

## Lesson Plan

### Voting Rights Timeline

**Book:** *Barbara Jordan: Civil Rights Leader*

**Series:** Important Women

**Level:** Beacon

### Objective

To help students understand the history of voting rights in the United States.

### Supplies

- *Barbara Jordan: Civil Rights Leader* book
- Access to the “US Voting Rights Timeline” web page:  
<https://a.s.kqed.net/pdf/education/digitalmedia/us-voting-rights-timeline.pdf>
- Large sheets of paper

### Before the Activity

Read through the *Barbara Jordan: Civil Rights Leader* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Pull up the “US Voting Rights Timeline” web page.

### Activity

The right to vote gives citizens a say in their country. Through voting, citizens can elect officials to represent them in government. US voting laws have changed throughout the country’s history. In many cases, certain groups of people have not been allowed to vote, either because the law said they could not vote, or because other barriers kept them from exercising their right to vote. Barbara Jordan and others worked hard to ensure people can vote.

As a class, read through the US Voting Rights Timeline. This timeline discusses changes to voting laws as well as changes to US citizenship. US citizenship relates to voting rights because people must be US citizens in order to be able to vote. For each of the following dates, ask students whether who could vote was limited or expanded:

- 1776—voting rights limited to property owners, or white male Protestants over the age of 21
- 1848—citizenship granted to Mexicans living in US territory, but voting ability limited by English language requirements and violent intimidation
- 1856—voting rights expanded to include all white men
- 1868—citizenship granted to former slaves, but voting rights limited to men
- 1870—voting rights expanded to include African American men, but voting taxes, literacy tests, and intimidation prevented African American men from actually being able to vote

- 1876—citizenship and voting rights denied to Native Americans
- 1920—voting rights expanded to include women
- 1924—citizenship granted to Native Americans, but voting rights denied
- 1964—voting ability expanded by removing voting taxes
- 1965—voting ability expanded by removing other discriminatory acts
- 1971—voting rights expanded to 18-year-olds
- 1975—voting ability expanded by providing voting materials in other languages besides English
- 1993—voting ability expanded by making it easier to register to vote
- 2000—voting rights denied to US citizens living in US colonies

### **Evaluation**

Could students recognize whether changes to the laws limited or expanded people's right to vote?

### **Standards**

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational text, grade 5 (RI 5.1), and the National Council for the Social Studies standards 2, 6, and 10.