



How People Get Their Politics

12 Lessons to Engage Students

Curriculum covering Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standards

Reading

1. Read *How People Get Their Politics: Conversations with Americans about the Experiences that Shaped their Political Beliefs* by Julie Samrick

Writing

Essay ideas:

2. We read about round, dynamic characters in literature, which teach us something about what it is to be human. Not everyone in the book fits easily into a political party box. Choose one person from *How People Get Their Politics* and explain how they exemplify a round character (someone human with many sides—opposite of a flat, stereotypical character who only shows one side).
3. Interview someone about their political shaping story. Then write an informative essay answering: *What is this person's primary political belief(s) and what led to it/them?*
4. Interview two or more people of varying backgrounds and then compare and contrast their shaping stories. What connects the two and what sets them apart?

Journal prompts:

5. What political shaping story in *How People Get Their Politics* do you find most interesting and why?
6. Are there any stories that swayed you in any way to consider an alternate political point of view? Explain.
7. What is your political shaping story? Or, reflect on the personal experiences that are shaping you right now.



Speaking/ Listening

8. Have students orally present their papers. Then match them with a student who wrote about someone with a similar and/or a contrasting difference (this could be age, gender, life experience, religion, etc.)
9. After papers are shared, have students participate in a Socratic Seminar about their findings. Open-ended questions will lead to rich discussions and student insight.
10. Challenge students to practice listening as an exercise. For example, they can take the role of reporter. Practice how to frame open-ended questions, and then learn techniques for how and when to probe for more information.
11. Challenge students to scan social media, noting tactics people take when spreading a message that is political in nature.

Follow up with these questions:

- What connotations do the messages have? Are they positive or negative?
 - Are any persuasive devices used?
 - Are there viewpoints that are more lauded by commenters? Why do you think this is?
 - Do any comments surprise you?
12. Ask students to watch three or four different news reports, from local to national. May do the same with newspapers. Students can also search words that evoke emotional responses (*guns, immigration, etc.*) online and see how these topics are handled by various outlets.



Julie Samrick is a Language Arts teacher and the author of *How People Get Their Politics: Conversations with Americans About the Experiences that Shaped their Political Beliefs*. Her books are published by Motina Books.

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