

Brainstorming & Resources

Civics is Everywhere Presentation: Literacy Texas 2023

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Brainstorming. We had a ton of fun coming up with Civics lessons, then tying them to a variety of subjects. Why do this? Because the best adult ed lessons should always contain more than just one outcome!

While brainstorming, we color-coded subject areas so we could quickly see what we are including. Although there are other subjects, we included *Reading/Writing*, *Mathematics*, *Communication*, *Research*, *History/Social Studies*, *Politics*, *Digital Literacy*, and *Other Subjects*. We thought you'd like to see what we came up with in an hour. It just gets better with more time! Remember, weave subjects in as they apply.

- **How do fire stations work?** Invite in someone local. *History*, *Research*, *Community service*, *Writing*, *Employment*. What is the purpose of a fire station? Paid firefighters versus volunteer? When was the first fire station established in your area? How many fire stations are there to where you live? How are they funded? How can someone become a fire-fighter?
- **City government.** Where are the meetings held? What is on the current agenda? Who is on the committee? Who is your representative/alder-person? Open or Closed Session and what does that mean? Attend a local meeting, take notes on the topic. Follow up in class – group presentations on topics covers, how the meeting worked, how people can participate? *Digital Literacy*, *Reading (vocabulary)*, *Communication*, *Research*, *Politics*
- **Scavenger hunt on local city history** (can be done in the classroom or in local area) Help students better understand how to locate the nearest historical society, visit in person or online research, come up with a list of historical people, places, events. Students either search online and complete the who/what/when/where/how for each item, or for bonus points, visit in person. *History*, *Digital Literacy*, *Research*
- **What are neighborhood watches and how do they work?** Find out if there is a local neighborhood watch in the area where students live. Why were these organizations started? How does it work; who is in charge? Do they work? How do neighborhood watches work with local police? How can your students get involved? *Reading/Writing*, *Communication*, *Research*, *Sociology*, *Digital Literacy*, and *Community involvement*.

- **Famous people at cemeteries.** Who's buried there? Famous local people? Why are they important? Also, see if you can identify street names associate with famous people from the area. (Ex: in Racine, WI, 'Jay Eye See St.'? Named after a horse!) - *Research, Digital Literacy, History, Reading/Writing*
- **US Census.** *Mathematics, Digital Literacy* For example, racial breakdown of community, ex: 100,000 people in your community, and 20% are African Americans – how many is that? What other information can we learn from reviewing census data? Let's face it – statistics can be interesting and fun!
- **Plan a Road Trip!** In your state, identify the first official town of your state. Then plan a road trip and do the following: (supplies: paper state map – no Google Maps!!). Or, if you happen to live in the first official town, plan a trip to Washington DC, or any state capital, or your location of choice! Assume that you've got the time off!
 - What is the city? When was it incorporated? *Digital Literacy, Reading/Writing, Geography*
 - How far is it from where you live? *Math*
 - Who will go with you & when will you leave? *Communication, Writing*
 - How far away is it, and how long will it take by car? *Math, Geography*
 - Because it's a road trip by car, how much will it cost for gas (estimate mpg, price per gas, etc.) *Math, Digital Literacy, Reading, Financial literacy*
 - How much can you estimate for the cost for food, lodging, other incidentals? *Math, Digital Literacy, Reading/Writing, Financial literacy*
 - When you are there, what will you see? Are there historical plaques, sites, museums that refer to early state history? Is there a cost associated with it? (Entry fee) *Research; Digital Literacy, Reading, Writing*
- **Create a Civics timeline.** Helps with visual learners. Use any parameter/theme that make sense. Maybe amendments to the Constitution in conjunction with other historical events. Timelines can run on top of each other – top line politics, second line social events, 3rd line local events, etc. Justify adding something to the timeline! Create new with each new group of students. *Reading/Writing, Communication, Research, History/Social Studies, Digital Literacy*
- **Have fun learning US Government Structure:** Create manipulatives of each branch, what they do, and who is included. Mix up cards, set up students in teams, then have a race/competition by putting the cards together creating the structure. Use this as a pre-test and then again after instruction, a post test (test for understanding!) *Reading/Writing, Communication, Research, History/Social Studies*

Your Civics Lessons and Standards.

All our lessons plans should align to the standards associated with your program or state. Remember that Adult Education standards are all aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards (PDF is stored on LINCS – Google to locate), and the major assessments are all aligned to these as well. In Texas, we have the Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards 2.0 as well as newer Civics standards. If you want to get ideas on how to teach a lesson, but teach it for students at varying levels, the TAE LCS as well as the CCRS documents lists various anchor standards, and then how each anchor standard is applied at by level.

Print Resources and More

It's unlimited! For national-level civics, and you are using New Readers Press resources or other adult basic education print publishers, go to all Social Studies resources for practice, content, and various activities – see your rep for recommendations.

For local resources, contact your local historical society or city alderperson for references.

Ann loves these two books as a teacher resource, especially for brainstorming. Accessing primary resources in the American Reader can help connect students to their lives and others. Timelines help students connect new information with previous information they already may know, or help make those connections.

The American Reader: Words that Moved a Nation, 2nd Perennial Edition, Edited by Diane Ravitch. 2000 Harper Collins Publishers.

This wonderful collection of writings defining America. Collection is broken down by time periods, including everything from the Mayflower Compact, Thomas Paine's work, song lyrics (Oh Suzanna, If I Had A Hammer), to speeches that made an impact on America and Americans.

The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People and Events: Bernard Grun. 2005 Edition

You betcha – this is one HUGE timetable, way beyond just U.S. people, places and events.

Or, if you really want to have some fun, go to the Library of Congress for US. History Primary Source Timeline: “Explore important topics and moments in U.S. history through historical primary sources from the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/>

Suggestions/recommendations? Please email me at: Ann Beeson, abeeson@proliteracy.org