students will compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of the local & state governments of NJ and the qualifications of NJ leaders.

**Materials:** [State and Local Government](#) BrainPop Jr. video, [Government of NJ](#), [Levels of Government infographic](#), [Compare & Contrast Levels of Government](#)

#### **Instruction:**

- Vocabulary: Introduce the words **mayor** and **governor**
- Watch [State and Local Government](#) BrainPop Jr. video
- Tell students that they will be investigating the roles and responsibilities of the mayors and governor of NJ.
- Explain that to become governor of NJ, a person must be
  - at least 30 years old,
  - a U.S. citizen for at least 20 years, and
  - a New Jersey resident for seven years prior to the election.
- Assign the video for the students to access on their own, [this Government of NJ link](#) to read and research, and pass out or provide a digital copy of the [Levels of Government infographic](#).
- Group or partner students and provide [Compare & Contrast Levels of Government](#) handout.
- Ask students to complete the handout by using the video, link and infographic to help them.
- Close by asking students to write a short letter to their mayor providing one idea on how to improve the community and why it would be helpful.

### **Lesson 9**

**Objective -** Students will compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of the local & state governments of NJ and the qualifications of NJ leaders.

**Materials:** [Government of NJ](#),

#### **Instruction:**

- Turn & Talk: Activate prior knowledge by asking students to list the roles of the state and local governments of NJ.
- Explain that NJ has a governor who runs the state. The state constitution says that the governor chooses the heads of up to 20 major departments. As of 2013, there are 15 cabinet-level or principal departments in the state's executive branch.
- Present this link to the class: [Government of NJ](#) and explain that today, they will be choosing 2 leaders in the state of NJ to study. This includes current or former governors or mayors, or any of the current leaders listed in the NJ state cabinet (refer to chart at the bottom of the link)
- Pair or group students and ask them to create a Google Slide presentation. Each slide should include the following information:
  - Name of leader
  - Role
  - Local or state government?
  - Background (education, prior work experience)
  - Job description (what does their job require them to do?)
- Closure - ask a few students to share what they learned/who they studied.

## Lesson 10

**Objective** - Students will describe the purpose of government, compare and contrast different types of government and use content-specific language when describing types of government

**Materials:** [Democracy](#) BrainPop video

**Instruction:**

- Vocabulary - Introduce the words democracy and republic
  - **Democracy** is a system of governance where the power is vested in the people.
  - **A republic** is a form of government in which representatives are elected to make governmental decisions for the general public and are responsible to the electorate.
- Watch the "[Democracy](#)" BrainPop video.
- Ask students to define the vocabulary terms in their own words using a frayer model. [Frayer Model Template.pdf](#).
- Discuss that The United States is a Democracy and has a Republic since in most cases decisions about government are made by elected representatives.
- **Activity:** Provide students with access to the "[Democracy](#)" BrainPop video and the asks the following questions to assess student understanding:
  - Where was the first Democracy created?
  - What restrictions were different in terms of who could vote?
  - What are some examples of the U.S. as democracy and republic?
  - Why is a republic (representative democracy) helpful for large countries like the United states?

## Lesson 11

**Objective** - PBL - Students will write a bill to enact change within their school.

**Materials:** [Write a School Bill](#), [Bill Templates](#)

**Instruction:**

- Explain to the class that they will be writing a bill for the school that could be presented to the principal.

- Tell them they will:
  - Think about your school and any changes that you would want to make to the way it runs.
  - Think about something that you are passionate about and think will make an important difference in your school.
  - Write a title for your bill and explain what all your bill includes.
  - Ask your classmates if they would be willing to cosponsor the bill, and if so add their names.
  - Write a letter to your principal explaining the bill and its benefits for your school.
- Depending on teacher preference, students can work in pairs, groups or individually.
- Present an example to the class from the plan: [Write a School Bill](#)
- Students can complete the work on google slides using the [bill templates](#) or on construction or poster paper.

Students can also work in partners or small groups to create their bill and presentation.

Explain to the class that they will be writing a bill for the school that could be presented to the principal.

Tell them to:

- Think about your school and any changes that you would want to make to the way it runs.
- Think about something that you are passionate about and think will make an important difference in your school.
- Write a title for your bill and explain what all your bill includes.
- Ask your classmates if they would be willing to cosponsor the bill, and if so add their names.
- Write a letter to your principal explaining the bill and its benefits for your school

## Lesson 12

**Objective** - Students will write a bill to enact change within their school

**Materials:** [Write a School Bill](#), [Bill Templates](#)

**Instruction:** Students will continue to work on their school bill.

## Lesson 13 - PBL

**Presentations**

**Assessment:**

[Rubric for PBL](#)