



Grade 5 Lesson Plan #14: Citizen Participation Today

Teacher Notes

This lesson builds upon the previous lesson examining forms of political participation during the colonial period. In Lesson 13, students learned that colonists participated in government through voting, jury service, militia service, leadership, and public service. In Lesson 14, students examine ways citizens participate in government today. While citizens participate in government in a variety of ways, this lesson focuses on jury service as an example of how ordinary citizens participate directly in government while protecting constitutional rights.

The focus of this lesson is to help students understand that jury service remains an important form of political participation because it allows ordinary citizens to participate directly in the justice system while helping protect the constitutional rights of others. Students examine how the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Amendments protect the right to trial by jury and why the Founders believed ordinary citizens should play an important role in ensuring justice.

Students learn that:

- Citizens participate in government today in many different ways.
- Jury service is an important form of political participation.
- Jury service protects citizens' constitutional rights.
- The Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Amendments protect the right to trial by jury.
- Jury service is both a civic responsibility and an important way citizens participate in government.
- John Adams believed representative government and trial by jury were essential to preserving liberty.

This lesson is organized into two phases. Phase 1 builds meaning through vocabulary, reading, and text coding. Phase 2 builds argument through gathering evidence and using it to engage in discussion and writing. The lesson culminates in a structured Revolutionary Writers essay centered on John Adams' belief that representative government and trial by jury are "the heart and lungs of liberty."

Competition Note: For teachers participating in the FIREWORKS250 year 2 cohort, this essay is one of nine potential essays students may select for the Revolutionary Writers Essay Competition. Each lesson introduces a key Founding Father or revolutionary while integrating civics standards. Teachers will introduce these individuals to students with a biography and video before students write their essay.

Materials

- Highlighters or pencils for text coding
- Handout #1: Ways Citizens Participate in the Political Process Today
- Handout #2: Essay Writing Organizer
- Handout #3: Directed Note-Taking Graphic Organizer
- Handout #4: Video Notes Organizer

Note: Students may use any notes from any handout (text coding, video notes, or graphic organizer) when writing their essay. These are not separate tasks but support tools for the final essay.

Preparation

- Number paragraphs in the reading text.
- Review vocabulary: Political participation, Jury duty, Due process, Speedy and public trial, Double jeopardy
- Before class, locate and read the biography from the White House Freedom 250 Founders Museum for John Adams: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250/founders-museum/signers/profiles/#john-adams>.
- Load the John Adams video. <https://youtu.be/rw7rhC8ZB1I?si=1fPaxisv-5UI2Bio>.
- Prepare the essay writing model. See sample paragraphs in the Essay Writing section.
- Be prepared to connect this lesson to previous lessons examining forms of political participation during the colonial period.

Standards Alignment

Florida Grade 5 Civics Literacy Standard **SS.5.CG.2.2** Compare forms of political participation in the colonial period to today. *Clarification:* Students will identify ways citizens participate in the political process today (e.g., serving on juries, participation in elections for government).

Essential Question

Why is jury service one of the important ways citizens participate in government today?

Phase 1: Make Meaning (Input → Interpretation)

Purpose: Students identify ways citizens participate in government today, with an emphasis on understanding how jury service allows ordinary citizens to participate directly in government while helping protect constitutional rights.

Hook—Open Response (5 minutes)

- **Teacher prompt:** “How do citizens participate in government today?” Accept all reasonable responses. Record responses where all students can see them.
- **Quick pair share:** Students briefly discuss. Do not correct yet. Students will return to these questions later during the lesson.
 - How do citizens participate in government today? (possible responses below)
 - * Voting
 - * Serving on juries
 - * Holding leadership positions
 - * Attending meetings
 - * Contacting elected officials
 - * Volunteering on campaigns
 - Today we’ll zoom in on one of those forms, jury service, to understand why the Constitution protects it and why the Founders believed it was essential to self-government. What do you already know about jury service? (possible responses below)
 - * Happens in a court
 - * Citizens listen to evidence
 - * Required attendance
 - * Makes decisions about trials

Vocabulary Instruction (10–12 minutes)

- **Introduce and clarify the following terms:**
 - **Political Participation:** Actions citizens take to help govern or improve their community.
 - **Voting:** The process of choosing leaders or making decisions.
 - **Jury Duty:** The responsibility of serving on a jury to help decide a court case.
 - **Due Process:** The constitutional guarantee that people will be treated fairly under the law.
 - **Speedy and Public Trial:** The constitutional right to have a trial that is held without unnecessary delay and is open to the public.
 - **Double Jeopardy:** The constitutional protection against being tried twice for the same crime after being found not guilty or guilty.
- **Teacher prompts:**
 - “What are some ways citizens participate in government today?”
 - “Why do you think ordinary citizens are asked to serve on juries?”
 - “Why might the Constitution protect the right to a trial by jury?”
 - “How might jury service help protect individual rights?”

Reading and Text Coding (25–30 minutes)

- **Teacher prompt:** “As you read, use the text codes to identify important ideas in the article. Some sections may receive more than one code. For example, a paragraph might explain both jury duty and constitutional rights.”
- Students read: Ways Citizens Participate in the Political Process Today (Handout #1)
- **Students use four codes to mark sections:**
 - P (Political Participation) Describes ways citizens participate in government today.
 - J (Jury Service): Describes the process where a group of citizens serves the community by helping to decide court cases.
 - C (Constitutional Rights): Describes constitutional protections that safeguard the rights of people involved in the justice system.
 - I (Important Information): Important background or context that does not clearly fit P, J, or C.

Note: The “I” code is intentionally open. Students who disagree about coding are engaging in strong historical thinking. Use discussion prompts such as: “Why did you choose I instead of P?” “Could this paragraph fit more than one code?” “What evidence supports your thinking?”

Teacher Modeling—I Do (5 minutes)

- **Think aloud:**
 - “This section explains one way citizens participate in government today. I would code that P.”
 - “This section explains how juries help resolve disputes. That’s describing how citizens participate in juries, so I might code it J.”
 - “This paragraph provides historical context without clearly being connected to political participation, jury service, or constitutional rights. It’s important background information, so I would code it I.”
 - “This section describes constitutional rights. I would code that C.”
 - Model uncertainty and evidence-based reasoning. Not every paragraph fits neatly into one category. Encourage students to explain and defend their thinking.

Guided Practice—We Do (5 minutes)

- **Read the next paragraph together.** Celebrate productive disagreement. There is no single correct answer for every paragraph.
 - “What is this section mostly explaining?”
 - “Is this describing political participation, jury service, constitutional rights, or important background information?”
 - “Could more than one answer make sense?”
 - “What evidence supports your thinking?”
 - Celebrate productive disagreement.

Independent Practice—You Do (15–20 minutes)

- *Students continue coding independently.*
- *Teacher prompts:*
 - “How does this section help explain ways citizens participate in government today?”
 - “Why might a community use juries to help determine court case outcomes?”
 - “What does this paragraph say about constitutional rights?”
 - “What evidence supports your code?”
 - “Could more than one code apply? Why?”

Phase 2: Build Argument (Synthesis → Evidence → Writing)

Purpose: Students gather and use evidence to explain ways citizens participate in government today, with an emphasis on jury service as an important form of political participation.

- *Teacher prompt:* “As you review the text today, pay attention to the different ways citizens participate in government today. Notice how the author uses jury service as an example of political participation.”

Directed Note-Taking (15–20 minutes, Handout #3)

Guiding Question:

What evidence does the author provide about citizen participation in government today?

- *Teacher prompt:* “Today you are gathering evidence to explain how citizens participate in government today, with an emphasis on jury service. Think carefully about the different ideas the author uses to support this.” Remind students to use paragraph numbers when citing text evidence. Students may draw on notes from any handout when writing their essay.

Category	Evidence (paragraph #)	What this evidence shows
Why Citizens Participate in Government Today		
Jury Service as a Civic Responsibility		
Constitutional Protections for Jury Service		
Preparing Citizens for Participation		

- *Teacher prompts:*
 - “Which category contains the strongest evidence?”
 - “Which category appeared most often?”
 - “Why do you think the author devoted so much attention to jury service?”
 - “Which category do you think best explains why jury service is important?”

Meet a Founding Father: John Adams (10 minutes)

- *Teacher prompt:* “In today's text, we learned that citizens participate in government in many different ways, including serving on juries. We also learned that the Constitution protects the right to trial by jury. Now we are going to meet John Adams, one of America's Founding Fathers, who once said, ‘Representative government and trial by jury are the **heart and lungs of liberty**. Without them we have no other fortification against being ridden like horses, fleeced like sheep, worked like cattle, and fed and clothed like swine and hounds.’ He believed that no one should be denied the right to a fair trial. As a lawyer, he even defended British soldiers in court, despite his fierce opposition to British rule. As you listen and watch, think about why John Adams believed ordinary citizens should play an important role in government and why jury service was so important to protecting freedom.”
- **Read** the John Adams biography aloud to the class from:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250/founders-museum/signers/profiles/#john-adams>.
- **Show** the John Adams video to the class from:
<https://youtu.be/rw7rhC8ZB1I?si=1fPaxisv-5UI2Bio>

Note: The biography and video introduce students to John Adams and his strong patriotism, including the belief that no one should be denied the right to a fair trial. The text remains the primary source for understanding ways citizens participate in government today.

- *Students complete Handout #4 while watching.*
- *Teacher prompts (after video and biography):*
 - “Why do you think John Adams believed no one should be denied the right to a fair trial?”
 - “What do you think John Adams meant when he described representative government and trial by jury as ‘the heart and lungs of liberty’?”
 - “How did John Adams participate in government and public life?”
 - “How do John Adams' ideas connect to the ways citizens participate in government today?”

Interpretive Discussion (10 minutes)

- **Teacher prompt:** "Which of the ways citizens participate in government today seems most important?"
- **Students discuss:**
 - Voting
 - Jury Service
 - Contacting Elected Officials
 - Leadership and Public Service
- **Teacher prompt (after students talk):** "Today's text focused on jury service as one way citizens participate in government today. John Adams once described representative government and trial by jury as 'the heart and lungs of liberty.' Based on what you've read and learned, why do you think he chose those words?" Let this synthesis emerge from student responses rather than leading with it. Remind students that there may be more than one reasonable answer. Encourage them to support their position with evidence from the reading and videos.

Debate: Why is jury service important? (10–12 minutes)

Teacher Setup: Display the debate question and the position statements:

The Debate Question

John Adams once called representative government and trial by jury "the heart and lungs of liberty." Based on the author's evidence, is jury service more important than other ways citizens participate in government because it protects the rights of citizens or because it is a responsibility of all citizens?

Position statements:

- Position A: Jury service is more important than other ways citizens participate in government because it protects the rights of citizens.
- Position B: Jury service is more important than other ways citizens participate in government because it is a responsibility of all citizens.

Note: The Directed Note-Taking categories provide evidence students may use to support either position.

Debate Directions

Choose one position and explain why you believe it best reflects the author's message. Support your position with evidence from the text, the John Adams biography, or the video.

Structured Discussion

- Call on students who chose different ideas. *Prompts include:*
 - “What evidence supports your position?”
 - “Does another group disagree?”
 - “Could both ideas be important? Why or why not?”
 - “How did John Adams’ quotation influence your thinking?”
 - There is no single correct answer. The goal is for students to use evidence to defend a position—exactly the thinking the essay requires. Teachers may shorten discussion or combine steps depending on class time.

Bridge to Essay

- *Teacher prompt:* “Today you learned that citizens participate in government in many different ways. Today's lesson focused on jury service as one important form of political participation. You've argued about why jury service matters. Now your essay asks whether you agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways citizens participate in government and protect liberty. Use evidence from today's text, biography, and video to explain your thinking.”

Primary Assessment Task (20–25 minutes, Handout #2)

Revolutionary Writers Essay: John Adams and Jury Service

Important: This essay is the primary assessment for Lesson 14 and also serves as one of nine potential student essays for the FIREWORKS250 Revolutionary Writers Essay Competition for students with teachers participating in cohort 2. Participating teachers should save all student essays. Students will select their best essay at the end of the year to submit for the competition.

- *Teacher prompt:* “You have learned that citizens participate in government in many different ways today. Today's reading focused on jury service and explained how it helps protect constitutional rights while allowing ordinary citizens to participate directly in government. John Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, once said: ‘Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty.’ Do you agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways citizens participate in government and protect liberty? Explain your answer using evidence from the text, biography, and video. Use Handout #2 to plan and write your essay.”

Writing Prompt

*John Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, once said:
"Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty."
Do you agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways
citizens participate in government and protect liberty?*

Students should write a paragraph that:

- states whether they agree or disagree with John Adams' statement.
- explains why they agree or disagree.
- uses evidence from the text, biography, and video.
- explains how jury service is one important way citizens participate in government today.

Sentence starters to share with students (optional):

John Adams believed...

I agree (or disagree) with John Adams because...

One reason jury service is important is...

The text explains...

The biography or video explains...

This evidence supports my thinking because...

Sample paragraphs:

Agree with John Adams: *I agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways citizens participate in government and protect liberty. One reason is that juries help protect the rights of citizens by listening carefully to evidence before making a decision. The text explains that the Constitution protects the right to trial by jury through several amendments. Another reason is that jury service allows ordinary citizens to participate directly in government instead of leaving every decision to judges or elected officials. John Adams believed representative government and trial by jury were "the heart and lungs of liberty" because both depend on citizens participating. I agree that jury service is an important way people help protect freedom in our country.*

Disagree with John Adams: *I understand why John Adams believed trial by jury was very important, but I do not think it is one of the most important ways citizens participate in government today. One reason is that voting allows millions of citizens to help choose the leaders who make laws and represent their communities. Another reason is that citizens can also participate by contacting elected officials or serving in leadership roles. The text explains that jury service is an important form of political participation, but it is one of several ways citizens participate in government. I think all of these forms of participation help protect liberty.*

Closure (5 minutes)

- *Teacher prompt:* "Today we learned that citizens participate in government in many different ways. We focused on jury service because it is one important way ordinary citizens participate directly in government while helping protect constitutional rights."
- *Turn-and-Talk teacher prompt:* "Do you agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways citizens participate in government and protect liberty? Why or why not?"
- *Exit Ticket prompt:* "What is one way citizens participate in government today, and why is it important?"

Handout #1

Ways Citizens Participate in the Political Process Today

In the United States today, citizens have many ways to take part in the political process. This means helping make decisions about our laws, leaders, and government. Some of the most important ways include:

- Voting in elections for president, Congress, governors, mayors, school board members, and other leaders
- Running for office or helping someone who is running
- Contacting representatives (writing letters, emailing, or calling your senator or congressperson about issues you care about)
- Attending town meetings or public hearings to speak up on local issues
- Volunteering for campaigns, community groups, or causes
- Serving on juries in court cases

These activities let everyday people—like you and your family—have a voice in how our country is run. One of the most powerful and interesting ways citizens participate is serving on a jury. Let's look at why jury duty is so important, how it connects to the Constitution, and why it matters today.

What Is Jury Duty?

Jury duty is when regular citizens are called to sit on a jury in a court case. A jury is a group of 6 to 12 people who listen to both sides of a story, look at evidence, and decide if someone is guilty or not guilty in a criminal trial, or who wins in a civil trial (like a disagreement over money or property).

Jury service is a civic duty—meaning it's one of the responsibilities of being a citizen. Almost every adult citizen can be called for jury duty (usually once every few years). You get a letter in the mail asking you to come to court. If you're picked, you help decide real cases and make sure justice is fair.

The Constitution Protects Jury Duty

The Constitution has three amendments that guarantee the right to a jury trial and make sure juries are fair:

- **Fifth Amendment**—This amendment says no one can be tried for a serious crime without a grand jury first deciding there is enough evidence to go to trial. It also protects against double jeopardy (being tried twice for the same crime) and says the government can't take away your life, liberty, or property without due process (fair legal procedures). Jury trials are part of due process—they make sure decisions are made by ordinary people, not just judges or officials.
- **Sixth Amendment**—This amendment guarantees a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury in criminal cases. It also says you have the right to a lawyer, to see and question witnesses against you, and to bring witnesses to help you. The jury must be fair and consist of people from the area where the crime happened.

- **Seventh Amendment**—This amendment says that in civil lawsuits (disagreements over money or property worth more than \$20), you have the right to a jury trial. This keeps the government or big companies from taking advantage of regular people in court.

These amendments were added to the Constitution because the Founders wanted to protect citizens from unfair treatment by the government or powerful people. They remembered how British officials could arrest colonists without fair trials or juries. Jury duty puts power in the hands of everyday citizens to make sure justice is done.

Why Jury Duty Matters

Jury service shows that ordinary people—not just lawyers or judges—help decide big questions of right and wrong. This is an important part of self-government, the idea that citizens help run the country themselves. When you grow up, you might get called for jury duty. You could help decide if someone broke the law or if someone deserves money for being hurt.

Being on a jury is exciting because:

- You hear real stories from witnesses and lawyers
- You discuss the case with other jurors
- Your decision can change someone’s life or make things fair

It’s also a way to show respect for the rule of law. The Founders trusted citizens like you to be honest, listen carefully, and decide fairly. That’s why jury duty is one of the most direct ways citizens participate in the political process today.

Other Ways Students Can Start Participating

Even though you can’t vote or serve on a jury yet, you can practice political participation now:

- Talk to your parents about who they vote for and why
- Write a letter or draw a picture about an issue you care about (like saving parks or helping animals) and send it to your local leaders
- Join a school club or student council to help make decisions for your class or school
- Learn about current events and discuss them with friends or family

These small steps build important skills for being an active citizen. You learn to listen to other’s points of view, treat others with respect, work together, and make fair decisions. When you’re older these skills will help you vote, serve on a jury and help run the country. One day, you might serve on a jury and help decide a real case—that’s how powerful your voice can be in America!

Handout #2: Essay Writing Organizer

Writing Prompt

*John Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, once said:
"Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty."
Do you agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways
citizens participate in government and protect liberty?*

Remember: Use what you learned about jury service and John Adams from the text, biography, and video.

Step 1: Choose Your Position

Which decision did you make?

- ☐ I agree with John Adams
☐ I disagree with John Adams

Step 2: Plan Your Essay

Which decision did you make?

I decided to agree/disagree _____

What is one reason for your choice? _____

What is a second reason for your choice? _____

How did the reading about jury service influence your decision?

My decision was influenced by _____

How did John Adams' ideas from the biography or video influence your thinking?

My decision was influenced by _____

Why do you think your choice is the best one?

I think that my choice is the best one because _____

Step 3: Gather Your Evidence

Evidence from the text (include paragraph number):

Paragraph ____: _____

Use the space below to write your essay paragraph.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

John Adams believed...

I agree with John Adams because...

I disagree with John Adams because...

One reason I agree is...

One reason I disagree is...

I think that jury service is important because...

I think that another way citizens participate in government is...

Handout #3: Directed Note-Taking Graphic Organizer

Guiding Question:

What evidence does the author provide about citizen participation in government today?

Directions: As you read the text, record evidence below. Find evidence for each category that shows how citizens participate in government today. Include paragraph numbers for text evidence.

Category	Evidence (paragraph #)	What this evidence shows
Why Citizens Participate in Government Today		
Jury Service as a Civic Responsibility		
Constitutional Protections for Jury Service		
Preparing Citizens for Participation		

Think About It:

Which category contained the strongest evidence? Why?

Handout #4: Video Notes Organizer

Video: John Adams <https://youtu.be/rw7rhC8ZB1I?si=1fPaxisv-5UI2Bio>

Directions: Your teacher will read the biography of John Adams and show a short video about his life. As you listen and watch, think about why John Adams believed representative government and trial by jury were essential to protecting liberty. Record important ideas from the biography and video. Then answer the questions below.

John Adams

1. How did John Adams participate in government and public life?

2. Why did John Adams believe trial by jury was so important?

3. What do you think John Adams meant when he described representative government and trial by jury as "the heart and lungs of liberty"?

4. How does jury service allow ordinary citizens to participate in government today?

Make the Connection

5. How do John Adams' ideas connect to what you learned about jury service in today's reading?

6. Do you agree with John Adams that trial by jury is one of the most important ways citizens participate in government and protect liberty? Explain your thinking.
