We have two new items for your use: Colonial America Primary Source Set which is great for those teaching early U.S. history and a 5th Grade Resource List for Social Studies. This resource list is not complete but will be completed to cover the full scope of the 5th grade standards. A big THANK YOU to Suzanne Costner from Blount County for her work on the elementary resource lists!

After many requests for materials focused on the Trail of Tears, we now have a lesson plan exploring Cherokee removal and the Trail of Tears. This lesson plan includes a PowerPoint and additional background readings for teachers. A special thanks goes out to the Center’s Trail of Tears Project Historian and former TPS-MTSU GRA Amy Kostine for her contributions to this lesson plan.

**“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:**

**THEME: VOTING RIGHTS**

The expansion of voting rights to more and more people in the United States reflects the growth and evolution of democracy, as well as a broadening of the concept of who the “we” is in “we the people.” When those words were penned in 1787, “we” referred only to white, male landowners. Today, 240 years later, “we” includes all male and female citizens, regardless of race or economic status.

Read more about this development in our special guest article, "Forming a More Perfect Union Requires That We Vote," on p. 2, courtesy of Dr. Mary Evins of the American Democracy Project. You will also learn more about attitudes towards extending the vote to African Americans, women, and American Indians in the lesson ideas on p. 3.
Who and what constitute American citizenship is at the core of our national identity. The clearest manifestation of national identity, consciousness, and purpose is whom we legally codify as eligible to be doing the electing of the president and other officials. Expansion of access to the ballot throughout the course of U.S. history marks a bending of the moral universe toward justice. With, however, some significant setbacks.

It’s axiomatic that landowning white male elites, the ones who wrote the U.S. Constitution, were primarily the only ones allowed to vote in Early Republic America, as they had during colonial days. But beginning as soon as 1792, the requirement of landownership as a prerequisite for the franchise began to be lifted, state by state, initially in New Hampshire, and then completely by 1856 when North Carolina became the final state to remove property ownership as a qualification for voting.

At the founding of the country, in several northern states, free black men could vote, but the privilege, along with citizenship once held, was undermined by law across regional jurisdictions. The 1790 Naturalization Act passed by Congress defined citizenship as available only to free whites. If there was no citizenship, there was no vote. More than sixty years later, the 1857 Dred Scott ruling hammered home that principle, stating explicitly that a free black man was not a U.S. citizen and therefore had no rights. Justice Benjamin Curtis’s lengthy dissenting opinion, in which he cited the Articles of Confederation, asserted that free people of color had been citizens before the Constitution, under the Constitution itself, and in all the years thereafter.

Following Dred Scott, in 1860, a number of New England states permitted black men to vote. The 1866 Civil Rights Act granted citizenship and rights to all male persons without distinction of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The 1868 Fourteenth Amendment added African American citizenship permanently to the Constitution, while the 1870 Fifteenth Amendment stated unequivocally the right of citizens to vote would not be abridged in the U.S. on account of race.

Citizenship and voting for Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, and so many other ethnic groups were controlled and stingily doled out piecemeal in local, state, and federal actions across time. Native American citizenship was not fully guaranteed under after World War I in the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo broadly promised citizenship to Mexicans when the Southwest was absorbed into the United States, but racist restrictions kept the vote away from most Hispanics for over a hundred years. The Chinese Exclusion Act pointedly forbade Chinese American citizenship in 1882, but because they were the “good” Asians at the time of World War II, Chinese could be naturalized when the exclusion acts were repealed in 1943.

Our state’s historic role as the 36th legislature to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment put Tennessee in the national limelight when our General Assembly passed the amendment on August 18, 1920, fulfilling Article V of the Constitution and guaranteeing women’s vote across the country. That southern states had been a tough sell for voting rights for women—only Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky, and West Virginia had ratified in the South prior to Tennessee—is not especially unanticipated. More surprising were the progressive northern states of Connecticut, Vermont, and Delaware that had not already ratified by summer 1920.

Forming a more perfect union has meant that many sectors of our society have had to struggle mightily to be recognized as part of “we the people” to vote. Eighteen-year-olds were brought into the electorate in 1971 with the Twenty-sixth Amendment. Obstacles that have to be breached include eliminating poll taxes, in the Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964); establishing electors for Washington, D.C., residents to be able to participate in presidential elections, in the Twenty-third Amendment (1961); literacy testing banned in the Voting Rights Act of 1965; correcting barriers to access for individuals with physical limitations mandated in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. And so many more assaults on citizens’ voting rights have had to be challenged.

The fight to vote is dependent on the voters—to vote, to access their right and privilege, and to use their vote build a society of liberty and justice for all of us. The fight to vote is equally dependent on the voters to proactively protect the franchise for their fellow citizens under threat. Citizenship is so much more than voting, but voting is the very cornerstone of citizenship. In Tennessee, registration to vote on November 8th ends October 11th. If you are not yet registered, do it now. Early voting starts October 19th. See you at the polls.
Lesson Idea—Voting Rights, According to Alexander Graham Bell

Alexander Graham Bell is best known for inventing the telephone, but he also developed methods to teach the deaf, worked towards the development of mechanical flight, dabbled in eugenics, improved Edison’s phonograph for the consumer market, and tried to extract the fatal bullet from President Garfield’s body. Curious about everything, he also had plenty to say about the situation of voting rights at the turn of the 20th century. He discusses his views on women’s suffrage and African American suffrage in a letter to his wife, Mabel Hubbard Bell, in 1901. Mabel—who was extremely intelligent, well educated, and deaf from the age of five—was her husband’s most trusted confidante, as the abundant collection of letters between the two attests.

Print out student copies of a letter from “Alec” to Mabel, dated March 28, 1901, and have students read the letter in pairs. (If you are pressed for time, have them read just to the middle of page 5.) What does Alexander think about women’s right to vote? What about African Americans’ right to vote? What is the role of education in determining voting rights? What about democracy? What does he mean when he compares the right to vote to the right to own a gun? After discussing the letter in pairs, students should complete this worksheet that exercises their ability to detect evidence-supported arguments.

Discuss student answers together as a class. What can you deduce about Mabel’s thoughts on suffrage from her husband’s response? Which of them seems more in favor of women’s right to vote? Do their views surprise you? In what ways are they representative of sentiment in 1901? In what ways are their views progressive?

This lesson idea meets state standards for high school U.S. History & Geography (US.6 & 18) and English Language Arts (Informational Text: Craft & Structure).

Lesson Idea—Citizenship for American Indians

The ability to vote has long been associated with citizenship, resulting in intense debates over who is a citizen. American Indians were one such group who found themselves on the periphery of American citizenship, unable to vote because they were not considered citizens of the United States. It would not be until June 2, 1924, that American Indians gained the right to vote. Even after gaining the right to vote, however, American Indians continued to be the objects of discrimination.

This is a great chance to use the Socratic seminar method, in which your students drive the conversation while you act as moderator. Have your students gather around in one big circle or smaller circles, depending on preference and size of the classroom. Select sources from the list below. Pair these sources with the analysis sheet for a grade. Develop guiding questions about the sources and about voting rights/citizenship. Make sure that your questions scaffold learning and are not close-ended. You can use the following questions as examples: How do you define citizenship? What are the requirements for being an American citizen? Why were American Indians not considered citizens before 1924? In what ways do voting rights include/exclude people in the democratic process? How does one determine who should be allowed to vote, and who gets to decide? Why is voting linked so closely to citizenship?

This lesson idea meets state standards for high school U.S. History & Geography (U.S. 39) and English Language Arts (Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details).

"Move On!" Has the Native American no rights that the naturalized American is bound to respect? / / Th. Nast. [1871]

"Move on!" Has the Native American no rights that the naturalized American is bound to re-
spect? / / Th. Nast. [1871]
Lowering the Voting Age

As the Declaration of Independence was being written, Benjamin Franklin and others were also working to write a state constitution. Pennsylvania opted to make tax payment and residency a requirement for voting eligibility rather than property ownership, as many other states did during this period. Why might this be an important distinction? What other key words can students identify in this passage that limit voting rights? Have your students research to find what other states opted for similar requirements.

Pennsylvania Constitution

As the Declaration of Independence was being written, Benjamin Franklin and others were also working to write a state constitution. Pennsylvania opted to make tax payment and residency a requirement for voting eligibility rather than property ownership, as many other states did during this period. Why might this be an important distinction? What other key words can students identify in this passage that limit voting rights? Have your students research to find what other states opted for similar requirements.

“Walls came tumbling down”

This cartoon by Herb Block depicts a crowd carrying an equal rights banner marching around a fortress called “Voting Discrimination.” How does the imagery in this cartoon mirror actions taken by civil rights activists? The 2016 Educator in Residence, Brandi Love, developed a great activity to analyze cartoons such as this one, which you can view here.

End of Poll Taxes

Poll taxes were widely adopted in the late 1800s as a way to counteract the 15th Amendment. Beyond limiting the right to vote for African American men and later women, they also hindered all poor people from exercising their right to vote. The poll tax was declared unconstitutional in federal elections in 1964 by the 24th Amendment. By 1966, the Supreme Court had extended this to cover state elections, ruling that the poll tax violated the 14th Amendment. Ask your students to consider how this compares to the debate over voter ID laws today.