

Gerrymandering Tilts Political Power

Lesson 1: Reapportionment & Redistricting

Access the [Gerrymandering](#) resource page here:

Lesson Plan: The Battle for Votes

Overview: Every 10 years, the United States conducts a census, counting every person living in the country. This count has numerous effects, and one of the most important is its impact on our representative democracy. Reapportionment and redistricting, in turn, affect how and by whom the people are represented. Examine the essential elements of the reapportionment and redistricting process to determine how states engage in this “once every 10 years” process. Experiment with several interactive maps to see both historic and contemporary changes to the balance of power among states, and discover who has power within those states to redraw the lines.

Subjects:

Social Studies - Government/Civics, Geography

Grade Level:

9-12

Lesson Duration:

- Two class periods

Essential Questions:

- What role do reapportionment and redistricting play in the electoral process?
 - How have apportioned seats in the House of Representatives changed over time in different regions of the United States?
 - How do states engage in the redistricting process and what criteria do they use to create new Congressional districts?
 - How do the criteria for drawing Congressional districts impact the balance of power in Congress?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Examine the role of the census in the reapportionment process.
- Analyze historic and contemporary maps to determine how the balance of power in Congress has shifted geographically over time.
- Determine the requirements for redistricting and compare how the process and requirements differ by state.
- Construct new Congressional maps and hypothesize how different criteria in map drawing may lead to different electoral outcomes.

Materials:

- Retro Report video “[Gerrymandering Tilts Political Power. Here’s How Redistricting Affects Democracy.](#)”
- Internet access and [Student Activity](#) handout for students to analyze the interactive tools listed below:
 - [Census in the Constitution](#) | United States Census Bureau
 - [US Census Interactive Apportionment Map](#) | United States Census Bureau
 - [Redistricting](#) | Ballotpedia

- [Redistricting Criteria](#) | National Conference of State Legislatures
- Digital redistricting tools
 - [Districtr](#)
 - [Dave's Redistricting](#)

Procedure:

1. Students will begin by examining the Constitutional basis for the census and how it relates to reapportionment. This can be done either as a group or individually. Students will use the US Census article found here:
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/census-constitution.html>
2. Students will examine historical and contemporary reapportionment data with the interactive map found here:
 - a. https://public.tableau.com/views/Apportionment_16116063135030/Apportionment
 - b. Teachers can help by modeling how to navigate the map. Specifically, there are date buttons along the left-hand side that will change the map to correspond to the appropriate decade. Additionally, hovering over a state will provide 2020 data while clicking on an individual state will provide more complete historic data.
3. The next resource is a short article that asks students to summarize both Federal and State-level redistricting requirements.
 - a. Resource is here:
https://ballotpedia.org/Redistricting#Federal_requirements_for_congressional_redistricting
4. Next, students will need to find an individual state in the provided table to see the data.
 - a. Resource is here: <https://www.ncsl.org/redistricting-and-census/redistricting-criteria>
5. At this point in the lesson, a quick check for understanding is advised. Have students provide a response to the prompt *"In one sentence, explain the difference between reapportionment and redistricting."*
 - a. This prompt directs students to pay attention to this key distinction in the two main vocabulary terms from the lesson.
 - b. A potential response may include: Reapportionment is dividing up congressional seats among the states based on population, while redistricting is redrawing lines within a state to balance for population and other factors.
6. The last interactive portion of the lesson asks students to engage in their own redistricting using a digital tool. Three tools are included as options. A brief guide is below:
 - a. [Districtr](#) - Scroll down to the map and choose a state. Choose "Congressional Districts," making sure you have chosen a state with more than one member of the House of Representatives. Use the paintbrush tool, and start with the "Paint counties" box checked.
 - b. [Dave's Redistricting](#) - The main advantage to this site is that you start with the district maps last used in the 2020 election, and you can adjust the existing maps instead of starting from scratch. Choose a state on the map and click on the "Congressional Map." You will see the Congressional districts for the 2020 election. Click on the paintbrush next to "View Only" at the top of the map. This will allow you to make a copy and edit a new map.
 - c. The level of challenge presented by this portion of the activity is related to the state that students choose. Have students avoid states like Montana, North Dakota, Alaska and others that only have one representative. It will also likely take students a very long time to redraw district lines for a state like California or Texas. If you live in a highly populated state, you may want students to focus on drawing one or more districts as opposed to a

complete map.

7. To conclude the lesson, have students engage with the “3...2...1... Review” prompt. This lesson can act as a stand-alone lesson or a preview for an investigation about Gerrymandering. Either way, a clear reflection protocol will make it more likely that students can define reapportionment and redistricting and explain differences in how states approach the redistricting process.

Relevant Standards:

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5: Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7: Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

C-3 Framework Standards for Social Studies:

- D1.2.9-12. Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.
- D1.4.9-12. Explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.
- D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.
- D2.Civ.4.9-12. Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.
- D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
- D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.
- D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.
- D2.Geo.5.9-12. Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.
- D2.Geo.8.9-12. Evaluate the impact of economic activities and political decisions on spatial patterns within and among urban, suburban, and rural regions.
- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.
- D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.
- D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

AP U.S. Government and Politics Course Framework:

- Disciplinary Practice 2.a. Describe the facts, reasoning, decisions, and majority opinion of required Supreme Court cases.
- Disciplinary Practice 2.d. Explain how required Supreme Court cases apply to scenarios in

context.

- Disciplinary Practice 3.c. Explain patterns and trends in data to draw conclusions.
- Disciplinary Practice 3.d. Explain what the data imply or illustrate about political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.
- Reasoning Process 2: Explain how the steps or stages in a process relate to each other.
- Reasoning Process 4: Explain the relevance, implications, and/or significance of similarities and differences.
- Unit 2: CON-3.C: Explain how congressional behavior is influenced by election processes, partisanship, and divided government.
 - CON-3.C.1: Congressional behavior and governing effectiveness are influenced by:
 - Gerrymandering, redistricting, and unequal representation of constituencies have been partially addressed by such Court decisions as *Baker v. Carr* (1961), which opened the door to equal protection challenges to redistricting and stated the “one person, one vote” doctrine, and the no-racial-gerrymandering decision in *Shaw v. Reno* (1993)
- Unit 5: PMI-5.c: Explain why and how political parties change and adapt.

About the Author:

David Olson is the Director of Education for Retro Report. Prior to joining Retro Report, David was an award-winning teacher of U.S. History, A.P. U.S. Government and Politics and Criminal Justice at a public high school in Madison, Wisc.