



COMMUNITY CLASSROOM: VOTE DEMOCRACY! EDUCATOR GUIDE

Educators can use the VOTE DEMOCRACY! Educator Guide to support viewing of PLEASE VOTE FOR ME, IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA, CHICAGO 10 and AN UNREASONABLE MAN while engaging students in discussions about democracy abroad, elections, third-party politics, gender, the role of dissent in democracy and media literacy. These lessons and activities also provide a context for understanding and further investigating the changing nature of democracy around the world.



KQED
education network



Activity 1

What is Democracy?
(90-120 minutes + assignments)



What does it mean ‘Democracy’?”

—Cheng Cheng

“It means that people are their own masters.”

—Mr. Gao (Cheng Cheng's father)



What is Democracy?

(90-120 minutes + assignments)

Grade Level: 9–12, College

Subject Areas: Government, Political Science, Social Studies, Current Events, Language Arts, Debate, Sociology

Objectives: Students will:

- analyze and critically read background information
- analyze and critically view film as text
- participate in small group and class discussions
- create their own media

Skills: Stating and supporting opinions in class discussion and in writing, critical reading and viewing, research, writing, note taking and oral presentation

Materials: Board or overhead projector, chart paper, **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME Video Module, PLEASE VOTE FOR ME Discussion Guide, Student Handout A**, art supplies

Definitions and conceptions of democracy are many. In this introductory lesson, students attempt to define for themselves what democracy is and what it means. Students are also exposed to how people around the world view democracy and what democracy looks like in other countries. The other activities will further expand this study of democracy.

Procedures:

1. Present this short survey in which students rate the degree to which each factor is present in a democracy: (1 = never, 2 = somewhat, 3 = always)

- Citizens vote for their political leaders.
- Citizens have freedom of speech.
- Citizens can criticize their government without repercussions.
- Political leaders represent the needs, opinions and attitudes of the people.
- Citizens are patriotic.
- Most citizens vote.

Call on students to share different responses.

2. Have students read “From the Filmmaker” and “Background Information” from the **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME Discussion Guide**. Discuss the filmmaker’s purpose and the questions he raises in his statement. Discuss the background information and make predictions as to what primary school children in China might say about democracy.

3. View the **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME Video Module**. Have a class discussion around the following guiding questions (consult the **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME Discussion Guide** for additional questions):

- Why might the children have a hard time defining democracy?
- Would it be as difficult for a child in the United States to create a definition of democracy? Why or why not?
- Do you agree with the teacher’s description of democracy? Why or why not?
- Do you think the class election in China was a good way to learn about democracy? Was it similar or different to school elections in your experience?
- What might children in other democracies say?

4. Break students into small groups and have each group brainstorm what comes to mind—images, people, words, songs, movies, books, events and so on—when they think of the concept of democracy. Have them choose two ideas that they will describe to the class. The descriptions should include why they chose that example, what it says about democracy and whether or not they agree with the depiction.

5. Assignment: Students create their own vision or statement of what democracy means to them. It could be visual art, collage, poetry, a testimony, an advertisement, a song, a performance or any other idea they have. They should also include a short definition (one to two sentences) of what democracy means to them based on what they created. Have students present their conceptions and comment on and discuss themes, similarities and differences.



6. As a class, develop a composite definition of democracy that will be the working consensus of what the concept means when used in class. Compare the class definition with the dictionary meaning of democracy, and then have a class discussion around the similarities, differences and the ways in which democracy in actual practice can differ from written ideals. Display the class definition prominently during this unit and refer back to it.
7. Now that students have had an opportunity to create their own idea of what democracy means, have them examine some examples from the Enlightenment thinkers and compare and contrast their different ideas:

Thomas Hobbes, born in England, 1588 (d. 1679); famous quote: "Fear and I were born twins." – In 1651, Hobbes wrote his most famous work, *Leviathan*. He argued that people are naturally selfish and in a constant state of wanting power, of "a war of every man against every man." He proposed that the best form of government is a government that has great power, like a leviathan (sea monster). He believed in the rule of a king or queen because he felt that a country needs a strong authority to provide direction and leadership. (monarchy)

John Locke, born in England, 1632 (d. 1704); famous quote: "All mankind ... being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health or possessions." – Locke wrote *Two Treatises of Civil Government* in 1689. He believed that people have the gift of reason and thought and that they therefore have the natural ability to govern themselves and to look after the well-being of society. He believed that governments should only operate with the consent of people. He also believed that an ideal government should be divided into three branches so that there is no absolute power and that if any government abuses the rights of the people, then the people have the right to rebel. (representative democracy)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, born in Switzerland, 1712 (d. 1778); famous quote: "Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains." – Rousseau wrote *The Social Contract* in 1762. He believed that society's institutions, such as governments, schools, the arts and the media, corrupt naturally good people. He believed that man must vote on laws himself, without anybody representing him, that even a representative democracy in which you vote for people to represent you is corrupt. According to Rousseau, governments should exist on the basis of a democratic "social contract" in which people have direct say in the way their society is governed. (direct democracy)

NOTE: See **Student Handout A: Enlightenment Thinkers**

- Discuss the similarities and differences of the three Enlightenment thinkers.
- Whose views are closest to your personal definition of democracy?
- Whose views are closest to the class definition of democracy?

Extension Activities:

1. Students survey classmates, staff and school community members on their idea of what democracy is. Students gather the data and present a schoolwide composite of their findings.
2. Students read further about China's education system from the fact sheet on the *Independent Lens* website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/pleasevoteforme/education.html>) and write a first-person narrative about a Chinese student's first day of school. They can select a level of education and do additional research to inform their writing.
3. Students write an essay describing how democracy is important to them and how it is reflected and manifested in their daily life.
4. Students research and present information about countries that can be considered modern-day examples of each of the Enlightenment thinkers' ideals for government.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Student Handout A: Enlightenment Thinkers (Activity 1: What is Democracy?)

Directions: Read about these thinkers who influenced conceptions of government and democracy. Compare their views with your own and those of the class.

Thomas Hobbes, born in England, 1588 (d. 1679). Famous quote: "Fear and I were born twins." In 1651 he wrote his most famous work, *Leviathan*. He argued that people are naturally selfish and in a constant state of wanting power, of "a war of every man against every man." The best form of government was one that has great power like a leviathan (sea monster). He believed in the rule of a king or queen because he felt that a country would need a strong authority to provide direction and leadership. (*monarchy*)

John Locke, born in England, 1632 (d. 1704). Famous quote: "All mankind...being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health or possessions." He wrote the *Two Treatises of Civil Government* in 1689. He believed that people have the gift of reason and thought. People have the natural ability to govern themselves and to look after the well-being of society. He believed that governments should only operate with the consent of people. He also believed that an ideal government be divided into three branches so that there is no absolute power. If any government abuses the rights of the people then the people have the right to rebel. (*representative democracy*)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, born in Switzerland, 1712 (d. 1778). Famous quote: "Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains." He wrote *The Social Contract* in 1762. He believed that society's institutions such as governments, schools, the arts, and media corrupt naturally good people. He believed that man must vote on laws himself, without anybody representing him; even a representative democracy where you vote for people to represent you- is corrupt. Governments should exist on the basis of a democratic "social contract," where people have direct say in the way their society is governed. (*direct democracy*)

- Discuss the similarities and differences of the three Enlightenment thinkers.
- Whose views are closest to your personal definition of democracy?
- Whose views are closest to the class definition of democracy?



Teacher Handout C: Supplemental Materials**PLEASE VOTE FOR ME Quotes****Democracy**

"Each of you will have the right to vote for your favorite candidate, this is what we call 'Democracy'. You will elect your own Class Monitor. Isn't this new? Very different than before."

—Teacher

"I want to be the Class Monitor, because you can order people around. What does it mean 'Democracy'?"

—Cheng Cheng

"It means that people are their own masters."

—Cheng Cheng's father

Voting

"Do you need our help to get your classmates' support?...You need some tricks. And a plan."

—Luo Lei's parents

"I don't want to control others, they should think for themselves. People should vote for whomever they want."

—Luo Lei

"Those who don't support me, show mercy and vote for me."

—Cheng Cheng

Campaigning

"I'll arrange a trip to ride the monorail. You can invite your class. The monorail is the most modern transport in Wuhan. Only a few cities have a monorail. During the trip, you can show off, and improve your relationship with your classmates, then they will support you. What do you think? Tell them this: 'The monorail is managed by my father's police department.'"

—Luo Lei's father

"I will not vote for you."

—Classmate

"I'll make you Vice Monitor."

—Cheng Cheng

"Then I'll vote for you."

—Classmate

"I am so happy!"

—Cheng Cheng

"If people point out your faults, can you defend yourself? ... You must be well prepared. You must make a list of their faults. Tomorrow, ask your assistants to gather information."

—Xu Xiaofei's mother



RECOMMENDED NATIONAL STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards for English Language Arts National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies and their understanding of textual features.
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communication with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion and the exchange of information).

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies Expectations of Excellence, National Council for the Social Studies

Performance Expectation 1: Culture

- Predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- Interpret patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding.
- Construct reasoned judgments about specific cultural responses to persistent human issues;

Performance Expectation 4: Individual Development and Identity

- Identify, describe, and express appreciation for the influences of various historical and contemporary cultures on an individual's daily life;
- Describe the ways family, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status and other group and cultural influences contribute to the development of a sense of self;
- Examine the interactions of ethnic, national or cultural influences in specific situations or events;
- Analyze the role of perceptions, attitudes, values and beliefs in the development of personal identity;
- Compare and evaluate the impact of stereotyping, conformity, acts of altruism and other behaviors on individuals and groups;
- Work independently and cooperatively within groups and institutions to accomplish goals;

Performance Expectation 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

- Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare;

Performance Expectation 9: Global Connections

- Analyze or formulate policy statements demonstrating an understanding of concerns, standards, issues and conflicts related to universal human rights;
- Identify and describe the roles of international and multinational organizations.
- Illustrate how individual behaviors and decisions connect with global systems.

For specific content standards on subjects such as social sciences, ethics and media literacy, please refer to your respective State Standards.



GUIDE CREDITS

CURRICULA WRITER

David Maduli

David Maduli is an independent educational consultant who has contributed many curriculum guides and conducted various workshops for PBS programs. He has a master's in teaching and curriculum from Harvard Graduate School of Education and continues to work as a veteran Bay Area public school language arts and social studies teacher.

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM CONTENT MANAGER

Susan Latton

Susan Latton is an independent consultant specializing in public health and public media collaborations. Latton develops campaign strategies, resources and national partnerships for ITVS COMMUNITY programming.

ITVS STAFF

Director of Communications

Dennis Palmieri

Associate Director of Communications

Duong-Chi Do

National Community Relations Coordinator

Caiti Crum

KQED STAFF

Supervisor School Services

Ken Garcia-Gonzalez

Project Supervisor

Maxine Einhorne

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM National Advisors

Carole Lester: American Association of Community Colleges

Renee McKee: 4-H

Joyce E. Harris: National Association for Multicultural Education

Garland F. Pierce: National Council of Churches

Wendell Bourne & Michael Yell: National Council for the Social Studies

Dale Allender: National Council of Teachers of English

Donelle Blubaugh & Jenny Bradbury: PBS



About COMMUNITY CLASSROOM:

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM is an exciting resource for educators providing short video modules drawn from the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*. *Independent Lens*, a 29-week series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS stations across the country, features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Drawn from the U.S. and abroad, these stories reflect the diversity of our world through the lens of contemporary documentary filmmakers. The CLASSROOM video modules are supported with innovative, resource-rich curricula for high school, college and youth educators. Video modules are 5-10 minutes in length and can be viewed online or on DVD-ROM. Content is grouped into subject specific segments that correspond to lesson plans and are standards-based.

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM is a product of the Independent Television Service and KQED Education Network, with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Educational content was developed with guidance from PBS Teachers, National Association for Multicultural Education, National Council of Churches, American Association of Community Colleges, 4-H, National Council for the Social Studies, and National Council of Teachers of English.

About ITVS:

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

About *Independent Lens*:

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. Hosted this season by Terrence Howard, the acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

About KQED Education Network:

KQED Education Network engages with community and educational organizations to broaden and deepen the impact of KQED media to effect positive change. Through parent education and professional development workshops, public screenings, multimedia resources, and special events, Education Network reaches more than 200,000 Bay Area residents a year and serves people of all ages, with a particular emphasis on reaching underserved communities. Learn more about its three unique services, Early Learning, Educational Services, and Community Engagement, at kqed.org/HistoryEd.

About PBS:

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS's premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

