

A More Perfect Union?

GRADES

9-12

DURATION

3 hours

GROUP SIZE

10-30 students

IDEAL FOR

U.S. History, Government, Civics, Ethics

Democracy has always been an argument. From the founding debates over who counts as "the people" to contemporary fights over voting access, representation, and civic identity, the questions the exhibition raises are the same ones students are about to inherit.

LEARNING GOALS

- Analyze the founding question of democratic inclusion and trace its evolution across 250 years of American history
- Engage in evidence-based argumentation on a contested civic question, steel-manning opposing views before responding
- Apply ethical reasoning frameworks to questions of political inclusion, representation, and civic responsibility
- Articulate a considered response to the exhibition's framing question: What does democracy ask of you?

PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS

No pre-reading required. Before the visit, ask students to come with a position: Is American democracy living up to its founding ideals? They don't need to defend it, just arrive with a view they're willing to test. If your class is mid-unit on U.S. History, Government, or a current events topic, share that context at inquiry. We'll build around it.

FIELD TRIP WALKTHROUGH**1 Welcome and orientation 15 minutes**

Students arrive and establish norms for productive disagreement. Central question introduced: What does democracy ask of you: not as a concept, but as a practice?

2 Navigating controversy in discussion 30 minutes

Students engage with an exhibition-based question, such as "Who gets to decide who belongs?," using a structured format that requires them to argue multiple sides before arriving at a reasoned position.

3 Guided exhibition experience 60 minutes

Facilitated walk through all five sections of the exhibition with extended stops at key interpretive moments. Includes primary source analysis connecting historical exclusion to present-day civic debates, and "Head to Head" and "Where Do You Stand?" from American Experiments.

4 Small group source analysis 20 minutes

Groups analyze a primary source from the exhibition's arc—a speech, legislation, or image—and present a two-minute argument connecting its historical moment to a contemporary civic question of their choosing.

5 Individual closing reflection 15 minutes

Students respond individually to the exhibition's framing question: What does democracy ask of you? Written responses kept private. Students leave with the question, not an answer.

INDIANA SKILLS + STANDARDS

SOCIAL STUDIES

SS.US.H.1: Foundations of American democracy

SS.US.H.6: Civil rights causes and consequences

SS.Gov.1: Constitutional principles

SS.Gov.4: Rights and roles of citizens

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELA.11-12.SL.1: Collaborative deliberation

ELA.11-12.W.1: Evidence-based argument

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SEL.B1: Perspective-taking

SEL.D1: Civic responsibility

SEL.C1: Cooperative communication

LOGISTICS

ACCESSIBILITY

Campus and exhibition space are fully accessible. Note any specific needs when submitting your inquiry.

OUTDOOR WALK

No required outdoor element for this path. Outdoor space available for lunch or informal time between activities.

MEALS

Not provided. Groups may bring a packed lunch; outdoor space available subject to availability.

Book a visit.

[PRINDLEINSTITUTE.ORG/FIELDTRIPS](https://prindleinstitute.org/fieldtrips) →