



Exploring Alternatives to the Electoral College

BY KELLY YOUNG-RAYMORE

GRADE LEVEL: 8TH-12TH GRADES

Objectives

- Explain the purpose and function of the Electoral College in the United States
- Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College system
- Evaluate the impact of the Electoral College on presidential elections
- Analyze proposed changes to presidential elections
- Explore and propose changes to the election process



Materials

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk
- Handouts with excerpts related to the Electoral College from diverse perspectives
- Internet access
- Electoral college map (Library of Congress resource)

Procedure

This lesson requires that students have some working knowledge of the Electoral College. If students have no understanding, consider one of the Electoral College resources linked below.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

- Briefly explain that today's lesson will focus on the Electoral College in the United States.
- Ask students if they have any prior knowledge or understanding of the Electoral College and write their responses on the board.
- As a refresher, watch "Does Your Vote Count? The Electoral College Explained—Christina Greer."
- Provide students with an Electoral College map.
- Ask students to make predictions on where candidates will spend the most time campaigning based on the Electoral College map.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (15 MINUTES)

- Distribute copies of "How the Electoral College Works to Cabin Fraud and Misconduct" by Walter Olson, "The Essential Electoral College" from the Heritage Foundation, and "It's Time to Abolish the Electoral College" by Darrell M. West.
- Divide the class into multiple groups so that there are roughly 2 groups reading each article.
- In their groups, ask students to read and analyze the viewpoint diverse articles, identifying the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College system.
- After sufficient time, facilitate a class discussion, allowing each group to share their findings. Write the advantages and disadvantages on the board, creating 2 columns.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (15 MINUTES)

- Divide students into new groups ensuring that each group has 1–2 people to represent each perspective.

- Task each group with developing a new system for voting that attempts to address the major concerns of the 3 perspectives.
- Students should record their plan and present it to the rest of the class.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION (5 MINUTES)

- Summarize the main points discussed during the lesson, emphasizing the purpose, advantages, disadvantages, and impact of the Electoral College.
- Ask students to individually reflect on their own opinion of the Electoral College system and whether they believe it should be reformed or abolished.
- Allow a few students to share their reflections with the class, fostering respectful discussion and debate.
- Ask students to reflect on the experience of developing an alternative that addressed everyone's concerns. Was it a challenge? Do they believe that lawmakers tackling this topic might have a similar experience?

Homework

Ask students to write a short essay, expressing their opinion on the Electoral College system and supporting it with evidence and reasoning. They should consider the advantages, disadvantages, and potential reforms of the Electoral College.

Note: This lesson plan can be adjusted based on the availability of resources and the specific needs of the students.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

- Write an op-ed in support of the plan that they developed in their group.
- Read “Electoral College and Election Fraud.”
- Analyze data from “Majority of Americans Continue to Favor Moving Away from Electoral College” by the Pew Research Center.
- Watch this clip from “The Electoral College” on C-SPAN from 2009 featuring John Samples from the Cato Institute and Rob Richie from FairVote and compare these perspectives to the perspectives in the articles read in class.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR MORE LESSONS ON THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (OPTIONAL)

- The Electoral Process (iCivics)
- How We Elect a President: The Electoral College (Grades 10–12)
- Lesson Plan: Electoral College Map Virtual Scavenger Hunt
- Don't Demonize the Electoral College—or the Framers—as Racist

- The Racial History of the Electoral College—and Why Efforts to Change It Have Stalled
- The Electoral College Explained

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and in words) to address a question or solve a problem.