

1. Participation in democracy	
<b>2. Knowledge and didactic objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand the development concerning the possibilities to participate in democratic processes</li> <li>To understand that democratic rights and structures have changed and continue to change over time.</li> <li>To evaluate the challenges related to building and maintaining democratic societies</li> </ul>	<b>3. Timing</b> 120 minutes
<b>4. Grouping of students</b> Individual+ small groups + whole class.	
<b>5. Historical thinking skills</b> Interpretation of evidence, change and continuity	
<b>6. Development or sequence of the activity</b> <p>This activity is divided into two topic areas that deal with (1) the development in voting rights in Britain and (2) the financial side of elections in present day USA.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some introductory lecture/readings on the development of democracy. Although the background information provided in the website does not extend to Antiquity, it may be advisable to reflect on the main differences between modern nation states democracies and those existing in Antiquity.</li> <li>The activity starts by looking at paintings depicting voting. Although the analysis on the paintings aims to widen students' understanding of how voting was perceived in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, this exercise is also meant as a "warm up" for thinking, where no reading is required.</li> <li>The next phases of the activity require quite extensive reading. Therefore it may be beneficial to sequence the reading in a way that students (individually</li> </ol>	

or in pairs) look at related video materials (see below) in between written documents. For example, after reading excerpts from the People's Charter, the whole class may look at a video, which would give them a more holistic view on living conditions in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain.

4. The final phase of the USA section is a good opportunity to practice debating skills. Groups may present opposing arguments on the nature of democracy in the United States.

5. After working with all the sources, students form small groups which produce a concluding group work linking the past democratic developments to their own societies.

## 7. Assessment techniques and instruments

What to assess:

- A student can explain what kind of processes have led to the universal suffrage, especially in Britain (a parliamentary process) and in their own country.
- A student is able to see what has, on the one hand, changed in democratic participation in the last 200 years, and on the other hand, what has not.
- A student can elaborate not only on the possibilities but also the challenges related to democratic systems.

When to assess:

Teacher provides formative assessment during the entire activity: while students work with the sources as well as during their concluding group work.

## 8. Complementary resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2-PC7u0dyU>

<https://www.wattsgallery.org.uk/art-action/?edit>



## Participation in democracy

This assignment looks into the possibilities of individuals to take part in democratic processes. The historical contexts of the assignment are 19th century England as well as contemporary United States. Whereas in many countries political rights were gained through revolutions and fast chain of events, in Britain wider political participation was developed gradually and through parliamentary processes. The historical background is introduced more in depth on the HistoryLab-website ([https://historylab.es/wp-content/uploads/4\\_curriculum\\_plantilla.pdf](https://historylab.es/wp-content/uploads/4_curriculum_plantilla.pdf)).

There are two main questions.

- What kind of demands were put on democracy in the 19th century England, and how were these demands received? (sources A–D).
- What possibilities and constraints does the contemporary democratic system contain in the United States ().

**Document A: Humours of election (1754). A series of four oil paintings by William Hogarth.**

### 1. An Election Entertainment

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours\\_of\\_an\\_Election#/media/File:William\\_Hogarth\\_028.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours_of_an_Election#/media/File:William_Hogarth_028.jpg)

### 2. Canvassing for votes

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours\\_of\\_an\\_Election#/media/File:William\\_Hogarth\\_032.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours_of_an_Election#/media/File:William_Hogarth_032.jpg)

### 3. The Polling

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours\\_of\\_an\\_Election#/media/File:An\\_Election\\_III,\\_The\\_Polling,\\_by\\_William\\_Hogarth.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours_of_an_Election#/media/File:An_Election_III,_The_Polling,_by_William_Hogarth.jpg)

### 4. Chairing the Member

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours\\_of\\_an\\_Election#/media/File:William\\_Hogarth\\_029.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humours_of_an_Election#/media/File:William_Hogarth_029.jpg)

Questions on document A



1. British museum has categorized the first of the drawings – “An election entertainment” – as a “satirical print”. ([https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_Cc-2-182](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Cc-2-182)). Find out what “a satirical print” means and reflect on how this may be portrayed in the “An election entertainment”.
2. Click the link ([https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_Cc-2-182](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Cc-2-182)) and use the zoom-in feature on the site. Find examples that would indicate the artist’s views about the state of democracy.
3. What kind of image of elections and voting does the artist want to portray through this series of drawings?
4. Consider different possibilities regarding the motivation of creating this series of drawing. Is it likely that it was commissioned by a politician or member of an elite?
5. Focus particularly on the painting Polling. What can you conclude about how and by whom votes were given in the 18th century? Who were included and who were excluded?

### Document B: People’s Charter 1838

The Chartist movement was created in the 1830’s when the working class was dissatisfied with the previous reforms concerning democratic rights. The Chartist movement took its name from this pamphlet, which was drafted predominantly by a cabinet-maker, William Lovett (1800–1877), and was first published by the London Working Men’s Association in May 1838.

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-peoples-charter>

### Questions on document B

1. Who has produced the document and for what purpose? ( see page 12 in the document)
2. The document was published in 1838. What kind of voting rights existed at that time and what kind of reforms had already taken place? (see background information)
3. Try to put the document in a wider historical context in order to think why the pamphlet was created (for example, how did people earn their living 19<sup>th</sup> century England, where and how did people live?)
4. What did the Chartists demand? What kind of specific suggestions did they make concerning these demands? (see pages 2 and 3 in the document)
5. How is universal suffrage defined in the People’s Charter? Whom does it include and exclude? How does the Charter address women’s and immigrants’ right to vote? (pages 11 and 14 in the document)



**Document C: Atwood's presentation of the Chartist petition to the House of Commons (representatives of the British parliament) on 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1839. Written in third person. A modified excerpt.**

The mass of the people of England, although miserable, do not want to injure the Constitution, or the useful and beneficial privileges of the Crown. But they were desirous of a change, and he [Atwood] should not be doing his duty if he hesitated in saying that he thought they would have a change, and a very great change too.

God forbid that dire necessity should compel them to effect that change by unlawful means; but 1,200,000 hearts that felt, and 1,200,000 heads that thought, ought not to be disregarded. Nothing would satisfy them but some large and generous measure. They also hoped, that that measure would be lasting—that they would not have prosperity today and adversity to-morrow.

The minds of hon. Members were, perhaps, better stored with history than his own, but he could not avoid calling to their recollection the situation of Louis 16<sup>th</sup> in 1787 and 1789. When Louis was asleep ruin was stalking through the land. In 1787 an individual who travelled through Burgundy and Champagne, found almost every gentleman's house burnt to the ground, and their owners murdered. Two years afterwards the Bastille fell. What was the position of the Queen of England at this hour? There was no one more attached to her than himself [Atwood], for he considered her the cement which held society together, and which enabled all classes to meet together for mutual protection. In his mind the sanctity of the Crown was above all other human considerations. But the Crown of England was like other Crowns. It rested upon public opinion.

They [the petitioners] told the House there must be a change. They said respectfully, but constitutionally, "there shall be a change, if they can by any legal and peaceful means produce that change." There were 700,000 electors in England, who elected the great bulk of the Members of that House, and those electors were of the middle classes—none of them of the lower. When anarchy became spread throughout the country, if choice did not, necessity would, compel the middle to join the working classes. He [Atwood] knew, that English people were aristocratic in their characters. The very working classes were so, and only let them live and they would be content. God forbid, that he should be instrumental in altering that character; his desire was to place the aristocracy on a foundation that never could be shaken. But 1,200,000 of her Majesty's subjects now said, that these things should be rectified; and he verily believed, that they had the power within themselves to rectify those great wrongs without illegality, and without crime.

**Document D: Lord John Russell responding to the Chartist petition in the House of Commons on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1839. A modified excerpt.**





I wish to speak with every respect of those who imagine that there would be some more prosperous, some more healthy, some more happy condition of the country, if universal suffrage were established as the law.

The hon. Gentleman supposes, that if you have a certain distribution of political power—if you have a certain representation, then you can by your mere will establish enduring and lasting prosperity in a country. Sir, I cannot conceive any form of political government or mode of legislation by which you can insure to the country a perpetual and lasting state of prosperity. Or, that in a country depending very much upon commerce and manufactures, you can prevent that state of low wages and consequent distress which at all times affect those who are at the bottom of the scale.

Look at that country which is sometimes held out to us—I think very falsely—as the country enjoying in its political and social state greater advantages than our own—I mean the United States of America. There they have universal suffrage. But will any man say that the United States have been altogether free from those fluctuations, or from distress? Enjoying as they do advantages which we cannot—having immense tracts of wild fertile land in which their population may easily find refuge and a mode of living? Even with these advantages, which we do not possess, is it possible for any man to say, that the United States of America have been free from the evils I have mentioned?

The hon. Gentleman says, there are more than a million of signatures attached to it [the petition]. Now, observe how differently this number of a million is treated, according to the side it happens to be at. If it is said that there are a million of persons having a right to elect Members of Parliament, we are told that it is too small a number—too insufficient a number, to be entitled to choose representatives. Yet a million of signatures being collected by the petition, we are asked to consider it as the petition of the people at large, and it is even called, Sir, the National Petition. I deny that this petition represents the sentiments and opinions of the people at large. I believe, that a vote of the House agreeing with the petition would create alarm and dismay throughout the country; not among persons in prosperity, the aristocracy or the rich alone, but among the labouring classes.

There are only two ways by which the position of the labouring classes can be improved. One would be by an increase of wages, a higher reward for labour. Does universal suffrage tend to anything of this kind? If there should be such a change in the institutions of the country as should drive away many of those who are the employers of labour, it should drive capital from the country. If this proposition were presented to the great majority of the working classes in this country, I am sure they would see, that the adoption of this proposition would be most injurious to themselves.

Questions on documents C and D

1. 1.2 million people signed the People's Charter, which is mentioned in both documents. How does Atwood (document C) and Russell (document D) describe the importance of this number (1.2 million people)?
2. Why does Atwood (document C) bring up the example of France in 1789?
3. How does Atwood (document C) try to convince his audience about the importance of the petition?





4. According to Russell (document D), what negative outcomes may come from extending the right to vote to all males? How does he argue against the petition?
5. Documents C and D represent the genre of political speeches. To whom were these speeches addressed to? Were they addressed to the wider public or to the members of political parties? How public were they, did they reach a large number of people, and through which means
6. What are the requirements for petition in your country at the moment? How many signature are needed? How often does the parliament in your country process a petition and how often do petitions change the legislation? Are petitions a viable way for citizens to participate in democracy?

### Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: USA

The previous section of the assignment focused on the possibility to participate in democracy through casting votes. In this section we introduce two other aspects of participating in democracy: running as a candidate and being elected as a candidate. First, read the background information on the democratic practices in today's USA (linkki).

1. You are about to look into some statistics presented by a website [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org). Assess the reliability of the website by using information provided by the website (<https://www.opensecrets.org/about/funders> + [https://www.opensecrets.org/about/editorial\\_independence\\_policy](https://www.opensecrets.org/about/editorial_independence_policy) ). In addition, try to find external internet sources assessing the reliability of [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org).
2. Read the following and reflect on the wealth of those elected both to the House of Representatives and to the Senate.

<https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2020/04/majority-of-lawmakers-millionaires>

3. Read the following and reflect on the development taken place in cost of elections as a whole in the United States over a period of 30 years.

<https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/cost-of-election>

4. Read the views of Robert Michels's on democracy in the background information ([https://historylab.es/wp-content/uploads/4\\_curriculum\\_plantilla.pdf](https://historylab.es/wp-content/uploads/4_curriculum_plantilla.pdf)).





- What arguments would you use for defending a position that democracy in the United States has oligarchical tendencies described by Michels?
- What arguments would you use for defending a position that democracy in the United States does not have oligarchical tendencies described by Michels?

### Group work assignment:

1. Return to the six demands made by the Chartists in 1838. Reflect on the voting rights in your own country. For example, have all the six reforms put forward by the Chartists been executed to date in your country? If not, why would that be? Are there voting practices which exclude some people or groups of people? Are there some other aspects of democracy in your country that you are dissatisfied with? How would you improve the current situation?

### Disclaimer

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