



Advanced High School

National FFA Organization

Lesson AHS.42

RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

Unit. Stage Four of Development—SERVE

Problem Area. How Do I Grow Others and Contribute to Society.

Precepts. **E2:** Perform leadership tasks associated with citizenship.

National Standards. NSS-C.9-12.5 — Roles of the Citizen — What are the responsibilities of citizens.



Student Learning Objectives. As a result of this lesson, the student will ...

- 1 Learn how to become informed on issues.
- 2 Learn the responsibilities of being involved in the political process.
- 3 Learn how to participate in community-based government.



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Time. Instruction time for this lesson: 50 minutes.



Resources

<http://www.firstgov.org>
<http://www.governmentguide.com>
<http://www.house.gov>
<http://www.senate.gov>
<http://www.talktogov.com>



Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

- ✓ Computer lab with Internet access for each student
- ✓ Overhead projector
- ✓ AHS.42.TM.A
- ✓ AHS.42.TM.B
- ✓ AHS.42.TM.C
- ✓ AHS.42.AS.A—one per student
- ✓ AHS.42.AS.B—one per student
- ✓ AHS.42.Assess—one per student
- ✓ American flag



Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson and appear in bold italics:

- ▶ Bill
- ▶ Resolution



Interest Approach

For this interest approach to work best, you will need the ability to completely cover an American flag with an overhead screen. Perhaps you will be able to attach the flag to the writing surface in your room and pull the screen down over it. Attempt to work out these details before attempting the following interest approach.

Place American flag directly behind overhead screen. Before students enter the room, display AHS.42.TM.A.

As students begin to enter the room, ask them to sit quietly and respond to the question above the quotes on the overhead. Give students a couple of minutes to settle and write their answers on a sheet of paper. After it appears that all have finished, lift the screen to reveal the American flag. When the room gets quiet again, connect the ideas they have written, and the flag, to what they will try to accomplish for the day.



 One of the first words that come to people's minds when they see this flag is freedom. Just one word can inspire pride, memories, and a sense of responsibility. The quotes that we just looked at together are just a few thoughts about what our government is all about. Change continues to happen, but we all must be a part of that change in order for it to be successful. The first quote reminds us that we either participate in government or allow someone else to do it for us. The time is fast approaching when many of you will have an opportunity that comes with great responsibility—you will soon have the right to vote.

If lessons are taught in order, the driving idea is carried from AHS.40.

 Take a moment to think about the excitement of turning 16 and getting the opportunity to drive. One part of you is nervous; the other part imagines the first few places you will go—on your own or with friends. This opportunity didn't just fall in your lap. There was a written test, which many of you got pretty good at taking again, and again and again. And don't forget the driving test. But as you reflect on the driving age, realize that your responsibility in government, voting in particular, is even more important. Take, for example, a new law stating that high school will now continue two years longer. Do you know what you would do. Do you know how you could actually affect change.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1. Learn how to become informed on issues.

I. Becoming informed on issues

Transition from the interest approach into the first objective.

 OK! I know the political process isn't always the most interesting thing to high school students, and you're probably wondering what's in it for you. But do you all realize that your age group can have a very profound impact on the political process. What's in it for you. There are many decisions made every day that affect you. But how do you know what issues are currently being addressed.

Me-You-Us Moment:

In a moment, each student will write as many avenues for learning about current issues as he or she can think of. Give students about one minute to write their answers and then ask them to turn to a partner and share their ideas.

 When I say "go," I want you to quietly write down as many places as you can think of where you can find out about current political issues that might affect you. Some of you might write down the television for example. You have one minute...GO!



When students are finished, ask them to share with a partner.

 Now, turn to a partner and discuss the things you wrote down. Go!

Allow for about minute of thoughtful discussion or as much as necessary.

 I heard some great ideas. Let's capture a few here on the writing surface.

Ask for volunteers to share their answers.

Allow each group to add a couple of ideas to the board for the benefit of the entire class.

 These are some great ideas, and as many of you guessed, the Internet is a big source of knowledge, especially on current issues. And, of course, that's why we happen to be in the computer lab today! Other popular sources of current political issues are the TV and newspapers. These are definitely some great sources, but there are some problems with them. If you think you have some reasons why these are not always the best source of information, show me your hand.

Allow for student response. Students will have answers suggesting bias, limited coverage, etc.

 Great! Remember that most TV shows and newspapers have a limited amount of time and space, so they only cover what is most popular or what they think is most popular. So, it's possible that an issue that affects you directly may not even be mentioned! Because of this, we need to go to the source!

Activity

Students will now begin a search on the Internet to find an issue that might interest them. Use the web pages given as resources as examples. Students will be able to find pending legislation in the House and Senate. You may want to add a link to your state legislative web site as well and continue this option throughout the lesson.

 In a moment, I am going to put up some potential web sites where you will be able to find information on current political issues. These are only some helpful guidelines. If you would like to search an issue on your own, feel free. The basic point here is to find an issue that is important to you, something that you are passionate about. At this point, all you are trying to do is find an issue and see if there is any pending legislation—bills, resolutions, etc.

- A. Bill—a written proposal for a new law, discussed and voted upon by the members of a legislative body
- B. Resolution—a formal expression of the consensus of a governmental assembly, arrived at after discussion and usually as a result of a vote

 If it does not appear that there is any pending legislation, then just find out more on the issue. If you have any questions, just raise your hand and I will be there to assist you. You have ten minutes...Go!

Be sure to circulate around the room to assist students. Try to help them track down an issue about which they can write their representative during the next objective. When the time is up, ask a few students who are comfortable to share their issues with the class.





Great work! Is there anyone who would like to share his or her issue with the class.

Allow for student response.



Those are some great ideas. You now have either an issue that involves some sort of legislation, meaning this issue is being addressed by Congress, or your issue isn't being addressed currently. This is the first step!

Objective 2. Learn the responsibilities of being involved in the political process.

II. Responsibilities of being involved in the political process

Transition from first objective



Now you each have an issue that you want to address. You have taken the first step in finding that issue and checking to see what our public officials are doing about it. Now you will take another step. Close your eyes for just a moment and quietly listen to the following scenario.



You have been given the task of preparing for a six-minute speech for your biology class on how Punnet's Square works. Your speech is in one week. OK, you may open your eyes. What are some things that you need to do before your speech.

Allow for responses. Look for responses addressing preparation and reviewing or researching how the square works.



Good! So you all agree that you need to get informed on the issue before you try to teach others about it. Now you need to do the same with your issue. I hope you now know what you would like to see happen with your issue. What do you want done. What changes do you want to see. What do you want your public officials to do. You need to get some evidence to back up our opinion. If you got up to give your speech and didn't know anything about the Punnet's Square, you probably wouldn't be very confident, and neither would your biology teacher when assigning your grade.



You need to either find more data to help strengthen the argument of your issue, or try to come up with a personal story as to why this is important to you. In a moment you will have the chance to look for some more information on the Web, or think about a personal story that you might use in your argument. Remember, there is a lot of information out there. You may want to use a search engine to try to narrow things down. Please raise your hand if you need help! Go!

Objective 3. Learn how to participate in community-based government.

III. Participate in community-based government

Transition from second objective



 Turn to your partner and say, “Great job.” I saw some excellent arguments starting to take shape! If you go back to your biology speech for a moment, you may remember that you needed to do some research on the Punnett’s Square, and now it looks like you’re ready to think about what you are going to say to the rest of the class. It is time to start working on your delivery. Just as there are some basic guidelines for how you should write your speech, there are some guidelines for how you contact public officials. The most important idea to remember is that these individuals deserve your respect. You may be of the opinion that your representative is an idiot, but if you want his or her help with an issue, you need to approach him or her with tact. Let’s start with how you should address public officials. First, by a show of hands, how many of you watch West Wing.

Allow for student response.

 OK, so what do the people call the president when addressing him.

You’re looking for “Mr. President.”

 Great! Now, just as the president has a title, so do your representatives in Congress. They also have a preferred way of being addressed. If you follow some basic guidelines, your contact with your representative can be rewarding. Let’s capture the following ideas in your notes.

Pass out AHS.42.AS.A and display AHS.42.TM.B. Allow a couple of minutes for students to assess AHS.42.AS.A.

 Great! I know that you all have written a letter before, but there are some special guidelines for writing your representative. Remember, these individuals receive hundreds, sometimes thousands of letters per day, and you don’t want yours getting lost in the pile or thrown out because it makes no sense. Here are a few ideas to capture in your notes that will help you be successful in your contact.

Pass out AHS.42.AS.B and display AHS.42.TM.C. Students will fill in the blanks on AHS.42.AS.B. Elaborate on contact notes as necessary for full understanding by students. Answer any questions before moving on to the description of the project.

 You may use AHS.42.TM.C to fill in the blanks on activity sheet AHS.42.AS.B.

Allow a couple of minutes for this activity.

 Now that you have the “know how” to write your representative a letter, and you have chosen an issue that you are passionate about, you are ready to take the final step of joining the political process. Remember to follow the basic guidelines we just discussed. Make sure that you know your issue and get ready to make a difference.

Instructor should set his or her own timeline and due date for letters. Letters should be reviewed by instructor prior to mailing.





Review/Summary



As you get ready today to go home and begin your involvement in the political process, I would like to remind you that your involvement is not just a choice, but also a responsibility. Just as you had a responsibility to pass that DMV driver's test to be able to drive, you all have the lasting responsibility to be active in the political process that provides all of us the freedoms that we enjoy every day. Take the time to get involved even beyond this lesson; decide to stay informed on the issues that are important to you; and don't hesitate to let those in power know how you feel. You all have some exciting work to do; good luck!

At this time pass out AHS.42.Assess.



Application

►Extended Classroom Activity:

Ask students to research a local issue that affects them, possibly a school, city, or town issue. Students can then write to the responsible person or persons in order to make their opinion known.

►FFA Activity:

Challenge students to find an issue within FFA that interests them and have them bring this issue to their chapter, regional, state, or national officers.

►SAE Activity:

Find an issue that may be of interest to a student's place of employment. The student may obtain permission to research issues related to the organization and provide the information to a boss or supervisor. A student may also find it interesting to see if there are any pending issues affecting their ownership SAE project. Students could share this information with the rest of the class.



Evaluation

AHS.42.Assess

Answers to Assessment:

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. F
5. Honorable Jane Smith, Dear Representative:
Honorable Jane Smith, Dear Senator:



RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

► True or False

Write “T” for true and “F” for false. (2 points each)

- _____ 1. Letters are the most common form of communicating to a member of Congress.
- _____ 2. It is good to write an official elected outside of your own district.
- _____ 3. You should never call a member of congress.
- _____ 4. If you can't speak directly with the member, you should call back later.

► Short Answer (4 points)

Briefly answer the following statement.

5. How would you address a member of the House of Representatives named Jane Smith. What if she were a member of the Senate.



WHAT DO THESE QUOTES MEAN TO YOU.

**“No man is good enough to
govern another man without that
other’s consent.”**

—Abraham Lincoln

**“The very key to our success has
been our ability, foremost among
nations, to preserve our lasting
values by making change work for
us rather than against us.”**

—Ronald Reagan



HOWTO CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

What do you call your Representative.

**Let's say for a moment that you are contacting
John Doe in the Senate:**

◆ **The Honorable John Doe
Room 1203, Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510**

◆ **Dear Senator:**

**What if John Doe is a member of the House of
Representatives.**

◆ **The Honorable John Doe
Room 305, Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

◆ **Dear Representative:**



TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

I. Letters are the most common form of communication

A. Letters should include your reason for writing in first paragraph

1. Include the name of bill or pending legislation, if it applies

B. Never go over one page

C. Pick one issue per letter

1. Don't try to save the world in 500 words; be specific



TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE (CONTINUED)

II. How to write the letter

A. Type the letter

- 1. If you must, print it neatly**
- 2. You don't want your letter thrown out because it can't be read**

B. Write to your own representative

- 1. Some offices don't accept letters from out of their district**
- 2. To find your district, go to the Senate or House Web sites and type in your address**

C. Don't use a form letter

- 1. One of the most annoying things for the staff is to get 1,000 of the exact same letter**
- 2. Make your letter personal**

D. Keep it light

- 1. Feel free to share personal stories**
- 2. Don't criticize or get belligerent**

E. Support your argument with examples

- 1. Find facts to support what you are saying**

F. Ask for a response

- 1. If you want a reply about your concern, always ask for a written response**
- 2. Include your phone number and mailing address**
 - a. If your idea is great, he or she may want to talk with you**
- 3. A staff response is OK**
 - a. Many times a staff member will contact you. Don't feel bad; in many cases this is good**



TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE (CONTINUED)

III. E-mail, calls, personal contacts

A. You can call a representative's office

- 1. Get number from his/her web site (go to House or Senate site first)**
- 2. Ask to talk to legislative assistant who handles your issue**
 - a. You probably won't get to talk to the representative, but that's OK**
- 3. Ask for a written response**
 - a. You will need to give your name, number, and address**

B. You can e-mail your representative

- 1. Go to web page by finding name at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov**
- 2. Follow same format as letter**

And remember, be patient for a response!



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Let's say for a moment that you are contacting John Doe in the Senate:

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United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

What if John Doe is a member of the House of Representatives.

The Honorable John Doe
Room 305, Rayburn House Office Building
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Dear Representative:



TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

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 - 3. Ask for a written response
 - a. You will need to give your name, number, and address
- B. You can _____ your representative
 - 1. Go to web page by finding name at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov
 - 2. Follow same format as the letter

And remember, be _____ for a response!

