Participation in My Government: What Difference Can My Voice Make?: A Seven-Week Unit for Eleventh Graders

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Participation in Government:
What Difference Can My Voice Make?

A 7-Week Unit for Eleventh Grade

by Jane C. Behrens

Despite courses in civics or U.S. government, many students look with apathy upon community or civic affairs, perhaps because they feel that such dry-sounding "stuff" as city codes and regulations have no relevance for them. In addition, adolescence is typically a time of rebellion against authority and institutionalism. This seven week unit, designed for eleventh graders, has been written to help young people see that their government was created to work for them, not against them, and that their opinions and ideas are important to the whole community.

Students will learn the benefits of making themselves heard by the public, and in the process will take a closer look at their own opinions regarding public policy. Their explorations will take the form of role-playing and simulation, reading of poetry and drama, listening to songs and speeches, and researching a community or school project of their own design. English teachers should not let the "civic" sound of this unit discourage them from trying it. Students will see how language skills are used outside their classroom by people in their community to get things done. Because much of the success of the unit depends on student ideas and input, teachers must be prepared to "let go of the reins" a bit more than they typically may.

Although this unit has been designed for an eleventh grade class of small-town or rural students, the lessons, projects, and reading materials can be tailored to suit the needs of urban students or those of higher or lower grade/ability levels. The group readings have been selected for three levels of readers: accelerated, average, and reluctant or at-risk readers. A class in which one of these levels is absent could eliminate the corresponding reading materials.

The central activity in this unit is the production of a feasibility study of a community or school project that the students choose for themselves. The final draft of the study will be in the form of a formal report which represents the collaborative efforts of all students in the class. Studies indicate that most professional writing is done by a group rather than an individual; therefore students should be given experiences in group writing as preparation for the demands of their future careers.

As an illustration of the kind of project possible, this unit will feature a hypothetical class researching and writing a report on a community improvement project to be presented to its town council, but another class might choose an entirely different kind of project with a different audience. The key is that the project be student-generated to provide a feeling of ownership and that students present their completed study to an appropriate audience for consideration.

Teachers should not feel obliged to follow the day-by-day format of this unit. It has been so designed for ease in presentation of lessons and concepts. Teachers whose classes have already had adequate exposure to some of the skills emphasized here may wish to pass over them lightly as a review; others may feel their classes will benefit from more in-depth study. Also, teachers may feel more comfortable presenting the materials in an altered order. This unit is meant to be a help, not a hindrance, to the teaching of English, so teachers should use it in any way that promotes success among their students.
The unit is meant to meet the following general objectives:

**Understandings**

The students will gain an understanding of the following:
1) the importance of weighing different viewpoints when considering solutions to problems;
2) the advantages of working as a team to complete a project or solve a problem;
3) the practical uses of language arts skills outside the classroom.

**Skills**

The students will:
1) write clear, neat business letters;
2) speak to business people by phone;
3) read in small groups a drama dealing with the concept of citizen voice and action;
4) compose, edit, and proofread a report within a small group;
5) make oral presentations to large and small groups;
6) use a variety of information sources in and out of the library and classroom;
7) listen critically to group members and outside speakers for information;
8) take effective notes for the purpose of retaining information;
9) identify bias in written work;
10) demonstrate an understanding of point of view in selected poems.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation methods will include the following:
1) self-evaluation;
2) peer-evaluation;
3) essay tests and short quizzes;
4) individual and group compositions.

In order to make group work more feasible, make the classroom one in which rearrangement of desks is not only possible but encouraged. At times, it may be more convenient to have students seated in conventional rows (for example, when an outside speaker visits), but for group work, the desks should be separated into clusters for full effectiveness. As work on the feasibility study progresses, any helpful information students or the teacher brings in for this unit (e.g. brochures, ads, newspaper clippings) should be placed in file folders or on a bulletin board in an easily accessible spot in the classroom. Bulletin boards may be used for displaying students’ work, messages of encouragement, and any related information. Place a “Suggestion Box” in a convenient spot in the classroom and encourage students to contribute their suggestions and ideas regarding school or community improvement for use later in the unit.
DAYS 1-2: Fully Developed Lesson

Behavioral Objectives: At the completion of this lesson the majority of students will be able to read an assigned drama and identify the issue with which it is concerned. In a previously unread portion of their drama they will select a statement by a major character which indicates the speaker’s stand on that issue. The students will be able to identify at least one reason for that character’s stand, using evidence gathered from the play.

Affective Goal: Students will be able to express an appreciation for opinions different from their own.

Motivation: This activity will serve as a motivating device for the entire unit. In their booklet Introductory Activities for Literature and Composition, 7-12, Smagorinsky, McCann and Kern (1987) have designed an opinionnaire which "... provides a series of statements concerning governments, individuals, and the proper relationship between citizens and rulers" (5). Administer this opinionnaire (see Appendix A) or write a similar series of statements which the students answer by circling "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Not Sure," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree." An example is "A government should consider the needs of the group before the needs of the individual."

After allowing time to fill out the opinionnaire, appoint a recorder to mark the class’s answers on the blackboard or overhead projector for students to see where the greatest disagreement lies. Those who share similar views may be grouped together to present an argument for their case. Encourage an informal debate, allowing time for the opposing sides to confer among themselves, appoint a spokesperson, and construct their argument. Students may discover that while they share the same views, their motives may be widely different. Stress to students during their conference, and later during their debate, the importance of listening politely until the speaker is finished. It may be helpful to ask a volunteer to model attentive listening for the class (leaning forward, making eye contact with the speaker, remaining silent until the speaker has finished, taking notes). At the conclusion of the debate, tell the students that during this unit they will have an opportunity to make themselves heard by leaders outside the classroom—perhaps their local government!

Procedure for Lesson: The motivational activity for the unit will probably require one class period to complete. Therefore, on Day Two hand out the lyrics to “We Work the Black Seam” by British singer/songwriter Sting (See Appendix B). This is a consciousness-raising song told from the point of view of a British coal miner who watches his job become obsolete with the advent of nuclear power. Although he admits that coal mining is a dirty job, he takes pride in the manual labor that provides power for his country. He knows that nuclear power is “cheap and clean,” but he contends that it is an industry over which its operators have little control. The waste is deadly and there is no completely safe means of disposing of it.

Before playing the song, it may be necessary to preteach some of the terminology used, such as “seam” (an underground layer of coal) and “carbon 14” (a heavily radioactive isotope of carbon). After hearing the song, the students will pair up, with one taking the role of a coal miner and one a nuclear plant representative. Using the lyrics as supporting evidence, the students must cite reasons for supporting or rejecting nuclear power, as their role demands. After a few minutes of role playing, the pairs should be ready to present their views to the class. Encourage reactions to the differing viewpoints. It may prove interesting to ask the “nuclear power representatives” if they had more difficulty supporting their views with the lyrics and why.
**Evaluation:** Students will be assigned one of three plays depending on their reading ability. Henrik Ibsen’s *Enemy of the People*, Jerome Lawrence’s and Robert E. Lee’s *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, or Archibald MacLeish’s “The Secret of Freedom.” Using their reading, journal entries, and discussion notes, students will produce a paper which addresses the critical issue presented in their assigned play and the stand taken by a major character in the play. Students will be required to use evidence from the play to strengthen the thesis of their paper, such as statements by the character, statements by other characters about that character, and stage directions. The evaluation cannot take place until the students are well into their reading, and the teacher may wish to postpone evaluation until students have finished reading and discussing their assigned play. The intervening days’ activities will be expanded upon below.

**DAY 3**

Tell the students they will be reading one of three plays in which they will be asked to identify a major character’s stand on an issue and the motives or reasons for that stand. They will form groups according to the play they are assigned for the purpose of discussion, collaborative learning, and presenting a project to the rest of the class. Help group members agree on a specific amount of reading to complete each day before coming to class. The at-risk or reluctant readers may need to be excused from out-of-class reading, since the drama genre can be frustrating for such readers. However, the play they will be assigned is short enough to be read aloud in class by group members in a matter of a few days.

If desired, give students a brief introduction to each play before or just after it is assigned. However, be careful not to reveal critical information regarding the characters’ dilemmas during the introduction. Some students may accept a challenge to read more than one of the dramas presented here. The plays chosen for this unit are:

*Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen (1876). This readily available drama in five acts is recommended for advanced readers. A community plans to capitalize on its natural waters by creating and marketing a health spa. Everyone looks forward to the prospect of tourist dollars flooding the town until the local doctor discovers harmful bacteria in the baths. He insists the spa be shut down until the source of the bacteria is cleaned up, but the townspeople unexpectedly turn against his costly idea and try to frighten him into leaving their town.

*The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee (1970). While this two-act play is very good for most reading levels, it will be used for average readers in this unit. Henry David Thoreau actually was arrested and jailed in 1845 for refusing to pay taxes which would support the U.S. war in Mexico. The authors speculate that his evening behind bars might have been spent reviewing his independent and rebellious life and its effect on others. In the morning Thoreau concludes that by continuing to live in solitude at Walden Pond he is denying himself a complete life experience. Though the prospect is distasteful to him, he chooses to rejoin humanity.

“The Secret of Freedom,” by Archibald MacLeish (1961), was written as a one-act play but was adapted for television. Reluctant readers or at-risk students should have little difficulty reading this short play about a married couple who is disillusioned with their town after a school improvement referendum is voted down. They seek something or someone to blame for what they see as a general decline in American values and are taught by the local librarian that their search is futile. It is not the two-thirds majority that is solely responsible for America’s apathy, but the one-third who gives up its dream or loses the courage to achieve that dream.
Before asking students to begin reading their assigned play, emphasize the difficulty of reading a piece which is meant to be seen on stage. Emphasize the importance of reading stage directions and taking note of which character is speaking. Explain that while doing this may slow down their reading, it will help students to visualize the action.

Tell students that as they read they will be required to keep a journal to record two types of personal responses: their own reader responses to general guide questions provided by the teacher, and observations of the contributions of their group members or the group’s general ability to function together.

Guide questions can be very general in nature, applicable to all three dramas. For example:
- what is the central problem the main character faces as you see it? How do the secondary characters contribute to the problem or its solution?
- What is the main character’s stand with regard to the issue or problem? Why has this character taken such a stand?
- How is the problem solved? What contributes to the solution?
- If there is no satisfactory solution, what causes the impasse? How might the ending have changed if the major character had chosen not to take a stand?
- What has this person learned from his or her experience?

Before the students begin reading and entering responses in their journals, model a sample entry of both a reader response and an observation about a fictitious group.

By coming to the group discussions with written responses, students will be better prepared to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Keeping a record of the contributions of their group members will help students to take note of differing opinions. In addition, asking students to record the proceedings of their groups’ discussions helps them to become more aware of their interaction. Students should record other members’ contributions, positive and negative feelings about members’ interactions, and any suggestions for improving the group’s functioning, as well as their feelings about their personal place within the group.

In addition to discussing their responses to the play itself, each group will be responsible for making a presentation to the rest of the class which summarizes the issue and viewpoints of the major character(s). Group members may decide what manner of presentation they prefer: acting out a crucial scene (live or on videotape), making an informative/persuasive bulletin board explaining their play’s issue or a major character’s stand, creating a quiz show to involve the class, forming a debate panel to discuss their play’s issue, writing and acting a parody of their play, or following up on an idea of their own.

Begin the next several class periods with “mini-lessons” or general discussions of concepts to help students read more efficiently and better understand the genre of drama and their particular play. Drama is more difficult or at least more challenging to read because it is meant to be seen, not read. Students should come to class prepared to spend the first five or ten minutes attending to these lessons and then break into their groups for discussion and work on their respective projects. Allow students to move their desks into group formations when they are working together. During this time traditional evaluation methods can be employed; for example, “pop” quizzes can provide information on the students’ comprehension of the text as well as serve as a motivator for students to complete their reading assignments. Below are sample questions which could be included on such quizzes.

“The Secret of Freedom”: Identify three specific world problems mentioned in the play. Define “democracy” using the characters’ speeches as a basis for your definition.
The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail: Give two examples of the methods Thoreau uses to teach his students. Why does the chairman of the School Committee oppose such methods?

An Enemy of the People: Why does the mayor insist that Dr. Stockman suppress his findings about the mineral baths? Why do the townspeople assume Stockman is in the wrong?

DAY 4

The group members should work together to draw a rough sketch of the stage according to the authors' descriptions at the beginning of their play. They should revise their sketches when any subsequent changes are noted in the text. Members can refer to this sketch as they discuss blocking, setting, and dialogue during this time period.

Each play treats its setting quite differently, which should be noted to the entire class. Enemy of the People calls for a very traditional stage set to imitate reality. The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail, however, relies on abstract props, forcing the audience to imagine much of the furniture, the jail, even a boat, and the actors often resort to pantomime. “The Secret of Freedom” was adapted for television production and therefore is not limited to the stage. Students will need to concentrate on camera directions as well as directions to the actors. The setting is broader in scope, encompassing an entire town, and the audience, through the camera, follows cars or the main character walking down a city street.

DAY 5

In order to understand the importance of stage directions, groups should choose a scene they have already read and try blocking it, using the directions provided by the author. When blocking a scene, the actors “walk through” it, concentrating on their movements, not necessarily the script. By asking students to block a scene with little or no emphasis on dialogue, they must be more attentive to postures, poses, gestures, and movements that they might otherwise ignore. Seeing group members moving about as the characters helps students visualize the action more easily. In addition, call attention to those on-stage characters who aren’t speaking. What should or could they be doing while they are waiting for their next line? Encourage members to rotate as observers and actors, both in blocking and in reading parts.

DAY 6

Facial expressions can be an important aid to understanding the spoken word. Have students say the sentence “Troy asked me to the prom” or “Becky asked me to the Sadie Hawkins dance” using a variety of facial expressions. How is the meaning of the sentence altered if the speaker’s eyes roll to the ceiling? If spoken with a broad grin? Have students experiment with facial expressions as they read lines aloud from their play. Group members can coach each other as they choose lines and corresponding expressions.

DAY 7

Students should explore oral interpretation as they read and discuss their plays as well. Lines can be grossly misinterpreted if students stress the wrong word in a sentence. Offer a simple
sentence such as "I drove Dad's car into the lake." Let students say the sentence aloud several times, stressing a different word each time. How does the meaning change? They could also try saying the sentence as a question or an exclamation to get a different interpretation.

**DAY 8**

Scenery, lighting, costuming, and, when used, background music are dramatic techniques that are easily ignored on the printed page but contribute to the overall effect of the play. Lighting is especially important in *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* to simulate night and day or to indicate a change of time, place, or the beginning of a new scene. Students can take an inventory of these four categories and, as hypothetical directors, decide what items from each they need to help their production be as effective as possible. Such an exercise requires students to examine these previously overlooked techniques for their importance to the play.

**DAYS 9-10**

These days can be used as "catch-up" days or days to polish the group presentations. Presentations should take from fifteen to thirty minutes depending on the chosen format. Schedule time daily to meet with each group to listen to and promote their discussions and to answer questions. Students will work in a collaborative effort to produce their presentations and will continue to use their journals to keep track of the progress made by all members of the group. Periodically, choose one member of the group at random to explain the group's progress.

Groups may work more efficiently if each member assumes a particular task for the completion of the project. For example, one student can be in charge of recording the brainstorming and other conferences within the group, another can keep track of the contributions of each member and dole out compliments, yet another can verify the group's work with the text to ensure accuracy, and so on.

If the groups are too large to work together efficiently, split them and allow an extra day or so to make time for all the presentations. The teacher as well as the students are responsible for evaluating the contributions of each group member. This can be done informally through teacher observation and journal writing, or with a formal assessment sheet which students fill out for each member of their group. Hand out assessment sheets before the group work so students know by what criteria they will be judged. Morgan, Allen, Moore, Atkinson and Snow (1987) have created a useful assessment sheet in which students rate each other on a four point scale in the areas of planning, researching, writing, and revising. This assessment sheet can be used in other collaborative efforts in this unit as well. The scale can be set up in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Revising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DAYS 11-12

Depending on the number of groups, the final days of this part of the unit (in this case, two) should be given over to their presentations. Both teacher and students should evaluate the presentations, perhaps by ranking them in order of effectiveness.

DAYS 13-14 Fully Developed Lesson

Behavioral Objectives: At the completion of this lesson, students should be able to conduct a class-written poll of five to ten people outside of class and write an analysis of the results of that poll.

Affective Goal: Students will show an appreciation for new ideas and viewpoints as well as an understanding of the needs of their peers and/or community through their suggestions and acceptance of a possible class project.

Motivation: Ask students if they have ever taken part in or read the results of a poll of any kind. Offer examples such as the America’s Choice Awards for popular music and films. Promote a discussion in which students speculate on the accuracy of polls or why the results often conflict with our own choices. Show the class the most recent Top Ten Singles list (this is usually found in larger town newspapers which also feature best-seller lists of recent books) and ask students whether this list reflects their own opinions of what is best in current rock or pop music. In most cases, students will not agree with the ranking or possibly even with the songs listed.

Procedure: Tell the class they will create a simple poll of their own so that they can discover what types of music students in this class tend to listen to as well as put together a top ten list of titles which accurately reflects the class preference. First, ask students to suggest song titles which are favorites among these class members. Have a recorder write them on the board or overhead projector.

With a list of ten to twenty titles in front of the class, tell students that polls consist of carefully worded questions designed to elicit accurate responses. Questions may be multiple choice, fill in the blank, yes or no answer, ranking in order of preference, or using a rating scale, to name a few. As a class, create poll questions of each type, writing them in a place where the entire class can see them. For example, a fill in the blank question might be written something like this: “If I could have only one song to listen to, it would be __________ because ______________________.” Another question could ask responders to rank the titles listed in order of personal preference. Multiple choice questions might be more general in nature, for example: “I typically listen to (1) heavy metal, (2) pop rock, (3) new age, (4) punk, (5) __________________.”

Assign one poll question to each student. Depending on the number of questions the class has created, there may be multiple students assigned to each question. Allow students time during this lesson to poll five other members of the class. When the polling is done, ask students to review their results and write a summary of their findings. Students may use a format such as the following, which is based on one by Mary C. Grattan and Susan P. Robbins (1983): To discover my peers’ response to the question of ____________________, I administered a questionnaire to _____________(number of) students. I asked each student the following question: _______________________________. The results of the questionnaire show that _____________(number) felt _________________. The reason(s) given was (were) _____________________. An analysis of these responses indicates that ________________.
Based on this questionnaire, I believe that _________________.

Clearly, this format must be flexible in order to properly meet the needs of the students. When they have finished their "analysis" ask students to share their findings with the class and record the results on the blackboard. Allow time for students to reflect aloud on the actual analysis of the results and not just the numbers.

**Evaluation:** Probably the next day, tell students that they will be evaluated on a written analysis of a poll which they will conduct outside of class.

Remind the class that in the drama they read, a character or characters recognized a problem and attempted to solve it in a way that was acceptable to him or her. Today they will create a questionnaire to help them isolate a real problem or need in their school or community and suggest possible solutions. They will study the means of solving the problem or meeting the need and present their study to the local government or school board for serious consideration. Remind students that the end product will be a written report on the feasibility of such a project.

Prepare carefully formulated questions that will lead the students to think of creative, responsible, and reasonable ideas for a class project. Students can deal with such topics as creating a local teen recreation center, organizing a "Students Against Drunk Driving" campaign, placing student representatives on school curriculum committees, investigating local pollution control, running an employment agency for teens, etc. Bring out the suggestion box at this time and share its contents with the class to give them additional ideas.

Form students into groups of three or four to brainstorm ideas for a class project. Have each group appoint a recorder to write down their ideas and a leader to make sure every member has an opportunity to speak. After a few minutes of discussion, ask the recorders to move to a new group to share and compare ideas. Allow additional time for incubation of these ideas. Ask the recorders to move again to new groups and repeat the process, if desired.

When the process is completed, ask a student to collect the recorders' notes and write the ideas on the overhead or blackboard. Initiate an informal discussion of the project ideas, encouraging elaboration of some and leading students to identify those which seem inappropriate or unwieldy. When the class has agreed on a list of acceptable ideas ask them to remain in their groups and compose possible questions to be used in a poll which they will conduct outside of class. Remind them of the types of questions used in the music poll and ask them to use each type. Also remind them that the purpose of this poll is to help them learn what their peers or community members feel is needed to improve the school or town. The group leaders can present their questions to the class, write them on the overhead, and the class can approve those questions it wishes to include in its poll.

Each student should poll at least five to ten people for their opinions, but no one should be polled twice. Students must decide among themselves whom they will poll before they leave class so that no overlap occurs. Ask students to distribute their questionnaire among people whose opinions will be truly helpful: fellow students, teachers and other professional people, parents, members of the city council or school board, the editor of the local newspaper. All are likely to be of assistance in pointing out community or school needs that the class can address in a collaborative project.
Arrange for multiple copies of the poll questions to be made for each student by photocopying or duplicating a typed or neatly-written original or by creating copies on a computer word processor. While it would be convenient for students to leave class on this day with their copies, it may not be possible to have those copies available for 24 hours or more. However, the questionnaire analysis upon which the students will be evaluated may be distributed at this time. Once again, it is adapted from Grattan Robbin (1983). Should this format prove unworkable, modify it or ask students to modify it to be more useful. This form is merely a guide to demonstrate one way the analysis can be written out. The questionnaire analysis follows:

To discover community and/or peer response to the issue of a school or community improvement project, I administered a questionnaire to ________ (number of) people. I asked each person the following questions:

(1) ________________________ ,
(2) ________________________ ,
(3) ________________________ , (etc.)

The results of the questionnaire show that ________ (number) felt an appropriate improvement project was __________________, and ________ (number) felt __________________ was the superior project, (etc.). The reasons given by supporters of project A included __________________, ______________, and ______________. On the other hand, proponents of project B offered the following reasons for their choice: ______________, ______________, and ______________. (Etc.)

An analysis of these responses indicates that ______________. In the responses, there seemed (or did not seem) to be a correlation between ______________ and ______________. Based on this questionnaire, I believe the best project idea for our class is ______________. This analysis suggests that more research is needed in the area of ______________.

DAY 15

If the copies of the poll are ready for the students, they should be distributed today with the instructions that students should poll only those people they agreed to poll in order to avoid repeated responses. Ask that students finish their polling analysis by Day 17.

At this time, introduce two poems for the purpose of illustrating the manner in which poets take a stand and make their voices heard among readers. The poems are “The Unknown Citizen” by W. H. Auden (Appendix C) and “I Like to Think of Harriet Tubman” by Susan Griffin (Appendix D).

First, distribute copies of “The Unknown Citizen” to the class. Tell students that they should consider the point of view taken by the poet as they read the poem silently. Read or ask a volunteer to read the poem aloud after everyone has had time to peruse it. Ask students to consider questions such as these: How do they feel about this citizen? Is he admirable? A “saint”? If students express an uneasy feeling about this man, ask them to explore the possible reasons. Ask them to point out lines which make them feel that all is not right. Who is narrating this poem? How has the narrator compiled all her or his information about the Unknown Citizen? Is the narrator the same as the poet, or is the poet trying to make a statement? If so, does the statement have
to do with the Citizen or with the State? Can the students answer the questions posed by the narrator (‘Was he free? Was he happy?’)? Why is it that these questions seem to interrupt the flow of the narrative? Is this citizen worthy of a marble monument, and why would the state be responsible for erecting it? Is there any significance to the inscription on the monument (‘To JS/07/M/378’)? Does the poet want the reader to accept the narrator’s point of view?

Before the class reads “I Like to Think of Harriet Tubman” it may be helpful to provide a brief background of this courageous Black woman who escaped slavery and repeatedly risked her life to help other slaves escape North to their freedom. Ask students to again consider the point of view being expressed. Is it the author who is speaking or is it a person she has invented? Once again ask a volunteer to read the poem aloud as the class follows along. Direct students’ attention to the end of the first stanza. The final line of this stanza is unexpected: what does Harriet Tubman have to do with feeding children? Are there any clues in the previous lines which might offer the reader insight?

What purpose is served by imagining the President eating lunch on Monday but not Tuesday? The second stanza also ends on an unexpected note. Ask students to look closely at the last sentence of the stanza and the placement of the word “revolver.” Where did they see that word before, and why was it not as shocking there? What technique is the author using in this poem which is particularly noticeable in the final stanza? What is the purpose or effect of the repetition of words and phrases?

The students may compare the two poems on paper and make an observation about their contrasting forms. ‘The Unknown Citizen’ is written in long lines. Griffin’s poem, on the other hand, is composed of very short lines, sometimes only one or two words long. Ask students to speculate on the authors’ purposes in structuring each poem in the manner they did. Do short lines affect the reader differently? The combination of short lines and repeated phrases suggests a style of speech that is spoken by someone in a highly emotional state—almost breathless with indignation or anger. Auden’s poem, with its long, wordy sentences containing few facts of surface interest, sounds as though it is a dull statistical report written by a government employee who meant it to be filed, not read. Irony arises from the fact that it is being read, and that the writer seems surprised by the questions about the Citizen. Help students become aware that the two poets intended the reader to have feelings which the class may now be sharing.

Allow students time for a directed free write in their journals after reading and discussing these poems. Give students the options of writing their personal responses to one or both of the poems, or to express any new insights they have gained with regard to the suggested class projects. Some students may have a specific subject they wish to address in their journals that has not been suggested by the teacher.

DAY 16

Modern art is often misunderstood by the uninformed or uninitiated, yet it is a powerful medium through which political statements can be made. Pablo Picasso’s Guernica is such a work. Public libraries often have artwork available for borrowing; if a reproduction of this work is not included in the local library’s collection, a fold-out version can be found in the book Picasso’s Guernica by Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1988). Often artwork is reproduced and made available on photographic slides for easier group viewing. Have a copy of this work in the classroom for the lesson.

A good accompanying poem for the work of art is “The Monument” by Iosip Brodsky (see Appendix E). Distribute copies to all students to read silently before reading aloud. After yesterday’s discussion of point of view, students should feel familiar with the concept and be ready
to look for and identify implications of point of view within the lines. Before initiating a discussion, ask students to spend a few minutes collecting their thoughts and immediate responses to the poem in their journals. Some students may feel more comfortable writing if they are given one or two guide questions to direct their thoughts. Examples could be: why do you think the narrator mentions twice that the monument be one “that will not disturb anybody”? Why do people set up monuments?

When the class has had time to reflect in writing, ask students to share their thoughts about “The Monument.” Emphasize that they are not expected to answer a question correctly, but only to share their honest response and listen to and accept their classmates’ responses as well.

When the students have shared their responses, show the slide or reproduction of “Guernica” and ask them for their initial reaction to this work. In all likelihood students will respond in negative terms: “I don’t understand what it’s about,” “It looks like a second grader drew it,” etc. Tell students that the negative feelings they are experiencing were intended by the artist, Pablo Picasso. Give students an opportunity to look closely at the work, and ask them to take note of the details which are particularly striking to them. Ask that they record the feelings, thoughts, or memories which these details evoke. Using their written records ask the students to compose a “formula” poem which expresses the feelings they derive from this artwork. For example, write down an emotion on the first line, three adjectives related to that emotion on the second line, and action on the third line, and a summary statement on the final line. Those who wish to may share their composition with the class.

Students may be interested to know that Guernica is the name of a Spanish town whose defenseless buildings and inhabitants were mercilessly bombed by fighters from Nazi Germany in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. Picasso had originally been commissioned to create a work of art for the Paris World’s Fair which would demonstrate praise for the civilian army which was defending Spain against Franco’s regime. After the tragic bombing of Guernica, however, he chose instead graphically to illustrate the horror of war. That horror is obvious on the abstract faces of the adults and the dead child in the picture; however, students may wonder at the presence of a bull and horse. Picasso used these two animals repeatedly in his art to represent an unequal encounter, such as that which occurs in a bullfight between the picador’s horse and the enraged bull. In Guernica, however, Picasso emphasizes the chaos and confusion of war by making the normally combative bull stare placidly at the viewer while taking a protective stance over a distraught mother and her dead child. The horse, a picture of agony, has been impaled, not on the horns of the bull as might be expected, but on a weapon of man. Other disturbing images include a woman falling from a burning building, a decapitated soldier, and another woman dragging herself to safety. In Guernica there are no victors, only victims.

Picasso’s mural was not critically acclaimed when it was initially displayed. Just as students will no doubt need time to appreciate its powerful message today, so did the general public in 1937. Students should understand that important statements can be made in a variety of media and even people who are not political by nature may make themselves heard on matters that are personally important.

**DAY 17**

Today the class should return the results of the poll. Students will take turns presenting their results as well as their analyses of those results. The remainder of the class period should be used to summarize the poll results and have the class vote to decide which project the students are most interested in pursuing.
Remind the class that whatever project it adopts will be the subject of a collaborative report to which they all will contribute. This unit will not necessarily result in the desired project, but in a feasibility report which will be submitted to an appropriate audience for approval. According to R.S. Blicq (1975), a feasibility study “... starts with an idea or concept, and then develops and analyzes it to assess whether it is technically or economically feasible.” The writing of a feasibility study is essentially informative, not persuasive.

With minimal guidance, the class can decide on an appropriate audience for its report. If students experience difficulty in choosing an audience, nudge them into seeing that if they truly want to get action on a school or community project, their report should be submitted to the local government or school board.

DAY 18

With the decision of the class project made, the next step the students must take is to divide the research tasks among small groups of students. If, for example, a class has chosen to produce a feasibility study on the construction of a community swimming pool, the teacher could guide the class in a discussion of all important angles for the complete study of this project. Areas of research could include real estate, city zoning, insurance, construction bids, maintenance costs, financing, and pool design. The class would break into groups, each investigating one of these areas of concern. Each group would be responsible for submitting a report of its findings to the class. In addition, each member of the group would be assigned an individual task within that group to help produce and present its part of the final report. This report, a feasibility study, will be a collective work in which each group’s findings will be represented.

When the various areas of research are determined students should indicate their first and second preference of work. Assign students to each group according to their preference. The size of the groups should be consistent unless an area of research requires extensive work. In such cases, two groups could be combined.

Allow the groups time to meet today to assess their members and make initial plans for individual assignments. Each group should appoint a recorder and take time to brainstorm ideas regarding research methods for its part of the study. They should make note of questions they must answer, list local citizens who can serve as resources, and convenient times for members to meet. Each group must contact at least one outside resource person for a face-to-face interview to gain necessary information. The initial contact will be made with a telephone call to schedule an appointment for the interview, followed up with a letter confirming the date and time of the appointment. After the group completes its interview, the members will write a thank you letter to their resource person.

Some students may feel uncomfortable making a business phone call to an adult they do not know. This would be an ideal time to give students practice in telephone skills. Young adults are usually adept at using the phone for personal reasons (e.g., talking to friends, ordering pizza) but they have little experience in making business calls. To reduce anxiety, have group members work together to focus on exactly what information they wish to provide for and receive from their interviewee in setting up the appointment. Help students anticipate unexpected responses from the person they call. A quick lesson in telephone courtesy might be helpful as well. If possible, bring to class a set of disconnected phones so that students may practice holding the receiver the proper distance from their mouths, speaking directly into the mouthpiece, and using their prepared notes for rehearsal. When students have practiced and feel ready to make the real call, arrange for them to use a phone in the school office during class time.
DAY 19  Fully Developed Lesson

**Behavioral Objective:** All students will produce a clear, neat business letter to an adult for the purpose of securing information for their project.

**Affective Goal:** The students will express an appreciation for an aesthetically attractive and clearly written letter.

**Motivation:** Tell students that they will be writing letters to adult resource people to gain needed information for their task in the class project. The letters will be mailed, received, and responded to in some way. It is imperative that their letters be neat and legible, clearly stating the writer’s purpose.

**Procedure:** One of the most important tasks of business people working together on a project is to keep all members abreast of any new developments which occur. The class will follow a similar procedure and gain practice in writing business letters as well.

Have group members work together to list any questions, intentions, ideas, plans, etc., they have collected for their part of the project. Working collaboratively, they must write a draft of a letter to be distributed to the other groups informing them of the items on the list. Several drafts may be necessary before a group produces a letter with which they are completely satisfied. Members must reproduce enough copies of the final draft so that each group receives one copy for its records. The copies may be neatly handwritten, following a typical business letter format including return address and date, salutation and closing. The receiver’s address and name can be each group’s appointed leader. Group members should proofread each other’s drafts before distributing them to the other groups.

An alternative method, if computers are available, is to have groups compose and revise their letters on a word processor and make copies with a printer. Each student should be given an opportunity to use the keyboard and printer.

**Evaluation:** When students have made their telephone contacts and set up an appointment for their group interview, they will write a letter to be mailed to the interviewee confirming the date and time. After the interview, students will write an appropriate thank you note as well. Evaluate each letter before it is mailed, checking for neatness, mechanics, information accuracy, and format.

DAY 20

Give students an opportunity to practice interview skills before they conduct their actual interviews. Remind students of the listening skills they have already used (maintaining eye contact with the speaker, leaning forward, nodding, taking notes) but stress that interviewing requires more than just listening. Students must prepare critical questions and be prepared to form impromptu questions if the speaker brings up an unexpected or baffling piece of information. They must also make quick decisions regarding how many of the speaker’s words they must write down for future reference.

Ask students to finish the following statement: “I’m probably the only person in this classroom who . . .” In triads, the students will take turns as the interviewee while the other two formulate and ask questions based on the complete statement. Allow the interviewers time for composing questions together before beginning the interview. Emphasize to students that they will not be
expected to reproduce a word-for-word transcription of the interview; they need only write down those points they believe are most important. Encourage students to depart from their prepared questions, since many times an answer will open up the possibility of new questions. Give the interviewers a few minutes to collect their information before presenting their findings to the class. Fellow students may suggest other questions that could have been included in the interview, which should help the interviewers gain a better understanding of the importance of wide-ranging questions.

If time permits, have the original project groups formulate relevant questions for the real interviews they have set up already. Make a note of the information required by each group and consult with the school librarian regarding information sources they might consult. Request that the class be given a tour of the library’s resources as well as a review or introduction to them on the following day. Knowing in advance the type of information being sought helps the librarian to concentrate on those resources which will be most helpful to the students. In addition, the librarian may be able to direct students to outside sources which may have more specific information.

**DAY 21**

If the library tour has been approved, this class period will be spent orienting the class to the available information sources.

**DAY 22**

Groups may need time during this class period to begin synthesizing the notes they have acquired from the library sources they have consulted. In addition, ask students to think about presenting their final report to the agreed-upon government body (city council or school board). Are they familiar with the protocol observed at meetings? Do they know the procedure for putting their project report on the agenda? It may be wise at this point to invite a member of the intended audience (mayor or city council member or school board member) to class for an informational interview. Students may write a letter of invitation to a member of the governing body, or the teacher may wish to speed up the process with a phone call.

Each group may write up questions to ask the visitor to help gain an understanding of the way local government handles citizen action. They may learn what form their report should take, when the next meeting will be held, the proper procedure for presenting their report, whether the meeting may be videotaped for those students who cannot attend, how soon they may expect a formal response from the council or board, etc. Students will also be responsible for taking notes during the interview and for writing a thank you note afterwards.

**DAYS 23-25**

In order to allow time for the groups to gather, share, and produce a report of their findings, several days should be devoted to group work. The class period may open with mini-lessons on biased and objective writing, devising an easy-to-read format, sentence-combining, and other aspects of writing which will aid students in completing their information. For example, have students read a newspaper account of an incident and an editorial or letter to the editor related to the same incident. Let the students examine the two and identify those words or phrases in
the editorial which would lend bias to the straight news story. Impress upon students that their feasibility study must reflect objectivity in order to maintain credibility with its audience.

Write an informative paragraph (or change the writing of a paragraph already available) using short, choppy sentences or sentences all formed with a subject-verb structure. Ask students to rewrite the piece, combining sentences or rearranging their structure to create a smoother, more interesting paragraph.

During these three days, groups should prepare another letter to update the other groups as to the progress made or the difficulties encountered at this point. Write and distribute them as before. Groups may be able to offer each other some assistance; if so, they should write a return letter with their suggestions or advice. An alternative might be to ask one member from each group to "visit" other groups and listen to their proceedings. These visitors can return to their own groups with relevant information for their members.

At the end of day 25, some groups may have collected enough information to begin a rough draft of their part of the final report.

**DAYS 26-28**

Students should have completed their group interviews by now and should be composing in their groups initial drafts of their report. They should also use this time to plan for a method of presenting their report to the rest of the class. They may disseminate their information in any manner they choose; some possibilities include presenting a panel discussion, inviting an outside speaker to class to aid in explaining their study, making a video of the information they have uncovered, etc.

Ask the class to help create a criteria list for the purpose of evaluating each presentation. The class as well as the teacher should evaluate each group’s work as presented to them. Students may wish to base their evaluations on how clearly the problem and solution(s) are presented, the group’s knowledge of the subject matter, etc. Each group should distribute one copy of its report’s final draft to every group on the day of its presentation.

**DAY 29**

If group work is progressing on schedule, the presentations can take place today. Groups will present their findings to the class, using their collaborative report as the basis of the presentation and any other means to effectively explain their investigation. Allow time for the class to complete evaluations of each presentation.

The presentations may be an effective means of drawing responses from the students regarding problems they share, questions that still remain, new ideas and suggestions, etc.

**DAY 30**

Assuming that the council or board member has accepted the class invitation to appear for an interview, students will use this class period to ask their prepared questions and "trial balloon" information from their small group presentations. They will note the important points in the council or board member’s replies. If the visitor leaves before the end of the period, ask the class to summarize in a discussion the information they have collected.
DAYS 31-33

Before disbanding the small groups, ask that each member evaluate his or her fellow members’ performances. In addition, each student should complete a self evaluation. The process can be as simple as ranking the members from most to least productive, although the teacher may desire a written justification for the ranking.

The final task of the unit is to combine the small group findings into a complete and cohesive report. The small groups should disband at this time and the class should discuss methods of fusing the reports into a whole. Explain to students that the contents of their study are more important than its format. Nevertheless, their final draft should be neat and attractive. Emphasize to students that such reports are most effective when they are easy to read. Suggest that they employ such devices as wide margins, short, single-spaced paragraphs with spaces between them, enumerated lists, graphs and charts, and boldface headings. Most computer word processors have the capabilities necessary for creating documents with these features. A computer in the classroom will provide immediate feedback of any page designs the students wish to try. Students can type the page as they wish it to appear and print it up quickly for the class to see.

Students should form new groups to rewrite, proofread, edit, cut-and-paste, design the cover and create any charts or graphs necessary.

DAY 34

Assuming the class has completed the final draft, give each student a copy to examine. Go through it together, reading for any last-minute typographical errors, changes, or improvements. Students may wish to contact a local television or radio station or newspaper to ask for coverage of their presentation to the city council or school board. Perhaps a reporter would be willing to come to the class and interview the students!

DAY 35

Since the students know they will be presenting their study at a meeting of the city council or school board, they will be motivated to implement the information they gained from interviewing the city council or school board representative. Capitalize on this motivation by reviewing (or introducing) parliamentary procedure in class. Students can role play officers and public people as they simulate a meeting to rehearse their upcoming experience.

During this period, students should discuss the presentation of their report. Who will do the speaking for the class? How many students should present the document? What accommodations can be made for those students who cannot attend the meeting?

If admissible, the class should make arrangements to have the meeting videotaped for reviewing the next day so that students who were unable to attend can experience the procedure. There should be enough copies of the report for each council or board member to have one.

DAY 36

Assuming that the class has attended the meeting and made its presentation, this period may be used as a “debriefing” session. If the meeting was videotaped, class members can watch and evaluate their experiences. Encourage students to share what they have learned from this unit.
that they did not know six weeks ago. Ask the class whether they would like to present a bound copy of their report to the school library or place their work in a display case at the school or in another community building.

Guide students toward follow-up activities. Perhaps they would like to invite a council member back to their class to give them a “progress report” on their study. Perhaps they should write a thank-you letter to the council or board.

Ask students to write an essay in which they outline what they have learned about making themselves heard in local government. They may use any information they have picked up during the unit, including their drama, the song, and the poetry, to strengthen their essay.

Works Consulted


APPENDIX A

Opinionnaire

Name
(Never give an opinion without also giving your name.)

Below is a series of statements. Circle the response which most closely indicates how you feel about the statement.

1. Most governments genuinely do have the interests of the people at heart.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

2. If the people feel a government is not working fairly for them, they have the right to start a revolution to overthrow that government.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

3. A citizen of legal age has the right to do anything he or she wants to do as long as it does not directly harm another human being.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. Governments are only interested in keeping themselves in power.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. The best government is the one that governs least.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

6. You should always complain when things aren't going the way you want them to go.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

7. A person should be loyal to his or her government first, and to his or her own interests second.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

8. When you want society to change, you should do it through your vote, not by protesting.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

9. We should never question the decisions of people who are placed in administrative positions, because they are doing what they feel is best for everyone.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

10. Most people are too meek to stand up for what they believe in.
    Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

11. I always make my opinions known when I disagree with the way things are being run.
    Strongly Agree  Agree  Not Sure  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX B

WE WORK THE BLACK SEAM

This place has changed for good
Your economic theory said it would
It’s hard for us to understand
We can’t give up our jobs the way we should
Our blood gas stained the coal
We tunneled deep inside the nation’s soul
We matter more than pounds and pence
Your economic theory makes no sense

CHORUS:

One day in a nuclear age
They may understand our rage
They build machines that they can’t control
And bury the waste in a great big hole
Power was to become cheap and clean
Grimy faces were never seen
But deadly for twelve thousand years is
Carbon fourteen
We work the black seam together

The seam lies underground
Three million years of pressure packed it down
We walk through ancient forest lands
And light a thousand cities with our hands
Your dark satanic mills
Have made redundant all our mining skills
You can’t exchange a six inch band
For all the poisoned streams in Cumberland

CHORUS

Our Conscious lives run deep
You cling onto your mountain while we sleep
This way of life is part of me
There is no price so only let me be
And should the children weep
The turning world will sing their souls to sleep
When you have sunk without a trace
The universe will suck me into place

CHORUS

by Sting

from the album Dream of the Blue Turtles
A & M Records Inc., CS 3750, 1985
APPENDIX C

THE UNKNOWN CITIZEN

by W.H. Auden

(To JS/07/M/378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against who there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Great Community.
Except for the War til the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn’t a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found

That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the right opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation,
And our teachers report he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? the question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

APPENDIX D

I LIKE TO THINK OF HARRIET TUBMAN

by Susan Griffin

I like to think of Harriet Tubman.
Harriet Tubman who carried a revolver,
who had a scar on her head from a rock thrown
by a slave-master (because she
talked back), and who
had a ransom on her head
of thousands of dollars and who
was never caught, and who
had no use for the law
when the law was wrong,
who defied the law. I like
to think of her.
I like to think of her especially
when I think of the problem of
feeding children.

The legal answer
to the problem of feeding children
is ten free lunches every month,
being equal, in the child’s real life,
to eating lunch every other day.
Monday but not Tuesday.
I like to think of the President
eating lunch Monday, but not
Tuesday.
And when I think of the President
and the law, and the problem of
feeding children, I like to
think of Harriet Tubman
and her revolver.

And then sometimes
I think of the President
and other men,
men who practice the law,
who revere the law,
who make the law,
who enforce the law
who live behind
and operate through
and feed themselves
at the expense of
starving children
because of the law,
men who sit in paneled offices
and think about vacations
and tell women
whose care it is
to feed children
not to be hysterical
not be hysterical as in the word
hysterikos, the greek for
womb suffering,
ot to suffer in their
wombs,
not to care,
not to bother the men
because they want to think
of other things
and do not want
to take the women seriously.
I want them
to take women seriously.
I want them to think about Harriet Tubman,
and remember,
remember she was beat by a white man
and she lived
and she lived to redress her grievances,
and she lived in swamps
and wore the clothes of a man
bringing hundreds of fugitives from
slavery, and was never caught,
and led an army,
and won a battle,
and defied the laws
because the laws were wrong, I want men
to take us seriously.
I am tired wanting them to think
about right and wrong.
I want them to fear.
I want them to feel fear now
as I have felt suffering in the womb, and
I want them
to know
that there is always a time
there is always a time to make right
what is wrong,
there is always a time
for retribution
and that time
is beginning.

APPENDIX E

THE MONUMENT

by Iosip Brodsky

Let us set up a monument
in the city, at the end of the long avenue,
or at the center of the big square,
a monument
that will stand out against any background
because it will be
quite well built and very realistic
Let us set up a monument
that will not disturb anybody.

We will plant flowers
around the pedestal
and with the permission of the city fathers
we will lay out a little garden
where our children
will blink
at the great orange sun
and take the figure perched above them
for a well-known thinker
a composer
or a general.

I guarantee that flowers will appear
every morning
on the pedestal.
Let us set up a monument
that will not disturb anybody.
Even taxi drivers
will admire its majestic silhouette.
The garden will be a place
for rendezvous.
Let us set up a monument,
we will pass under it
hurrying on our way to work,
foreigners will have their pictures taken
standing under it.
we will splash it at night with the glare
of floodlights.
Let us set up a monument to The Lie.