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# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Middle School Lesson

# VOICES to VOTES

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## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT VOCABULARY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS



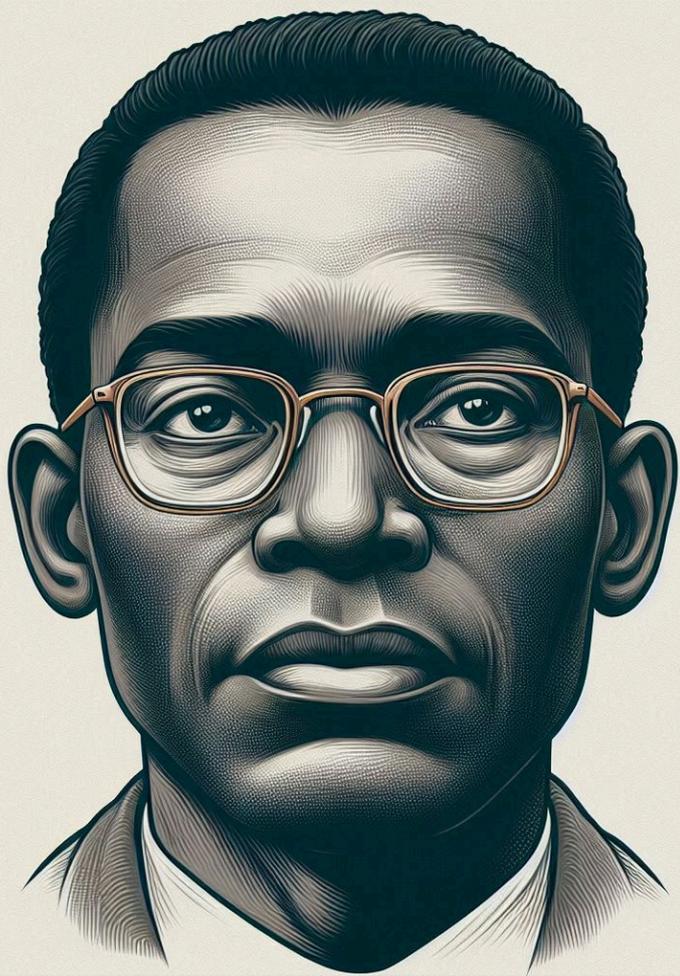
- **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT, OR SOCIETY TO ADDRESS PUBLIC ISSUES AND BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE.
- **CIVIL RIGHTS:** THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS TO POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FREEDOM AND EQUALITY, OFTEN FOUGHT FOR THROUGH ACTIVISM AND LEGAL ACTION.
- **ACTIVISM:** EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT SOCIAL OR POLITICAL CHANGE, OFTEN THROUGH PROTESTS, CAMPAIGNS, OR ADVOCACY.
- **PROTEST:** A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF OBJECTION OR DISAPPROVAL, OFTEN TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE.
- **EQUALITY:** THE STATE OF BEING EQUAL, ESPECIALLY IN RIGHTS, STATUS, AND OPPORTUNITIES.
- **ADVOCACY:** PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR OR RECOMMENDATION OF A PARTICULAR CAUSE OR POLICY.
- **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:** THE PROCESS OF BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO ADDRESS COMMON ISSUES AND ACHIEVE SHARED GOALS.
- **GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT:** A MOVEMENT DRIVEN BY ORDINARY PEOPLE RATHER THAN ESTABLISHED LEADERS OR ORGANIZATIONS.
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE:** THE FAIR AND EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETY, REGARDLESS OF RACE, GENDER, OR OTHER FACTORS.
- **VOTER REGISTRATION:** THE PROCESS OF SIGNING UP TO VOTE, OFTEN A KEY PART OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.



## MARCH ON WASHINGTON

- **MARCH ON WASHINGTON:** A MASSIVE PROTEST HELD ON AUGUST 28, 1963, IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ADVOCATING FOR CIVIL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS.
- **I HAVE A DREAM SPEECH:** A FAMOUS SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DURING THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, CALLING FOR RACIAL EQUALITY AND JUSTICE.
- **CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT:** A STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS, PRIMARILY DURING THE 1950S AND 1960S.
- **NONVIOLENT PROTEST:** A FORM OF ACTIVISM THAT USES PEACEFUL METHODS, SUCH AS MARCHES OR SIT-INS, TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE.
- **FREEDOM RIDES:** BUS TRIPS THROUGH THE AMERICAN SOUTH IN 1961 TO CHALLENGE SEGREGATION ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

## **JAMES FARMER (1920–1999)**



**WAS A PROMINENT CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND LEADER IN THE UNITED STATES. HE WAS ONE OF THE KEY FIGURES IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND IS BEST KNOWN FOR CO-FOUNDING THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE) IN 1942.**

**CORE WAS A PIVOTAL ORGANIZATION IN THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY AND PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ORGANIZING SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CIVIL RIGHTS CAMPAIGNS, INCLUDING THE FREEDOM RIDES OF THE 1960S.**

**FARMER WAS A PROPONENT OF NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION,**

**INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI, AND HE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO COMBAT RACIAL SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION. HIS EFFORTS HELPED TO BRING ATTENTION TO THE INJUSTICES FACED BY AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE PASSAGE OF KEY CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION, SUCH AS THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AND THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965.**

**IN ADDITION TO HIS ACTIVISM, FARMER WAS AN EDUCATOR AND AUTHOR. HE WROTE ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES AND THE BROADER STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, "LAY BARE THE HEART." HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MOVEMENT AND HIS COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE AND EQUALITY HAVE LEFT A LASTING IMPACT ON AMERICAN SOCIETY.**

## **JAMES FARMER FACTS**

- **JAMES FARMER: A CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE), KNOWN FOR HIS WORK IN ORGANIZING THE FREEDOM RIDES.**
- **CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE): A CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN 1942, DEDICATED TO ENDING RACIAL SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION THROUGH NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION.**
- **DIRECT ACTION: A FORM OF ACTIVISM THAT INVOLVES IMMEDIATE, VISIBLE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A GOAL, SUCH AS PROTESTS OR SIT-INS.**
- **SEGREGATION: THE ENFORCED SEPARATION OF DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS, ESPECIALLY IN PUBLIC SPACES AND INSTITUTIONS.**
- **INTEGRATION: THE PROCESS OF BRINGING PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RACES TOGETHER IN SHARED SPACES AND INSTITUTIONS.**

# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED: TOGETHER LET'S ANSWER 10 QUESTIONS REFLECTING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, JAMES FARMER & THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR "JOBS & FREEDOM"

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

- A) WATCHING TV
- B) ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY OR GOVERNMENT
- C) PLAYING SPORTS

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF ACTIVISM?

- A) ORGANIZING A PROTEST FOR CLEAN WATER
- B) IGNORING A COMMUNITY PROBLEM
- C) STAYING HOME ON ELECTION DAY

WHY IS VOTER REGISTRATION IMPORTANT?

- A) IT HELPS PEOPLE STAY INFORMED ABOUT SPORTS
- B) IT ALLOWS CITIZENS TO VOTE IN ELECTIONS
- C) IT IS NOT IMPORTANT

WHEN DID THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON TAKE PLACE?

- A) AUGUST 28, 1963
- B) JANUARY 1, 2000
- C) DECEMBER 25, 1955

WHO DELIVERED THE "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH?

- A) JAMES FARMER
- B) DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
- C) ROSA PARKS

WHAT WAS THE MAIN GOAL OF THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON?

- A) TO CELEBRATE A HOLIDAY
- B) TO ADVOCATE FOR CIVIL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS
- C) TO PROMOTE A NEW MOVIE

WHO WAS JAMES FARMER?

- A) A FAMOUS MUSICIAN
- B) A CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER AND CO-FOUNDER OF CORE
- C) A SCIENTIST

WHAT ORGANIZATION DID JAMES FARMER CO-FOUND?

- A) NAACP
- B) CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE)
- C) BLACK PANTHERS

WHAT WERE THE FREEDOM RIDES?

- A) BUS TRIPS TO CHALLENGE SEGREGATION IN THE SOUTH
- B) A TYPE OF DANCE
- C) A NEW FORM OF TRANSPORTATION

WHAT IS NONVIOLENT PROTEST?

- A) USING VIOLENCE TO ACHIEVE GOALS
- B) PEACEFUL METHODS TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE
- C) IGNORING PROBLEMS

ANSWER KEY

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1.  | B |
| 2.  | A |
| 3.  | B |
| 4.  | A |
| 5.  | B |
| 6.  | B |
| 7.  | B |
| 8.  | B |
| 9.  | A |
| 10. | B |



**"MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM"**

# VUOTS



## Voices to Votes

Date: February 21, 2025

Grade: 8th

Subject: Social Studies



### Civic Engagement and the March on Washington

#### Learning Objective/s:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Define civic engagement and understand its importance in shaping society.
2. Analyze the March on Washington (1963) as a historical example of civic engagement.
3. Connect the March on Washington to modern examples of civic participation.
4. Reflect on how they can engage in their own communities.



#### Materials Needed:

13-minute video featuring a local educator connecting the March on Washington to modern civic engagement. \*Link Included

Excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech (printed or projected). \*Attached

Primary source images of Civic engagement the March on Washington (e.g., crowd photos, signs, and speakers). With formal explanation. \*Attached  
Information sheet and image of James Farmer. \*Attached

Group Questionnaire \*Attached

Whiteboard or chart paper for group discussion.

Session Survey

#### Standards: Common Core State Standards (CCSS):

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS):
  - NCSS Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance - Understand the role of civic engagement in shaping government policies.
  - NCSS Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices - Analyze the role of civic participation in achieving social change.

#### Links

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbyDZy2dYgo>



## Lesson Outline

### 1. Warm-Up and Introduction (5 Min)

- Begin with a quick question: “What does civic engagement mean to you?” Write student responses on the board.
- Provide a brief definition of civic engagement: “Civic engagement is when individuals take action to address issues in their community or society.”
- Introduce the March on Washington (1963) as a key example of civic engagement.

### 2. Video: Connecting the March on Washington to Modern Civic Engagement (13 Minutes)

- Show a 13-minute video featuring a local educator discussing the March on Washington and its relevance to modern civic engagement.
- Before the video, ask students to listen for:
  - The goals of the March on Washington.
  - How the March inspired change.
  - Examples of modern civic engagement.
- After the video, ask students to share one thing they learned or found interesting.

### 3. Primary Source Analysis and Group Discussion (15 Minutes)

- Display primary source images of the March on Washington and distribute an excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.
- Divide students into small groups and provide a graphic organizer to guide their analysis.
  - What were the goals of the March?
  - What strategies did organizers use to advocate for change?
  - How did the March inspire others to take action?
- Facilitate a class discussion using the following questions:
  - Why was the March on Washington an example of effective civic engagement?
  - How can we apply the lessons from the March to modern issues?

### 4. Connecting to Modern Civic Engagement (7 Minutes)

- Ask students to brainstorm examples of modern civic engagement (e.g., protests, petitions, social media campaigns, volunteering).
- Discuss how individuals and groups today use similar strategies to advocate for change.
- Highlight the importance of youth involvement in civic engagement.

### 5. Reflection and Wrap-Up (5 Minutes)

- Distribute a handout with reflection prompts:
  - “What is one way you can get involved in your community?”
  - “How can we use the lessons from the March on Washington to address issues today?”
- Have students share their responses with a partner or the class.

#### Formative Assessment:

Monitor student participation in discussions and group work.

Summative Assessment: Review student reflections to assess their understanding of civic engagement and the March on Washington’s significance.

**HERE ARE A FEW PASSAGES FROM THE ICONIC "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ON AUGUST 28, 1963, DURING THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM. THIS SPEECH REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND ENDURING CALLS FOR RACIAL EQUALITY AND JUSTICE IN AMERICAN HISTORY.**

**"I HAVE A DREAM" BY DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**

**I AM HAPPY TO JOIN WITH YOU TODAY IN WHAT WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE GREATEST DEMONSTRATION FOR FREEDOM IN THE HISTORY OF OUR NATION. FIVE SCORE YEARS AGO, A GREAT AMERICAN, IN WHOSE SYMBOLIC SHADOW WE STAND TODAY, SIGNED THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION. THIS MOMENTOUS DECREE CAME AS A GREAT BEACON LIGHT OF HOPE TO MILLIONS OF NEGRO SLAVES WHO HAD BEEN SEARED IN THE FLAMES OF WITHERING INJUSTICE. IT CAME AS A JOYOUS DAYBREAK TO END THE LONG NIGHT OF THEIR CAPTIVITY.**

**BUT ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE NEGRO STILL IS NOT FREE. ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE LIFE OF THE NEGRO IS STILL SADLY CRIPPLED BY THE MANACLES OF SEGREGATION AND THE CHAINS OF DISCRIMINATION. ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE NEGRO LIVES ON A LONELY ISLAND OF POVERTY IN THE MIDST OF A VAST OCEAN OF MATERIAL PROSPERITY. ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE NEGRO IS STILL LANGUISHED IN THE CORNERS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND FINDS HIMSELF AN EXILE IN HIS OWN LAND. AND SO WE'VE COME HERE TODAY TO DRAMATIZE A SHAMEFUL CONDITION.**

**IN A SENSE WE'VE COME TO OUR NATION'S CAPITAL TO CASH A CHECK. WHEN THE ARCHITECTS OF OUR REPUBLIC WROTE THE MAGNIFICENT WORDS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THEY WERE SIGNING A PROMISSORY NOTE TO WHICH EVERY AMERICAN WAS TO FALL HEIR. THIS NOTE WAS A PROMISE THAT ALL MEN, YES, BLACK MEN AS WELL AS WHITE MEN, WOULD BE GUARANTEED THE "UNALIENABLE RIGHTS" OF "LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS." IT IS OBVIOUS TODAY THAT AMERICA HAS DEFAULTED ON THIS PROMISSORY NOTE, INsofar AS HER CITIZENS OF COLOR ARE CONCERNED. INSTEAD OF HONORING THIS SACRED OBLIGATION, AMERICA HAS GIVEN THE NEGRO PEOPLE A BAD CHECK, A CHECK WHICH HAS COME BACK MARKED "INSUFFICIENT FUNDS."**

**BUT WE REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THE BANK OF JUSTICE IS BANKRUPT. WE REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT FUNDS IN THE GREAT VAULTS OF OPPORTUNITY OF THIS NATION. AND SO, WE'VE COME TO CASH THIS CHECK, A CHECK THAT WILL GIVE US UPON DEMAND THE RICHES OF FREEDOM AND THE SECURITY OF JUSTICE.**

**WE HAVE ALSO COME TO THIS HALLOWED SPOT TO REMIND AMERICA OF THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW. THIS IS NO TIME TO ENGAGE IN THE LUXURY OF COOLING OFF OR TO TAKE THE TRANQUILIZING DRUG OF GRADUALISM. NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE REAL THE PROMISES OF DEMOCRACY. NOW IS THE TIME TO RISE FROM THE DARK AND DESOLATE VALLEY OF SEGREGATION TO THE SUNLIT PATH OF RACIAL JUSTICE. NOW IS THE TIME TO LIFT OUR NATION FROM THE QUICKSANDS OF RACIAL INJUSTICE TO THE SOLID ROCK OF BROTHERHOOD. NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE JUSTICE A REALITY FOR ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN.**

**IT WOULD BE FATAL FOR THE NATION TO OVERLOOK THE URGENCY OF THE MOMENT. THIS SWELTERING SUMMER OF THE NEGRO'S LEGITIMATE DISCONTENT WILL NOT PASS UNTIL THERE IS AN INVIGORATING AUTUMN OF FREEDOM AND EQUALITY. NINETEEN SIXTY-THREE IS NOT AN END, BUT A BEGINNING. AND THOSE WHO HOPE THAT THE NEGRO NEEDED TO BLOW OFF STEAM AND WILL NOW BE CONTENT WILL HAVE A RUDE AWAKENING IF THE NATION RETURNS TO BUSINESS AS USUAL. AND THERE WILL BE NEITHER REST NOR TRANQUILITY IN AMERICA UNTIL THE NEGRO IS GRANTED HIS CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS. THE WHIRLWINDS OF REVOLT WILL CONTINUE TO SHAKE THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR NATION UNTIL THE BRIGHT DAY OF JUSTICE EMERGES.**



**SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BECAUSE IT EMPOWERS THEM TO BECOME ACTIVE, INFORMED, AND RESPONSIBLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.**

**HERE'S WHY IT'S ESSENTIAL:**

**FOSTERS A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY:**

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TEACHES CHILDREN THAT THEY HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THAT THEIR ACTIONS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

**ENCOURAGES CRITICAL THINKING:**

**IT HELPS CHILDREN UNDERSTAND SOCIETAL ISSUES, ANALYZE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, AND MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT HOW TO ADDRESS THEM.**

**BUILDS EMPATHY AND INCLUSIVITY:**

**ENGAGING WITH DIVERSE COMMUNITIES FOSTERS EMPATHY, RESPECT, AND A COMMITMENT TO FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY.**

**PREPARES FUTURE LEADERS:**

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT NURTURES LEADERSHIP SKILLS, SUCH AS COLLABORATION, PROBLEM-SOLVING, AND COMMUNICATION, WHICH ARE VITAL FOR FUTURE ROLES IN SOCIETY.**

**STRENGTHENS DEMOCRACY:**

**EDUCATING CHILDREN ABOUT VOTING, ADVOCACY, AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ENSURES THEY GROW UP VALUING AND PARTICIPATING IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES.**

**PROMOTES ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP:**

**IT INSTILLS THE HABIT OF CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMON GOOD, WHETHER THROUGH VOLUNTEERING, ACTIVISM, OR SIMPLY BEING A THOUGHTFUL NEIGHBOR.**

**ADDRESSES GLOBAL CHALLENGES:**

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EQUIPS CHILDREN TO TACKLE PRESSING ISSUES LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND INEQUALITY, ENSURING THEY ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION.**

**BY TEACHING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EARLY, WE RAISE A GENERATION OF EMPOWERED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO CREATING A JUST, EQUITABLE, AND THRIVING WORLD.**

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**VOICES to VOTES**

