

Democracy in Practice

GRADES

7-8

DURATION

3 hours

GROUP SIZE

10-30 students

IDEAL FOR

Civics, social studies, ELA, advisory

This path is designed for students ready to wrestle with genuine disagreement. Drawing on the Prindle Institute's civil disagreement expertise and the exhibition's full arc, students move from the founding debates through contemporary civic life and practice the skills democracy actually requires.

LEARNING GOALS

- Identify and articulate the values in tension in contested civic questions, drawing on evidence from the exhibition
- Practice structured dialogue across genuine disagreement, listening actively and responding to the strongest version of opposing views
- Connect the founding debates over democratic participation to reform movements and contemporary civic questions
- Articulate a personal civic identity: what democracy asks of them, and what they are willing to ask of it

PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS

No pre-reading required, but students should come ready to disagree: respectfully and on purpose. Before your visit, consider asking: What's a question about democracy or government where reasonable people disagree? What does it mean to change your mind? If your class has been studying the Constitution, civil rights, or current events, share that context with us at inquiry. We'll build the facilitation around it.

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

Students arrive and establish shared norms for civil disagreement. Central question introduced: What does democracy actually ask of us, not in theory, but in practice?

2 Dialogue exercise 30 minutes

Students engage in a facilitated structured dialogue on a contested civic question drawn from the exhibition. The exercise is designed around the Prindle Institute's civil disagreement work: listening first, claiming second, reasoning throughout.

3 Guided exhibition experience 60 minutes

Facilitated walk through all six sections of the exhibition, with extended stops at the founding debates, the history of voting rights, and the contemporary sections. Includes "Head to Head" and "Where Do You Stand?" from American Experiments.

4 Question Machine and debrief 20 minutes

Students interact with the Question Machine interactive, generating and responding to questions that surface the values underlying their positions. Small-group debrief connects threads from the day.

5 Journal and closing reflection 15 minutes

Students respond individually to a closing prompt: What's one thing you believed coming in that the day complicated? What's one question you're leaving with? Responses kept private; optional sharing to close.

INDIANA SKILLS + STANDARDS

SOCIAL STUDIES

SS.7.CG.1: Constitutional rights and protections
SS.8.H.4: Causes and effects of reform movements

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELA.7.SL.3: Evaluating speakers' reasoning
ELA.8.SL.1: Collaborative discussion, argument

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SEL.B1: Perspective-taking
SEL.C1: Cooperative communication

SEL.D1: Civic responsibility

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.

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