



THE POWER OF ONE

(60 minutes over one to two days)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn to overcome apathy and appreciate how one vote can make a difference.

- ✓ Have your class use the Internet or print resources to briefly answer the questions below.
- ✓ Have each group present their findings to the rest of the class.

MATERIALS

Just One Vote! How Important Am I? handout; *Teacher's Example* handout; Internet access (optional)

GET READY

- ✓ If possible, arrange for your students to have access to the Internet.
- ✓ Photocopy the *Just One Vote! How Important Am I?* handout for your class.
- ✓ Review the *Teacher's Example* handout and do any extra research you feel is necessary.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- ✓ Break your class up into groups of three or four.
- ✓ Read to the class your *Teacher's Example* handout. (Read aloud the event followed by the event description).
- ✓ Give each group a copy of the *Just One Vote! How Important Am I?* handout to read.
- ✓ Inform the groups that they will be researching one of the events on the handout.
- ✓ Tell the groups to pick by consensus their top three choices in terms of interesting voting events.
- ✓ Go from group to group asking for their top choice, their second choice if the top choice is already taken, and a third choice if their top two are taken, etc. No two groups should be researching the same topic.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Why is your topic significant?*
- ★ *How did the subject you researched impact history?*
- ★ *Who was the "one vote" in your historical event? Was it a citizen? A member of the Electoral College? A senator?*
- ★ *What would have happened had that one person not practiced their right to vote?*
- ★ *How would things be different today if the outcome of the vote you researched was different?*
- ★ *What did you learn about the importance of a single vote?*



JUST ONE VOTE! HOW IMPORTANT AM I?

In 1845, one vote brought Texas into the Union.

In 1845, one vote admitted California, Oregon, and Washington into statehood.

In 1867, The Alaska Purchase was ratified by just one vote paving the way for the eventual admission of America's largest state in 1958.

In 1868, Andrew Johnson was impeached; one vote saved him from removal.

In 1875, one vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic.

In 1890, by a one vote margin, Idaho became a state.

In 1916, if presidential hopeful Charles E. Hughes had received one additional vote in each of California's precincts, he would have defeated President Woodrow Wilson's re-election bid.

In 1920, one vote in a last minute decision ratified the 19th Amendment to the Constitution — giving women the right to vote.

In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler leadership of the Nazi party.

In 1941, one vote saved Selective Service (drafting into the armed services) — just weeks before Pearl Harbor was attacked.

In the 1960 presidential election, an additional one vote per precinct in Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, and Texas may have altered the course of America's modern history by denying John F. Kennedy the presidency and placing Richard Nixon in the White House eight years earlier.

In 1962, the governors of Maine, Rhode Island, and North Dakota were all elected by a margin of one vote per precinct.

In 1994, the U.S. House of Representatives enacted a law banning specific classes of assault weapons. The vote was initially tied but one member changed his vote to approve the ban.

In 2000, George W. Bush won the Electoral College vote over Al Gore by receiving 271 votes, just one more than the 270 needed to win.



TEACHER'S EXAMPLE

In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States.

Elected by a heavy majority, Hayes entered Congress in December 1865, troubled by the “rebel influences...ruling the White House.” Between 1867 and 1876 he served three times as Governor of Ohio. Safe liberalism, party loyalty, and a good war record made Hayes an acceptable Republican candidate in 1876.

He opposed Governor Samuel J. Tilden of New York. Although a galaxy of famous Republican speakers, and even Mark Twain, stumped for Hayes, he expected the Democrats to win. When the first returns seemed to confirm this, Hayes went to bed, believing he had lost.

But in New York, Republican National Chairman Zachariah Chandler, aware of a loophole, wired leaders to stand firm: “Hayes has 185 votes and is elected.” The popular vote apparently was 4,300,000 for Tilden to 4,036,000 for Hayes. Hayes’s election depended upon contested electoral votes in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. If all the disputed electoral votes went to Hayes, he would win; a single one would elect Tilden.

Months of uncertainty followed. In January 1877 Congress established an Electoral Commission to decide the dispute. The commission, made up of eight Republicans and seven Democrats, determined all the contests in favor of Hayes by eight to seven. The final electoral vote: 185 to 184.

Source:

<http://clinton4.nara.gov/textonly/WH/glimpse/presidents/html/rh19.html>