



Strategies for Classroom Conversations

With and without the vote, young people have been a force to be reckoned with as they take action and stand in support of the issues that matter most. In 2020 this legacy will continue; 22 million young people will be eligible to vote in American elections for the first time and countless more will likely participate in the electoral process in other ways.

The *Young People Shake Up Elections (History Proves It)* video series from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History shares 10 stories of young people shaping and changing elections throughout American history. The series, along with additional stories and resources, can be found at [s.si.edu/youth-democracy](https://www.si.edu/youth-democracy).

THE VIDEOS

Each video features a cast of teens telling two stories of young people in American history who impacted electoral politics. The teens reflect through critical dialogue on what it means to be a young person participating in elections today. The videos end with a prompt to spark conversation among your students about the public issues they care about and how they might take part in the upcoming elections. The series includes the following videos:

Taking A Stand (05:53)

Featured stories: Benjamin Brown Foster and Mabel Ping-Hua Lee
Discussion prompt: What will you stand for?

Generational Impact (05:32)

Featured stories: Amy Kaukonen and Mattie Oblinger
Discussion prompt: Why will your generation matter?

Civic Action (05:43)

Featured stories: Rosie Head and José Ángel Gutiérrez

Discussion prompt: What history are you making?

Getting Informed (05:41)

Featured stories: John Roy Lynch and Khmer Girls in Action

Discussion prompt: How will you participate in the elections?

Shared Democracy (05:28)

Featured stories: The Wide Awakes and youth voters in recent elections

Discussion prompt: How will you shape the future?

RECOMMENDED DISCUSSION AND PROCESSING STRATEGIES

Each video concludes with teen-led discussions about their reactions to the stories and connections to elections and civic participation today. Use this as a model to convene conversations among your students in response to the videos. The learning strategy below is designed to foster thoughtful, critical, and inspiring discussions.

- Arrange students in groups of three to watch and respond to the videos. After they watch a video, have students individually write or draw their initial responses to the following questions.
 - Which story was the most interesting to you? What about that story did you like?
 - How did the people in these stories participate in the elections? How did their actions impact the elections, on a large or small scale?
 - Did the people in these stories seem ordinary or extraordinary or both? What makes you say that?
- With their small group, invite students to take turns sharing their initial responses. Then provide the following questions to deepen their discussions.
 - What connections do you see between these stories and issues with events that are happening today?
 - Do you think young people can continue this tradition of shaking up elections? What makes you say that?
 - Through what methods or actions can you participate in the elections today, with or without the vote?

- Direct students back to the prompt at the end of the video (also listed above). Have students reflect on the prompt individually or with their discussion group. Then ask them to share their reflections with the entire class and record their responses on the board. Use this to engage the full class in conversation about concrete ways that they and their peers will participate in the elections, with and without the vote.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about the stories of young people from history featured in the videos, please visit s.si.edu/youth-democracy-LearningLab

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The videos and accompanying discussion guide bring awareness to and celebrate the power of young people in shaping electoral and political outcomes throughout American history. Through these resources, students will:

- increase their knowledge and understanding of how American democracy and elections have been and continue to be influenced by the ideas, concerns, and hopes of young people;
- analyze specific examples of youth civic impact in the past that serve as examples for taking constructive, positive action today; and
- see themselves as part of an ongoing tradition and movement of youth democratic engagement and identify current public issues that they want to address.

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE (C3) FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
- D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

