

National Civics Day Lesson Plan

NationalDayClassroom.com

The Call to Civic Action

Target Audience: Middle or High School (Adaptations for Elementary are noted)

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- **Define** civics, civic engagement, and their importance in a democracy.
- **Identify** a foundational document of American civics (e.g., *The Federalist Papers*, Constitution, or Bill of Rights).
- **Propose** a local action they can take to be a more engaged citizen.

Section 1: Engage & Introduce (10 minutes)

- **Warm-up:** Ask students to free-write or discuss: "**What does it mean to be a good citizen in your school, community, or country?**"
 - *Elementary Adaptation:* Use a T-chart to list "Good Citizen Actions" vs. "Not Good Citizen Actions" in the classroom or playground.
- **Mini-Lecture/Discussion:** Introduce **National Civics Day (October 27th)** and its historical tie to the first publication of **The Federalist Papers**. Explain that these papers argued for the U.S. Constitution and were an act of civic discourse—persuading citizens to participate in their new government.
- **Key Vocabulary:** Define **Civics** (the study of the rights and duties of citizenship) and **Civic Engagement** (working to make a difference in the public life of one's community).

Section 2: Explore & Analyze (25-30 minutes)

- **Activity: Foundational Document Snapshot**
 1. Divide students into small groups.
 2. Assign each group one of the following "civics snapshots" to quickly read and discuss:
 - **High School:** Excerpts from *The Federalist Papers* (e.g., *Federalist No. 10* on factions or *Federalist No. 51* on checks and balances).

- **Middle School:** A section of the **Preamble to the Constitution** or an Amendment from the **Bill of Rights** (e.g., the 1st or 19th Amendment).
 - **Elementary:** The **Pledge of Allegiance** or a simple explanation of the three branches of government.
3. Ask each group to answer:
- **What is the main idea of this section?**
 - **How does this document/idea relate to *your* life today?** (e.g., freedom of speech, local representative, etc.)
4. Have each group quickly present their document and its modern relevance to the class.

Section 3: Extend & Act (10-15 minutes)

- **Individual/Group Brainstorm: "My Civic Action Plan"**
 - Prompt students to think about a problem or issue they see in their **school** or **local community** (e.g., litter, lack of a club, need for a bike rack, a local ordinance).
 - Using the concept of civic engagement, have them draft a simple, achievable action plan:
 1. **Identify the Issue:** What needs to be fixed or improved?
 2. **Identify the Stakeholder:** Who needs to hear about this? (e.g., principal, city council, school board).
 3. **Propose a Civic Action:** What specific, small step will you take? (e.g., write a letter, start a petition, organize a cleanup, research a policy).
- **Wrap-up:** Ask a few volunteers to share their planned civic action. Emphasize that civic engagement isn't just about voting; it's about making your voice heard and taking action for the common good at *any* age.

Assessment

- Collect the "My Civic Action Plan" for a quick check of understanding of civic engagement.
- Observe participation in the group discussion and document analysis.