

Are “We the People” Represented in American Political Parties?

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Introduction

The United States’ recent political climate is a tense one to say the least. The polarization of both political parties is evident in nearly every instance of an American citizen’s life. This polarization hasn’t necessarily formed over night. American political parties could (and in many cases do) serve some really important functions. For example, these parties have served as rallying points for many Americans, a place where ideas can blossom and spread and a rich dialogue to take place in the country¹. In the US, a two party system has emerged, where the parties worked for their base and the American public. In many instances, politicians for both Democrats and Republicans would “reach across the aisle” and work (and indeed play) with members from the opposing side on matters of government and social recreation. But the recent polarization of the parties has made this consensus working and compromise difficult to obtain.

There are many culprits of this political incivility cited by political scientists. The changing social issues of the nation are a leading reason. It is difficult to be “in-between” on the subjects of gay-marriage, the right to access to abortion, and other political minefields. Another cause can be attributed to the immediate access to current events that people have such as twitter, facebook and social networking. It is easy to hear a reaction to an event or speech within seconds of the person hearing it. But this is a momentary reaction, not a reflective, processed thought. Yet, the mass public consumes these as hard facts which tend to reinforce already perceived notions. Along this same line are the cable TV news programs. In order to get ratings, there has to be some “action,” and this often comes from pundits yelling loudly about how the other side is wrong. Other recent political maneuvers such as the gerrymandering of districted consolidated in to “party rich” areas where there is little differentiation of thought. All these causes have led to the polarization of America.²

This was reflected in the dramatization of the recent referendum on Wisconsin’s Republican governor, Scott Walker. In talking with relatives who have lived in Wisconsin and listening to interviews on NPR³, the good citizens of Wisconsin were deeply divided on this issue, and Scott Walker’s actions taken in the state. In 2011, Walker proposed the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill that sought to save Wisconsin nearly \$300 million over the next 30 years. To do this, Walker proposed that state and local government employees contribute more of their own money to health care plans. In

addition, this proposal limited collective bargaining rights of unions to adjust wages. This proposal passed the state's legislature. There were many who were deeply unhappy about this measure and so, gathered enough votes to hold a recall election on Scott Walker.

This event sparked a feud that challenged family members, divided churches, and separated friends. Many spoke that they were afraid to bring the subject up, afraid to let their voices be heard on the issue, lest it turn in to an hour's long debate. Others were adamant that their voices be heard, on both sides of the issue. Some traversed back and forth to protest before the court house steps every day. In days leading up to the day of the referendum the fight seemed to embody the mood the country.

And yet, Wisconsin was just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. Throughout the country, many are deeply divided over issues of fiscal responsibility, social opportunity and military involvement. And this is just in the chambers of Congress. It is a time in politics where a Congress person's "reaching across the aisle" and bipartisanship seems to be put aside in favor of partisan politics. Where the question, "what's good for the party?" seems to outweigh and replace the question of "what's in the best interest of the nation?" This is directly embodied in the debt ceiling crisis of 2011. In US law, an administration can only spend money on programs for which it has sufficient funds. This money comes from either tax dollar revenues or by borrowing from the US Department of the Treasury. Congress has the power to control the debt ceiling and for an administration to continue to spend, Congress has to raise the debt ceiling. In 2011, Congress, indeed mainly the House of Representatives, held up the raising of the debt ceiling. There were negotiations and neither side seemed willing to "blink" lest they look weak to the American public. The effects of this damaging debacle was further polarization of the political parties and a down grade of the US credit by Standard and Poor, the first for the United States in its history.⁴

As I reflect on the instances of this polarization, it makes me wonder what a Henry Clay or a Daniel Webster would think of the scandal where the United States' government nearly went in to default due to the gridlock in Congress. Granted, Clay's compromises effectively sanctioned the institution of slavery to exist in the United States for several more decades, but it prolonged the time period before the Civil War that at the end of it recognized the prohibition of slavery and continued the struggle in providing a "more perfect union." Without this important time period in-between, the outcome of the conflict might have not been as successful. The "old lights" as Clay and his contemporaries in Congress were known as were compromisers, but it was their adherence to compromise helped to forge the foundations that this nation was built upon.⁵

If today's Congress, is a place where turmoil is the recipe of the day, then the individual citizen's home is the incubator for these ideas to become reality. Where the polarization can be solidified and the "other" vilified, leaving little room to understand the other side's argument and statues. And, as any social studies teacher knows, a student

typically brings in his/her parent's view on politics in to the classroom. This is not a new phenomenon. As Edward Greenberg notes, most regimes in history have noted the benefit of educating children in civic duty. This not only helps children have a sense of belonging, but also encourages that the said nation will endure. One noted difference between American civic education and that of others, is that the government does not sponsor the civic training, but it is left up to the parents in the homes to encourage and ensure that this is done. In this way, American parents refrain from Soviet-style brainwashing. What this can lead to, however, is the wide variety of ideologies present in a classroom.⁶

In these tumultuous and trying times, it can be a bit of a nightmare to navigate discussion of political parties in the classroom. I give the example from my class the other day. I assign students to present on current events that have taken place over the course of the last few days. The basic assignment requires the student to find a local, national, and international story that has relevance and relate its implications to the class and facilitate discussion amongst peers. One particular student decided to discuss the 2012 United States presidential candidates' views on tax plans. The presentation was going well, until the fatal question, "Which side do you guys agree with?" came out of the presenter's mouth. There was a tense silence and nervous giggles from his classmates as I hurriedly sought a good transition away from the topic. The students, to their credit, came up with humorous and non-committal answers that delved in to the issues regarding the tax plans and brought up some good questions that I would like to the candidates answer in a debate.

But this silence and the nervousness that permeated it, indicates the challenge that teachers struggle with in the classroom. How does one discuss current political philosophy in a public school room? How does a teacher encourage a student to reflect on his/her own beliefs, separate from the parent without giving the perception, even though it is not the intent, that the parent's views are misinformed? And to what extent can the teacher encourage the student to question both political parties in the United States and their beliefs? Can the relevance of political parties even be questioned?

The history of political parties is on the history teacher's side in this case. While the American system of democracy has developed a two party system, the two political parties that are in existence today have not always been the dominate forces. In fact, one political party was indeed the third party that forced its way in through conflict and eventual resolution. For example, the modern day Republican Party was, at its roots, a third party. In the turbulent 1850s, where civil war loomed in the distance, many political parties started to address the contemporary social issues. While the two major parties, the Whigs and Democrats tried desperately to provide solutions for the divisive issues of slavery, states' rights and internal improvements, third parties continued to erupt such as the Free Soil party. Their aim was to keep all newly acquired territories slave free. And, as all this turbulence dominated the national discussion, it was the 1860 election where a

fairly brand new political party called the Republicans won the national election with Abraham Lincoln as their candidate. Lincoln's election was the catalyst of South Carolina's decision to secede from the Union and helped to start the Civil War, even though he was against the expansion of slavery and promised to leave slavery alone where it existed. Yet, though this conflict, it was the Republican Party lasted and the Whig party naturally declined. Why was this? Was it due to the fact that another party was needed to provide a dialogue in the country? ⁷

Political parties were formed in the United States due to divisive factors that separated the American people almost since their inception. What was too much government? What was the government allowed to do? Hamilton and Jefferson, the founders of these first political parties, took varying viewpoints on these essential questions. Yet, both of these men were integral in the formation of the Constitution of the United States. Regardless of whether their hands actually penned the words or not, their ideas, their spirit and philosophies helped to guide the men who wrote the document to guarantee that people would be, "forever free." The development then, of these political parties, was in alignment with policies that would help to reinforce the document itself, and protect the government of the United States. The political parties were in effect, designed by an interpretation of how the written Constitution should be executed. Alexander Hamilton took the view that if something wasn't specifically prohibited in the Constitution; it meant that the action could be taken. He used this as justification for his Economic Proposal in which he called for a National Bank of the United States. Jefferson on the other hand, believed that if something wasn't specifically designated in the Constitution, then it was prohibited. Therefore, by his reasoning, there was no mention of the US government sponsoring a bank which made it unconstitutional for Hamilton's plan to be enacted⁸.

The Constitution was written in order to outline the great experiment of democracy; to ensure that Americans adhered to the policies set forth, that no king could disabuse a man's individual rights. In effect, the Constitution was written to provide "we the people" with an explanation of his rights. So, theoretically, political parties developed as a favorable interpretation of the Constitution for the constituents of that party.

Throughout the following pages, I have assembled a lesson plan that will delve in to the question of whether or not political parties have (and do) represent "we the people." It will take students on a journey of analyzing primary source documents, where they will have to ponder the question of, "who is represented in "we the people," and evaluate if political parties are the right forum for the people's voice to be heard.

Rationale

Today I find that students are nervous to discuss politics, and when they do often do not cite accurate facts to support their point. To this end, I intent for this unit of study to provide students with a deeper understanding of the political history of our country in

order to enable them to discuss the current issues better. Also this unit of study will provide students with accurate facts and primary sources to help them feel more comfortable discussing their opinion and more informed global citizens. Through this unit of study, students can explore ways to feel more comfortable discussing problems and issues that may directly oppose others' opinions.

Through this unit, students will be required to read, analyze and hypothesize using 21st century skills as well as meet Common Core standards.

At times, political parties can seem a bit daunting and “disconnected” from the “happenings” of history. My goal and intent is for these lessons to incorporate and include political with social history and have students evaluate if “we the people” were represented in the particular party platform culminating in student’s assessment of political parties as a whole.

Background

Independence High school is a secondary high school serving students from 9th to 12th grades. It is located in suburban Charlotte, North Carolina and is a part of the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system. The school system is the second largest in the nation and the nineteenth largest in the United States.⁹

Independence has undergone some significant changes in the last few years. When I first started teaching at the school, it was a high poverty, high minority, low socio-economic school that was at one point and time in its history considered a “failing” school, where gang activity was noted, though not always a threat. There was a wide variety of demographics of students who, despite the troubles of the school, interacted with eagerness and there was little racial hostility. Through concentrated efforts and hard work of its principals and faculty, the school saw great successes in raising test scores and watching children succeed. Students’ pass rate on EOC’s went from 40% to 86% in just four years.

Through the recent rezoning of school boundaries in part due to the opening of new schools, my school has changed in its socio-economic status. It still boasts a wide variety of demographics of students who engage enthusiastically to understand one another’s background. There are still a large amount of students who have little experience outside of their own community.

The teachers at my school are divided by departments based upon subjects, and are then subdivided in to Professional Learning Communities by specific content area where teachers plan and review data to drive instruction. Classes are differentiated by offering standard level, honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Technology is used throughout the school. The majority of teachers have Promethean Boards that are used to enhance teaching and learning opportunities.

I am one of fifteen Social Studies teachers in the Social Studies department and one of four United States history teachers in my Professional Learning Community. I am the only teacher who has an Advanced Placement United States History course. I align my courses the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and incorporate the literacy strategies of the Common Core standards.

The Advanced Placement United States History course derives its curriculum from the College Board. The students who participate in the AP course are eligible to take an exam in May that will determine their eligibility to waive the introductory United States History course at some colleges. This is a rigorous three hour test consisting of a multiple choice section, a document-based essay and two free response essays.

Content Objectives

This curriculum unit of study will fit in to my Advanced Placement United States History course. It will serve as a cumulative unit, where students can utilize tools and skills learned throughout the course. Students will engage in the use of analytical skills they peruse primary documents, argumentative writing skills as well as use their content knowledge to defend their positions. This curriculum unit will cover the objectives set forth by the College Board and Department of Instruction for North Carolina.

I also want my students to gain a confidence of facts for when they talk to people about political parties. With the increased polarization of the political parties, it becomes difficult to discuss the relevance or even the efficacy of the current political parties. Through this curriculum unit of study, it is my hope that the students will feel more confident and have a vernacular in which to speak of political parties. It is my hope that through this unit of study that cooler heads will prevail, and the beginning of political civility can start with this generation.

Teaching Strategies

APPARTS

Students will be required to analyze some primary sources as a part of this unit. Students will use the APPARTS model when given primary documents. This acronym stands for the documents' author(s), place(s) and time, prior knowledge, audience, reason(s), the main idea(s) and significance. By using this particular strategy, students will be able better understand the inherent meanings behind the documents and further their skills towards analysis. For example, students will begin by analyzing selected parts of *The Constitution* and *The Declaration of Independence*. In using these two documents,

students will have to read to discover who authored each piece. As the students read both of these pieces, the students discover that both the *Constitution* and *Declaration* were written by one man, but approved by many. Students will analyze the meaning behind having multiple authors and their opinions reflected in one document. Students will continue this method for the documents by analyzing the place and time that the documents were written. For example, is it important the *Declaration* was written when it was? The students will have to consider and grapple in determining the audience each document was intended to reach. For example, students will evaluate if the intended audience of the *Declaration* was indeed the King of England.¹⁰ This strategy will help the students delve more deeply in to the text and to understand the inherent meanings behind each of the pieces, as well as evaluate what the document indicates about today's society.

Socratic Seminar

Another strategy that students will utilize is the Socratic seminar. This strategy is where students should value discussion over debate in using a series of questions to explore a topic. All students should participate in this discussion. This strategy requires that students and the teacher all be sitting in a circle. Every participant should be able to see each other. The teacher's role in this is to act only as a facilitator and only ask questions, rather than tell students information. Prior to this activity, students are required to have done background reading and bring with them points that they wish to discuss. Teachers can help students prepare for this activity by helping students to draft their own questions and thoughts regarding the topics. The hope of the outcome of this strategy is that it is a student-driven discussion and students get a better sense of the material presented before them. This activity can be difficult for teachers, as it really requires a hands-off role. This activity is usually used in the middle or end of a unit plan.

Collaborative Groups

An additional strategy that students will be required to utilize is for students to work in collaborative groups. This strategy reflects the 21st century skills, encouraging the students to collaborate to solve or discuss a relevant solution to problems presented. This is where teachers purposefully pair students with the intent to match their skills and abilities. This can happen in multiple ways with the students choosing their own partners or at the teacher's discretion. Most generally, I like the strategy where the teacher assigns the groups. This ensures that all skills and abilities are match appropriately. As students work together, it will force them to use 21st century global competency skills that require collaboration, effective speaking and writing skills to enhance communication through the entire group.

Research

Students will also need to use their research skills in order to complete this unit. This will require students to use the internet to evaluate sources for accuracy and change this information into workable data to be used for their presentations. This is a strategy that will require teachers to ensure that students are able to evaluate web-based sources for their accuracy and authenticity. This strategy will encourage the development of 21st century global skills for students.

Debate

Students will also be required to use the debate strategy. This requires students to take a position and use evidence and rationale to defend their points. In this particular unit of study, I would make the students argue from a partisan perspective. Students will be assigned a particular view point, regardless if it is one they personally identify with. This will help the students to view the other side and practice defending beliefs with facts and rationalization.

Position Paper

Students will also be required to produce a one page position paper. This strategy will allow students to express their own opinions, but practice putting their opinions in writing with facts. Students will need to provide evidence for their opinions from documents and background information read. This strategy will help to support the Common Core goals and help students to continue toward 21st century global skills mastery.

Classroom Activities

Introduction

It is helpful to note that I intend for the students to complete the unit of study after they have taken their AP exam. Due to the schedule of the exam and the end of the school year, there is a gap of approximately three weeks. Students will approach this unit of study with some prior knowledge of the documents and events that will be discussed.

Day One

The students will begin their inquiry into the unit by reading *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Constitution of the United States*. In order to do this, the students will use the APPARTS strategy to identify the meaning and significance behind the documents. Students will then work in pairs to identify the commonalities between the history of the time period and the actual documents themselves. Using this knowledge students will then work in groups and engage in rewriting sections of the Constitution to fit today's society. Students will have to make connections between the wants of the people in the 1700s, and that of today's population.

Some of the enduring questions that students will have to consider:

- What is the role of government?
- What role should political parties play in developing laws and standards that the government should follow?
- What is the role of the central government?
- What are the powers left to the state governments?
- What should the president be allowed to do? To not do?

The students will read all of *The Declaration of Independence* and answer the above questions. Students will do this by working in collaborative groups established by the teacher. They will identify if there are any enduring thoughts or questions that still apply to the United States today, even though this document was written prior to the establishment of the government of the United States. They will be prepared to discuss and explain their findings.

The students will read selected sections of *The Constitution* including *The Preamble*, *Article I, Section VII—Method of Making Law*; *Article I, Section IX—Powers Denied to the Federal government*; *Article II, Section II—Powers of the President*; *Article II, Section III—Other Powers and Duties of the President*. Students will focus on these portions of *The Constitution* because these sections discuss what the US government *cannot* do and the powers that *can* occur. I want students to come to a consensus to answer the following questions:

- What is the role of the central government?
- Why are certain powers denied to the Federal government? Why are certain powers denied to the States?
- What is the role of the executive? What does this indicate about the American people? (hint: think historical significance)
- What do each of these sections indicate about the American character at the time it was written?

By analyzing these sections of the aforementioned documents, students will be able to have prior information to discuss the development of the first two American political parties.

At the end of the lesson, students should have written answers to the above questions. Each of these questions should be answered in complete sentences and use evidence with in-text citations. This lesson plan establishes information that students will need for subsequent lessons.

Days Two and Three

In the next segment of the lesson, students will participate in a Socratic seminar, utilizing the information that they have learned throughout the class and in the previous lesson. In this Socratic seminar, students will follow the rules set forth by the instructor and utilize

the notes from the previous activities. The subject of this Socratic seminar will focus upon the definition and subject of the “We the people” mentioned in the Constitution. The students will be expected to cite specific references to *The Constitution*. This Socratic seminar will then be guided to ask if “we the people” of today are still represented by the *Constitution*. As always, students will be expected to provide evidence for their opinions.

The beginning question that the teacher will ask students to answer is, “What did the framers of *The Constitution* mean when they cited “We the People?” Students will then take turns sharing out what they meant. The teacher will act as the facilitator to ensure the conversation comes to a decision, with the ultimate question that the teacher asks being, “Are ‘*We the People*’ represented in the formation of the government? Where and how do you see this exemplified in the founding documents?” This discussion should take no less than 15 minutes and no more than 30 minutes.

This will be followed by an analysis of the origins of political parties in the United States. It will require students to read basic background information on Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson and the formation of their beliefs on what would constitute a good government for the people. This information will be read in collaborative groups where students will prepare their “sides” for a skit. The skit will consist of one of the group members “acting” as if her/she were Hamilton and the other as if he/she were Jefferson. Each side will have opportunities to formulate questions for the other side. This will most likely take a significant portion of one of the class days as it will require the students to conduct research and to create a line of questioning for the other group.

Once the students are prepared for the skit, one student will be selected to be a moderator and ask a series of questions related to the formation of American political parties of each “gentleman.” The other students will engage in note taking, ensuring that they can comprehend both sides that are presented.

The teacher will wrap up this segment of the lesson by checking for understanding from the students in verbal questioning. The teacher will then instruct students to write a one page position paper explaining if their viewpoints of *The Constitution* more closely align with Hamilton or Jefferson. The students will be expected to use historical facts and evidence from the text to support their opinions. This paper will be collected during the next class. This segment of the lesson will end with students writing a one page paper, if they believed that Hamilton or Jefferson’s ideas were the right ones to follow for the newly formed government, and if the political party represented the people.

Day Four

The next part of the unit will evaluate the formation of Jacksonian Democracy and require students to conduct individual research. Students will be required to research the

evolution of the “common man” with the ascendancy of Jackson to the presidency and evaluate if the political parties at the time actually reflected the common man. The study of Jackson will lead to students in the study of patronage and how political parties dealt with individual people and not just elections. This brand of democracy changed how political parties functioned in American society and establish precedents that still, in some form or other, exist today. In order to do this, students will analyze primary sources from Jackson to understand the “common man.” Students will then analyze the platform for both the National Republicans and the Jacksonian Democrats in the election 1828. From this, students will be able to evaluate if this was truly a reflection of the average citizen¹¹.

Students will do this by completing a web quest. The students will be directed to research the election results of 1824 and 1828 and explain the corrupt bargain. Students will be directed to read primary accounts from Jackson’s Inauguration¹². They will need to research the beginning of the spoils system, the Peggy Eaton Affair, Tariff of 1828 and the Nullification Crisis, Maysville Road Bill, Indian Removal Act of 1830, and *Worcester v. Georgia*.

As the students conduct they will examine the following primary sources:

- “Trail of Tears” painting by Robert Lindeux¹³
- Map of Indian Removal¹⁴
- “King Andrew” Cartoon¹⁵

At the end of this research, the teacher will lead the students in a discussion, covering the following essential questions:

- Did Jackson’s presidency usher in the era of the “common man?”
- How did Jackson change the role of the political party? Did doing so increase political participation?
- How did Jackson’s presidency reflect what was in *The Constitution* as a guarantee for “*We the People*?”

Day Five

Students will continue their inquiry into “We the People” by analyzing the 1860 Democrat and Republican conventions. Students will be reminded of the turmoil the country was in on the eve of the Civil War. Through the analysis of these political party platforms, students will be required to justify if the parties accurately reflected the will of the people. Some questions that students should consider: Was the Civil War inevitable? Did the average person wish to go to war? To what extent did the political parties at the time represent the correct views of the people?

To culminate this activity, the students will write a “letter to the editor” of a simulated newspaper during the 1860s. In this letter, the student will use persuasive writing to try to convince that newspaper one which candidate the newspaper should endorse and for what reasons. The students will have to use historical evidence and cite the happenings of the Republican or Democrat conventions and their platforms in the letter, referencing which political party better represented the people of the day.

Day Six

In the next section of the unit, students will be assigned to work with a group and will be assigned a specific political party and convention year. With their partner, they will research to conduct a presentation in front of the class. In this presentation, students will explore the platform of the party and connect it with the popular mindset of the day. In order to do this, students will look at old newspaper or magazines to get an understanding for and understand what the “common man” might have experienced during that time period. They analyze the economy of the time period, looking in to layoffs, inflation and outsourcing. In addition, the social movements of the time period should be taken in to consideration when evaluating if the political party accurately reflected the people of the time period. The students who are presenting should take in to consideration if the party’s platform truly represented the people during that time period. They should also evaluate if the party which was elected to the presidency accurately reflected that of the people during this time period. Students will use the information from these presentations in their culminating activity.

The elections that the students will analyze will be as follows:

- The Election of 1848
- The Election of 1960
- The Election of 1980
- The Election of 1992

Day Seven

Students will continue their exploration of political parties and the representation of the people through the analysis of the 2012 political platforms for the Republican and Democrat and third parties. The third parties will include the Tea Party movement and the Libertarian platform. Students will conduct this research on their own, compiling their notes. They will utilize the skills enhanced and developed throughout the curriculum unit. The teacher will guide students through an analysis of current third party platforms. This should take approximately half the class.

Once students have analyzed the platforms, the class will participate in another Socratic seminar. The teacher will again act as facilitator with only questions being allowed on his/her behalf. Students will use this time to discuss whether they believe the two current political parties accurately reflect the will of the people in today's society. In the discussion, the students should reference historical anecdotes and the development of political parties in American society. This should not devolve in to a debate about the beliefs of the political parties, but rather a discussion about whether the parties accurately reflect the will of the people.

At the end of the discussion, students will be instructed to formulate an argumentative essay on their beliefs as to whether political parties are the accurate platforms for representing "we the people." In these essays, students should use historical information, and evidence to back up the claims used in the paper. This paper will be graded via a rubric.

Annotated Resources

For Teachers

The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, "CIRCLE." Accessed November 25, 2012. <http://www.civicyouth.org/>.

This particular website provides analysis of past elections, quick facts and featured research on youth voting. It provides the research in a variety of methods from graphs and charts to reports and journal articles.

"Declaration of Independence," *The History Channel website*, <http://www.history.com/topics/declaration-of-independence> (accessed Nov 25, 2012).

The Declaration of Independence was written by the nation's founders and provides historical reasons for the creation of the United States. It claims to have been created to help provide the people with a more appropriate form of government, and still stands as a legal document today in the United States.

Edward S. Greenberg, *Consensus and Dissent Trends in Political Socialization Research*, (Transaction Publishers, 2009).

Greenberg studies the relevance of political socialization and explores how children inherit their political orientation.

Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. "The Mindsets of Political Compromise." *Perspectives on Politics*. 8. no. 04 (2010): 1125-1143. www.upenn.edu/president/meet-president/Mindsets-political-Compromise (accessed November 25, 2012).

Gutmann and Thompson acknowledge that political compromise is difficult to achieve in the current political climate. They do however, reason, that compromise is necessary and explore what it would take for the current American politicians to achieve it.

David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant A History of the Republic Thirteenth Edition*, (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006)

This text is a good overview of American history. It provides detailed descriptions on the issues in the foundations of the United States. Considered largely as an overview text, it is a good source to reference or use as a beginning text.

Maclay, Kathleen. "Disrespect in politics: Is civility possible?" *Newscenter Berkeley*. . <http://newscenter.berkeley.edu/2012/07/13/disrespect-in-politis-is-civility-possible> (accessed November 25, 2012).

Maclay questions civility in American politics and political parties.

Thomas E. Mann, and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse than It Looks How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

Mann and Ornstein have published this work very recently in which it describes the increased polarization of the current American political parties. The authors give detailed insight in to the reasons which have led to this polarization and provide potential solutions to reduce this political polarization.

Memmott, Mark. "Wisconsin Recall Elections Set for June." *NPR*, March 30, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/03/30/149689519/wisconsin-recall-elections-set-for-june> (accessed November 25, 2012).

This article provides insightful understandings of the reasons for the recall on the Wisconsin governor.

U.S. Constitution

This is the founding legal document for the United States. It is still referenced today and is the legal code which Americans follow. It was drafted after the failure of the Articles of Confederation, and can be amended to follow the changing time period.

For Students

“Declaration of Independence,” *The History Channel website*, <http://www.history.com/topics/declaration-of-independence> (accessed Nov 25, 2012).

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Memmott, Mark. "Wisconsin Recall Elections Set for June." *NPR*, March 30, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/03/30/149689519/wisconsin-recall-elections-set-for-june> (accessed November 25, 2012).

This article provides insightful understandings of the reasons for the recall on the Wisconsin governor.

U.S. Constitution

This is the founding legal document for the United States. It is still referenced today and is the legal code which Americans follow. It was drafted after the failure of the Articles of Confederation, and can be amended to follow the changing time period.

For Classroom Use

Democratic Party, Accessed November 25, 2012. <http://www.democrats.org/democratic-national-platform>.

This is the Democratic Political party platform from the 2012 election. It will come in useful during the last stage of the curriculum unit.

Fact Check, Accessed November 25, 2012. www.factcheck.org.

A great resource for students and teachers alike as it provides an avenue to check the facts of statements.

NY Times, "Past Convention Coverage." Accessed November 25, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/library/politics/camp/whouse/convention-ra.html>.

This website provides links to past convention coverage and has links to the political platforms of past political parties. It will be a very useful resource during the research phase of the unit.

PBS, "We Shall Remain, Trail of Tears." Accessed November 25, 2012. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the_films/episode_3_trailer.

This resource provides primary source documents on Andrew Jackson and the consequences of his actions within his political party.

Pew Research Center, Accessed November 25, 2012. <http://pewresearch.org/>.

This website provides a wealth of information in the form of articles, graphs and charts on past and current elections as well as politics. It will be useful for students and teachers as they conduct their research.

Republican Platform 2012, Accessed November 25, 2012. http://www.gop.com/2012-republican-platform_home/.

Listed here is the current Republican Party platform for the 2012 election.

Notes

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- ² Thomas E. Mann, and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse than It Looks How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2012), chap. 5.
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- ⁷ David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant A History of the Republic Thirteenth Edition*, (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), A29-A31.
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- ¹⁴ Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, "Map of Indian Removal." Accessed November 25, 2012. http://www.pccua.edu/keough/trail_of_tears.htm.
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