

CENSUS-the Constitutional Count

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LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson will acquaint students with Article 1, Section 3 of the Constitution, which calls for an enumeration of the population every ten years. Students will explore the reasons for the census. Students will participate in a variety of activities designed to involve them in the census process. This lesson will be multidisciplinary involving math, language arts, art and social studies skills.

GOALS OF LESSON

As a result of this lesson students will:

- ◆ realize that the Constitution calls for an enumeration or census every ten years;
- ◆ realize that the number of Congressmen a state has depends on the population reported in the census;
- ◆ learn vocabulary words dealing with the census;
- ◆ learn reasons that the census is important; why it is necessary to know ages etc of people;
- ◆ organize information.

GRADE LEVEL

3-5 (Gifted 2nd)

MATERIALS AND OUTSIDE RESOURCES

- ◆ regular graph and poster-board paper
- ◆ pencils & markers
- ◆ a city or town official who has some planning responsibility
- ◆ someone from your U.S. Congressman's office
- ◆ current almanacs
- ◆ U.S. Maps
- ◆ blank U.S. map

ACTIVITIES

1. Talk about the word census. Make sure that the students understand that it is a count or an enumeration. Have students count boys in class, girls in class. Record on board. Explain that you are taking a class census. You

might make several counts of students whose birthdays are in certain months, who walk to school etc. Discuss why this information could be useful. Have students make a picture or bar graph presenting this information.

2. Introduce the word population. (The number of people or inhabitants of an area at a given time.) Ask students to draw pictures of the dwellings on their block. See if they can estimate their block population. Next have them draw pictures of all different kinds of dwellings or show pictures of apartments, mobile homes, etc. Talk about possible numbers of people living in those homes. Make a census bulletin board using either student pictures or pictures of structures cut out of magazines. You may want to include different dwellings like trailers, apartments, single family to park benches for the homeless.

3. Have students brainstorm how they could find out the population living in the homes displayed on their bulletin board. Record answers on board. Discuss practicality of their suggestions. Explain that in the real census in 1990 a questionnaire is sent to all and that a self-enumeration form will be returned. Explain that information will be computerized.

4. Write Article 1 Section 2 of the Constitution on the board. Explain that the Constitution says that we must do a census every ten years. Thomas Jefferson did the first one in 1790 and since then a census has been done every ten years. (Good background for this subject is contained in the World Book Encyclopedia Census Article).

5. Explain that the government wants to know how many people there are but they also want to know other things about them for planning. Schools, etc. need to be planned. Students will develop a questionnaire together. Teacher will write questions on board. Students will copy and take home. Students will use questionnaire on their family or a family of friends or relatives. Teacher will explain that this is a sample.

6. Students will return their questionnaires to class. Some of the information can be graphed-use type of graph appropriate to age group. Display graphs.

7. Invite an official from town or city to explain how census information helps in planning and how the information is valuable.

8. Older students may look up state population figures in an almanac. These may be recorded on blank state map. Make sure that students know that population figures come from the census.

9. Explain that the state's population determines the number of Congressmen from each state. Discuss how many congressmen their state has. Invite a representative from the congressman's local office to speak.

10. If a computer is available students can create a database using the information which they collected.

11. Students can make poster illustrating why they think participating in the census is important. Ideas might include that it is valuable to know how many men and women there are who would be of an age for military service, how many very old people there are in an area that could use special support services etc. The posters can be the culminating activity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Census Education Project: 1990 by U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1988

Census. World Book Encyclopedia