

Voices of Democracy

Grades 8-12 Educational Resource Guide

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The Value of *Voices of Democracy* for Students Grades 8-12

Dear Educator,

A quotation from Pericles used to hang on my classroom wall. Modified for gender inclusivity, it read: “We do not say that someone who takes no interest in politics minds his or her own business; we say that he or she has no business here at all.” It reflected my conviction that civic literacy should be at the core of secondary education.

Our public school system, developed in large part to prepare students for democratic citizenship, too often does the opposite. It disempowers students from disadvantaged backgrounds, creating what Meira Levinson calls a “civic empowerment gap” between students rich and poor, white and black. As a teacher, I endeavor to train students in the arts of public speaking, debate, and deliberation to increase their capability and confidence to participate in political and civic life. In addition to communication skills, civic engagement requires that students learn to think critically and to analyze speeches and other forms of public discourse.

Through the high school lesson plans included in this resource, students can learn all of these skills through the study of famous (or not-so-famous or even infamous) speeches. The study of these speeches can help students recognize what Paulo Freire describes as the relationship of the word and the world. The power of the spoken word enlivens the study of otherwise sterile historical events, revealing the importance of ideas in shaping the course of society. At the same time, students learn about history, which is necessary to bring these rhetorical texts to life. Speeches are not timeless, ahistorical texts, but living, breathing efforts to persuade actual audiences at particular moments. Sometimes the success or failure of those speeches had life or death implications.

For almost ten years, *Voices of Democracy* has provided educational resources designed primarily for college instructors and their students. College professors have long engaged their students with the site’s authenticated texts, critical essays, and teaching and learning resources. Centered around persistent “deliberative themes” like citizenship, human rights, international relations, and freedom of speech, the site contains a wealth of texts and ideas that can also be of great value to middle and high school teachers, particularly as they develop their own lessons on the English language, speaking and argumentation, American history, social studies, and other subjects that shape the civic literacy and engagement of young people.

Thus, we are pleased to provide an additional collection of lesson plans developed specifically to meet the needs of teachers in grades 8-12. Tailored to the mandates of the Common Core State Standards, but designed more generally to promote civic education, these plans adapt existing *VOD* resources and speech texts for use in the K-12 classroom. The plans bear the mark of my past experience as a high school teacher, with suggestions for scaffolding, anticipating students’ troubles, and connecting lessons in civic literacy to required curricular standards. They are informed by scholarly perspectives on rhetoric, which provide an interdisciplinary approach to reading public speeches and debates.

These lessons draw from more than a century of American public address and cover a wide range of issues: from Theodore Roosevelt's famous critique of the media ethics of his day to John Kerry's protest against the Vietnam War; from Susan B. Anthony's appeal for women's rights to Stokely Carmichael's calls for black power. I hope that you—and your students—benefit from the resources provided here. Please contact me at msteudem@umd.edu if you have questions or suggestions!

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Teaching the Common Core State Standards with *VOD*

The *VOD* grades 8-12 lesson plans are based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Specifically, they respond to the CCSS focus on [literacy across the curriculum](#). The study of great speeches helps students recognize the power of rhetoric in real-world contexts—a mode of understanding that transcends disciplinary distinctions between English and social studies.

In certain ways, the CCSS provide insufficient guidance for developing students’ civic literacy. These *VOD* lesson plans are designed to overcome these limitations while still aiding teachers in meeting the new requirements. In particular, the *VOD* plans address three problems:

1) **The CCSS connect English and social studies curricula, yet they overlook that one aspect of rhetoric—the conception of “audience”—that undergirds this connection.** The CCSS stress that the development of literacy is a whole-school effort across the curriculum. However, the text-centered emphasis of the CCSS neglects *the role of the audience* as an important bridge between English and social studies. For example, consider this standard for grades 11-12:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6](#) – Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

Rhetorical scholars have taught us that the effectiveness, power, persuasiveness, and beauty of a text all depend upon the audience for that text. Reading a speech requires that students immerse themselves in its context, recognizing the particular challenges, values, and problems of a specific historical situation. To this end, these plans integrate the study of context and audience with the close analysis of a rhetorical text.

2) **The CCSS sharply differentiate informational texts and literature, whereas most forms of public persuasion defy such easy categorization.** The CCSS for [Informational Text](#) stress topics like evidence, reasoning, and argumentative support, while the standards for [Literature](#) emphasize the themes, aesthetics, and literary devices employed in texts. This separation problematically encourages students to think of these as two completely separate “modes” of reading. In reality, most persuasive political texts achieve their effects by combining elements of what the CCSS call “informational” texts with elements of prose and poetry. The *VOD* grades 8-12 lessons draw from both types of standards to illustrate the richness of the speeches under consideration.

3) **The CCSS stress speaking and listening standards, without connecting these skills thematically to their usage by real-life advocates.** Finally, *VOD* lessons help bridge the separation of speaking and listening standards from writing and reading standards. Speeches complicate this distinction; they are delivered aloud to audiences, but often disseminated through writing. More importantly, they have real-world consequences that illustrate the power of verbal and written literacy as vehicles of social change. The *VOD* grades 8-12 lessons strive to demonstrate the real power of literacy in the lives of students, often through suggested activities that encourage students to “speak out” themselves.

How Do I Use These Resources?

I taught speech as an English course at a small hybrid middle and high school. My students ranged in grade levels from 9 to 12. Within this already wide range, some students read at a 4th-grade level while advanced seniors enrolled for college credit.

From this experience, I know that highly scripted plans are often too specific to be useful. They make too many assumptions about the abilities, learning styles, and interests of students. In crafting elaborate plans, curriculum designers sometimes create *more* work for teachers, requiring them to revise elaborate PDFs, graphic organizers, and day-by-day agendas to meet their own students' particular needs.

More importantly, overly detailed lessons sometimes impinge upon teachers' autonomy and discourage their own resourcefulness. By prescribing every detail of a day's lesson, they do not allow teachers to take full advantage of their own creativity and expertise.

With this in mind, these plans were designed to provide a foundation for teachers as they develop their own lessons. These brief, two-page plans can be printed off on a single double-sided piece of paper and carried as an easy reference during a lesson. They easily fit on a tablet screen and help teachers keep their use of paper to a minimum. The plans provide the essentials to:

- 1) **Conduct foundational research.** Students need background knowledge of historical context and concrete reading strategies to approach new texts with confidence. *VOD's* grades 8-12 resources provide a starting point for selecting supplemental readings, highlighting key vocabulary terms, and developing presentation materials and notes to build lessons about each text's political and social context.
- 2) **Link speeches to content standards.** Each plan connects the primary text to existing CCSS across three categories: Informational Text, Literacy, and History. Each provides an explanation of how students can learn the standard through a careful reading of the speech.
- 3) **Set daily objectives and pacing.** Each of these plans offers recommendations for how a speech might be broken down over the course of a 3-to-5 day unit. The pacing guides assume 90-minute class periods, and are tailored to meet the needs of low-level readers who require a lot of in-class opportunities for reading aloud and discussion. Because every student reads and learns at a different pace, teachers should modify this timeline to suit their needs.
- 4) **Anticipate difficult and important passages.** One major challenge of teaching any new text involves highlighting important passages for purposeful discussion with students. Each grades 8-12 lesson plan highlights several key passages that may require additional discussion, background knowledge, or reading strategies to help students understand the speaker's meaning and arrive at the day's objective.

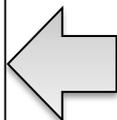
VOD Grades 8-12 Lesson Plans: At a Glance

Value to History Teachers

This section helps history teachers decide where to use the speech and the important events and concepts it illustrates. This section also establishes key social and historical context that should inform students' reading of the text.



Value to History Teachers	Relevant Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts	Grades 11-12
<p>There is a chasm in history classes between the Civil War and World War I in which it is difficult to engage students. If the Progressive Era is taught strictly through the historical facts—of unions, poor working conditions, Theodore Roosevelt's reforms, and so on—students may have a difficult time understanding the era's importance to American history.</p> <p>This speech by Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones helps draw students into the Progressive Era in two ways. First, Jones's vivid and passionate personality certainly draws students' attention. She represents an important female voice during an era before women had the right to vote. Secondly, Jones's speech provides an illustrative entry point to help students understand the working conditions that triggered the Progressive Movement, the intensity of the disputes between workers and their employers, and the formation of labor unions in the United States.</p>	<p>CC.8-12.2.1-2 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how action is ordered, how characters are introduced or developed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because the mine workers in the audience must risk a lot to criticize and/or organize against their employers, Jones crafts a narrative designed to stir their emotions by recounting their unfair treatment. <p>CC.8-12.2.3-4 Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the speech, Jones throws insults at the miners—but as an endearing rhetorical figure, the miners react positively. She also makes heavy use of sarcasm and other techniques to tie up workers. <p>CC.8-12.2.5-6 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jones walks a fine line between agitating the miners and courting sympathy toward listeners. Students will compare Jones's explicit account of events from inferences about how the speakers intend to act. <p>CC.8-12.2.7-8 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will track with Jones to determine her "real" perspective and audience, as she shifts from addressing the Governor to the miners. Jones also possesses a unique "grandmotherly" rhetorical style that strengthens her appeal among the workers. 	

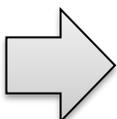


Relevant Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts

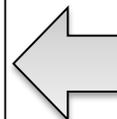
This section lists 3 to 4 grade appropriate standards that the speech can help students meet. It provides an explanation with each of how the text connects to that standard.

Ideas for Pre-Reading

This section recommends supplemental readings, literary strategies, and key pieces of context that will help students approach the text with confidence. These are meant to precede students' engagement with the text itself.



Ideas for Pre-Reading	Important Vocabulary and Figures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have students read the first two paragraphs of Mary S. Jones's analysis of Jones's style as a "fairy, off-beat, even threatening" 100-pound 40-year-old woman. Have students reflect on the "rough love" of their own parents. Prime students to think about workers' rights by asking them to brainstorm the types of legal protection they possess today. What are employers allowed—and not allowed—to make them do? Students should be primed to understand the conditions of mine workers in 1912 West Virginia. The New York Times History site provides video and photographic resources from West Virginia mining communities during Jones's era to help students visualize elements of the speech. Students will also need basic historical background on the progressive era. The OpenStax American History site provides historical context on the Mine Wars and Jones's role. An excerpt from this essay may be assigned to students as homework in preparation for the lesson. Jones regularly draws upon the language of the Constitution. A review of the President and Bill of Rights will help students follow her persuasive appeals. History.com and PBS.org feature transcripts of numerous news articles contemporary with the Paint Creek Mine War. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agitator: Describes Mother Jones's style of labor protest: traveling from town to town to encourage workers to organize theough various speech. Standard Oil Company: Andrew Carnegie (paragraphs 61-66). Jones's references to these figures provides an entry point for setting the Mine Wars alongside the other Progressive Era fights against "Robber Barons" capitalists. Theodore Roosevelt (paragraph 112-113). Jones communicates indignation with Roosevelt's reform efforts, underscoring the difficulty of leading social movements.



Important Vocabulary and Figures

This section helps situate speakers in a historical context and identifies key terms, political figures, and events that may be unfamiliar to students. It also highlights key trouble areas that teachers should be ready to explain.

Suggested Timeline and Objectives

This timeline assumes a block-schedule class with struggling readers. The text is broken up by clear starting and stopping points, with major objectives highlighted for each day of reading.



Suggested Timeline and Objectives	Key During-Reading Passages and Discussion Questions
<p>Day 1: Determining Content and Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read paragraphs 1-14 Students will explain the double-lined spaced to miners to company towns by difficult economic conditions and fear of abusive mine operators. Students will weigh Jones's purpose: whether she intends to appeal to the governor or the miners with her speech. Read paragraphs 15-41 Students will critique Jones's diction, style, or language, and assess her persuasiveness to the mine workers. Students will examine Jones's narrative to determine how she places the mine workers as part of a national movement. <p>Day 2: Analyzing Jones's Call to Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read paragraphs 42-107 Students will continue tracing Jones's narrative, focusing on how Jones depicts herself as a protagonist. Students will analyze the persuasiveness of Jones's personal sacrifice and make predictions about how the miners will respond. <p>Day 3: Analyzing Tone and Rhetoric</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read paragraphs 108-111 Students will continue to assess how Jones constructs herself as a protagonist. Students will contrast Jones's narrative appeals for protest against Jones's plea for caution and to "take the law" to draw inferences about her goals for the protest. <p>Day 4: The Aest-Climactic Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read paragraphs 112-161 Students will assess Jones's purpose in quelling the protest, drawing further inferences about her goals for the miners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps 1 and 2. Make sure students recognize not only the hazards and hard conditions that face the miners, but also why they might be reluctant to act. Should they act out against the mine operators, they risk being killed by the guards. The rhetorical challenge Jones confronts is encouraging the workers to act out and continue striking against their employers despite this risk. A note on read-aloud: If a student can read aloud in a particularly feisty "grandmother" voice, this may be a fun way to approach sections of the speech. Have students who are not reading aloud track with the text by reading the audience reactions to the speech. Paragraphs 5-7 then 9-14. In this section, Jones turns quickly from talking to the Governor (who is not present) to sarcastically declaring that the Governor is indebted to the mine owners and cannot meet the miners' demands. Students should recognize the abrupt shift in audience and tone to mine Jones's narrative. Paragraph 24. Jones's narrative involves painting the mine operators as a villain—in this passage, as "demons" that drove out the organization of mine operators to happen there. Paragraph 44-54. Direct students to notice the clear as we can see there. Distinction Jones creates through her narrative. On one side, the religious leaders, the mine managers, the guards, and the protesting attorneys are all in cahoots with the operators. On the other side, Jones constructs herself as benevolent leader who, as Governor or God, would drive out the guard. Paragraph 58-66. Jones discusses her role in organizing in the broader movement. Ask students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Jones's description of child labor serve to make outrage on the mine workers? (Also paragraphs 72-74) Why do miners seem to react positively to Jones's insults here? How does Jones construct herself as a protagonist? Paragraphs 75-81. Jones urges the miners to take action not to be victimized or destroyed, but that allow workers' efforts to misrepresent them. Ask students to identify how miners might react to the mixed messages of being told to "back on your armor" while being admonished "that violence [is] not the idea." Paragraph 106. Students should analyze the poem and how its imagery contributed to Jones's overall message. Paragraph 152-157. Have students evaluate the miners' reluctance to disagree in light of these mixed messages.



Key During-Reading Passages and Questions

Important sections of the text are selected based on their relevance to objectives and standards, potential for confusing students, and importance in discussion of key themes/ideas.

Ideas for Post-Reading and Assessment

For history and English teachers alike, this section recommends writing exercises, debate topics, and other types of assessment that evaluate how well students have arrived at the objectives and standards of the lesson. Each item is provided to spur teachers' creativity regarding how to engage their students in writing and speaking about the text.

