

Translating *We the People* into the Classroom

Using the pacing guide in option #1, the following is a step-by-step guide in implementing the Level 3 curriculum into the classroom. You have six Units with six to seven lessons per Unit. Emphasis is on using *We the People* as a stand-alone text and getting students involved early in the process.

Units 1, 2, 6 have 7 lessons each
Units 3, 4, 5 have 6 lessons each

Step 1: Getting Started

Divide each Unit by the number of students you have in your class. For example, if you have 28 students, then divide the seven lessons in Unit 1 and assign 4 students to teach or cover each of those lessons. As a lesson is being presented, the teacher and the class would be free to ask follow-up questions. Repeat the same for the next 5 Units.

Step 2: Method

Teachers can supplement each lesson or group of lessons with a preview in the beginning, a review at the end, or other strategy deemed necessary to ensure content mastery (i.e. use of videos, current events, editorials, etc.).

Having students lead the lesson(s) keeps them more involved, focuses their individual responsibilities, and conditions them for the planning, research, teamwork, public speaking, and critical thinking they will need for the simulated congressional hearing (competitively or non-competitively).

As each lesson is taught, the rest of the class is taking notes, asking questions, and fostering class discussion. Ideally, all students should be reading ahead for each lesson, not just the one they are teaching.

- Depending on the amount of time you have, you may only have students do a lesson presentation for certain lessons rather than the entire Unit. If there are fewer students in a class, you would alter how the lessons would be divided up as well.
- As an option, you can also divide the lessons up every other Unit or strategically select lessons to be presented.
- Areas of emphasis by each group should focus on (but not limited to) vocabulary, main ideas, supporting details, people, events, and correlation to the overall Unit theme.

- After each Unit is completed, switch the groups around so that students have several opportunities to work with other students. This will break up any monotony, diversify your group dynamics, and give insight as to strengths, weaknesses of your students. It will also help you determine what groups they would participate in when they begin preparing for the simulated hearing, at which time, groups would be final (See Step 4)

Step 3: Formulate Hearing Teams

Arrange students into final unit teams. Unless there is a small class or other circumstance, there would not be any more switching groups as you have done throughout the semester. Ideally, you would form your teams either before or during Christmas break. As students return from the break, there should be a natural start to the process of them preparing for the questions.

- Some teachers prefer to form their groups much earlier in the year as well as beginning specific work on the hearing questions used for the current year.

Step 4: Prepare for Hearing Questions

Give each Unit group their set of hearing questions (3 questions total). Although each individual student can write an answer (also called the opening statement), emphasize that they are answering each question as a group. There are two options as to how students can approach them:

- 1) Each group would work on answering one question for the week. By the end of the week (or other designated time) students should have a rough draft finished for question #1. The following week, students would prepare for question #2, with a rough draft at the end of the week again, and the same for the third week.
 - Teacher facilitates preparation each week, giving whatever help necessary.
 - Rough drafts are continuously re-submitted until all criteria has been met

- 2) Students can write the answers to each question individually. For example, question #1 can be written by one student, while another student in the group can write question #2, and another for question #3. This may help to speed up the process in general, and keep one person from being the designated as the sole writer; however, what works for one group may not work for another.
 - Since each of the three questions have several sub-questions within them, it may be better to have the group divide those sub-questions for quicker results. Additionally, this would give the team more ownership over the entire question for each week.

Step 5: Final Drafts

Once rough drafts have been finalized as complete (i.e. having satisfactorily answered the each question), students need to begin timing their opening statements, which must be no longer than 4 minutes reading aloud. Each member will have a part to read.

Step 6: Practice Hearing Simulation

The simulated hearing is a total of 10 min per hearing question, and consists of students reading their opening statement, and then faced with a 6-minute follow-up session. You should begin practicing for this once students have revised their opening statements (Step 5). Therefore, you would like to have at least three full 10-minute practices, one for each question.

It is recommended that you use as many different people (colleagues, civic leaders, etc.) to help judge the students in the practice simulations. As the teacher, you should develop some follow-up questions yourself, but having others practice judging for/with you will expose your students to varying styles of questioning (by nature, they tend to be used to your style). Outside judges can develop their own as well (recommended). Any unfamiliar faces to them that are judging them will help in their preparation.

Step 7: Simulation Congressional Hearing

At this final stage, you can do this competitively against other schools, or non-competitively as an in-class hearing or a school-wide hearing (against other teacher's classes).

Pacing Guide

The following is a suggested option on how to cover the *We the People* curriculum (Level 3 textbook) in a one-semester time frame of 90 days (1st and 2nd 9wks) if you were using it as a stand-alone text. Lessons can be extended if you have more than one semester to teach the curriculum. Both options can be used

Option #1

The high school book has 39 lessons divided into 6 Units. In a 90-day semester, if you spend 2 days per lesson (39 lessons x 2 days per lesson) you would use 78 days of instruction, which leaves you with 12 days left over. Of the 12 days left, 6 of those could be used as test days, while the other 6 could be used as flexible days (e.g. review, remediation, snow days, practice simulations, etc.)

39 block days = 78 single class periods

78 days of instruction
6 days to test (1 test per unit)
<u>+ 6 flexible days</u>
90 days / 1 Semester

Option #2

If you use *We the People* as a supplement only, you would not follow the same pacing. Teachers would assess how much time to spend for each lesson that is needed to correlate to their regular textbook based on the pacing set forth by that curriculum. For example, in an AP class, you may cover those lessons that directly match up with specific topic areas set by College Board that you would normally cover in a given year.

Additionally, teachers may concentrate more on those lessons which correlate more specifically to the simulated hearing questions. This way, you're able to use *We the People* to enhance what you already have. Consequently, some lessons may be more or less emphasized in some years than in others because of how the match (or not match) with the hearing questions.

Options 1 and 2 are suitable for teachers wishing to participate competitively, non-competitively, or simply as an added resource in your own classroom.