

REPRESENT

THE UNFINISHED
FIGHT FOR THE VOTE



BY MICHAEL ERIC DYSON
& MARC FAVREAU

TEACHING TIPS

To **REPRESENT** in hip-hop culture is not just a declaration of origin and pride, it's a powerful testament to the resilience and creativity of a community. In their work, Michael Eric Dyson and Marc Favreau have beautifully celebrated the individuals and movements that have shaped and continue to shape the United States. By weaving historical and present-day references, *Represent* illustrates the enduring efforts towards suffrage and access to freedom. This guide is a tool for educators to connect current movements to past ones, empowering them to ignite meaningful conversations, foster creativity, and guide students toward a deeper understanding of the diverse cultures, genders, and belief systems that have contributed to making the United States a more perfect union.

PERSPECTIVES ON EQUALITY

In 1831, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville took a journey through the United States and observed how the young nation was proclaiming equality but was, in fact, highly unequal. He wrote his findings in a book, *Democracy in America*, which was widely read in France. Have students imagine they are diplomats from a fictitious country visiting the United States for the first time. From this perspective, have students write a descriptive essay about current inequality in the US with at least two solutions that might improve the situation.

RESPECT ON THEIR NAMES

In *Represent*, Dyson and Favreau share the contributions of many figures across time, culture, and gender to voting rights. Many of whom persevered through tremendous physical violence and personal sacrifice for the greater good of all Americans. The figures included are both well-known and not widely known. After reading the book, educators can coordinate with their school media specialists, local librarian, historical association, and/or local archivist to find primary sources on individuals in the book as well as modern-day activists. Have learners create a print or digital scrapbook comparing activists that includes a bibliography of the sources and pictures used for the information. Bonus if students can get a tour of special collections and archives and learn how primary sources tell stories.

COME CORRECT: RAP BATTLE AS PRAXIS

Debate is a critical component of American discourse. The 15th and 19th Amendments of the Constitution gave African American men and white women voting rights, respectively. In both instances, many groups were left out of these historic wins. To engage students in a unique and creative way, this section introduces a 'rap battle' activity. This activity encourages students to research and understand different perspectives on the 15th and 19th Amendments and present their findings in a fun and engaging format. Students should select a position from a historical figure or groups left out of the 15th and 19th Amendments. Students should research their position and create a rhyme that explains them and gives a nuanced perspective, showing an understanding of the issue. Host a rap battle where learners can go head-to-head in this creative debate format, where the pros and cons of the 15th and 19th Amendments are presented in a fresh and fun manner. Use [open-source music](#) for beats. Give points to battlers for well-sourced information, valid arguments, and clever flow.



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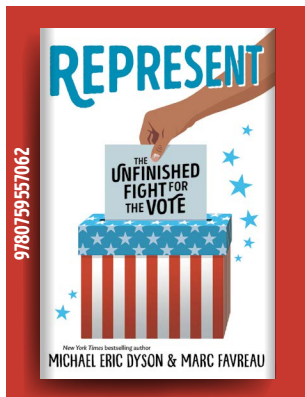


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CONNECTED THROUGH TIME

The authors create a clear thread connecting the suffrage movements of Reconstruction to the Civil Rights movement and our current political climate, where hard-won voting rights are being eroded. Separate students into groups and have them create graphic timelines that highlight pivotal years in the fight for voting rights. Have groups create images or illustrations representing the progression of voting rights in US History. Students should also annotate the illustrations, providing clarity and context.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Social Justice Links:

[Learning for Justice](#)

[Know Your Rights Camp](#)

[Asian Americans Advancing Justice: Voting Rights](#)

Primary Resources:

[Digital Howard](#)

[Library of Congress 15th Amendment Digital Collections](#)

[Digital Public Library of America 15th Amendment](#)

[Library of Congress Women's Suffrage Classroom Materials](#)

[Choice 360 Black Women's Suffrage Digital Collection](#)

[Library of Congress 19th Amendment to the US Constitution Collection](#)

[Library of Congress Voting Rights for Native Americans](#)

[NARA Voting Rights for Native Americans](#)

[University of Southern California Asian American Voting Rights Primary Digital Resources](#)

[Library of Congress: Civil Rights Collections](#)

[SNCC Digital Collections](#)

[NARA Civil Rights Collections](#)

[University of North Carolina Charlotte Latinx and Voting Digital Primary Resources](#)

Citation Resources:

[Purdue University Online Writing Lab \(OWL\) Citations Overview](#)

These Teaching Tips were prepared by Christina Vortia, Chief Librarian of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.



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