


Topic: VOTING

Objective: *To encourage interest in the Electoral System and the importance of voting*

Key Words: *adorn, clucked, corruption, election, opposition, penetrate, performance, political, polling station, rosette, sodden, unemployment, wisdom,*

Materials needed: The Manual or copy of lesson plan
Silent sitting exercises from the Manual
CD/Tape player
CD/Tape with music for silent sitting
CD/Tape with music for the song

QUOTATION/THEME FOR THE WEEK

<p>THE RISE OF NATIONS COMES WITH AN INCREASE OF MEN OF CHARACTER AND OF STRONG ETHICAL AND MORAL FIBRE</p> <p><i>Vivekananda</i></p>	
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Brainstorm and discuss.

SILENT SITTING

- Step 1 (*See page 36*)
- Steps 2, 3 (*optional*)
- Step 5: *Light visualisation exercise (page 37)*
- Step 6.

NARRATIVE

THE CANVASSER

by Tessa Hillman
Illustrations by Harold Jefferies

It was a cold, wet, dark winter's day. I felt the rain beating on my shoulders. I had many more houses to visit, doors to knock on, people to talk to. I was tired and hungry, but there was work to be done. I knocked on the door of a pretty pink house. In the summer I'm sure roses would have adorned the porch, but now in the winter all I could see were thorns. An elderly woman opened the door to me.



She had a kind face. Immediately she knew what my business was. She recognised my party colours, the rosette I was wearing.

“Come in, dear, you look half-dead. Let me make you a cup of tea and you can have a nice piece of my fruit cake.”

How could I refuse? I was so glad to get off my feet. I took off my sodden raincoat and checked my trousers to see if the rain had penetrated. I didn't want to wet her sofa.

“Sit down, sit down,” she clucked.

I flopped into her rather worn but comfortable armchair. I found I had nothing to say. No words of political wisdom issued from my lips. I was so cold I couldn't really think straight. I watched her prepare the tea and noticed two teacakes being popped into her toaster. At last, my luck had changed! I had been presented with stony faces and closed doors most of the morning. What's the point of trying to speak to the people when they don't want to hear, I'd thought? The election was looming and every party was doing their utmost to convince the voters that they had the best policies to run the country.

I know it's hard to understand all the issues, and to know who is telling the truth, but I do believe it's better to vote for someone who at least seems to be best to you, rather than not to vote at all. We all have an idea about what is fair and wise and if we listen carefully to what is said we can usually make a decision about who is morally sound and honest. If we don't vote we have no right to complain when bad political decisions are made.



“Sugar, dear?” The old lady broke into my reverie.

“Oh, yes please, two. Sorry, I was miles away. I was thinking about how important it is that everyone votes at the election.”

“Quite right, dear,” she said. “I find it quite difficult to get to the polling station to cast my vote. I don't have a car, and my old legs aren't what they used to be, but I always make the effort... I remember one election,” she continued. “We'd had a rotten government for five years, the country was in a mess and for the whole of the week before the election the

weather was like this. People had grumbled a lot about the government, unemployment was very high and there had been talk of corruption in high places. The opposition was very confident that they would get in. We all were, as everyone was so dissatisfied. But people didn't go out and vote. The weather was so bad that less than half the voters bothered to turn up. Of course, the government stayed in power! We had to suffer them for another four whole years!”

“Oh, no! That's terrible,” I said.

“It was terrible, the newspapers were up in arms. Only thirty-six percent of the voting population had turned out. I felt ashamed of myself because I have to admit that I stayed by the fireside that night. I was just too lazy to stir my bones. I thought I'd leave it to everyone else, but it's far too dangerous to do that. I've learnt my lesson. Never again! Does your Party offer transport to elderly voters? I can't promise I'll vote for you though, dear,” she said with a twinkle in her eye.

“Madam,” I replied brushing the last crumb of teacake off my lips. “I will personally take you there. We can't have a repeat of the performance you just told me about, can we?”

“Thank you, dear. I do normally vote for the other lot, but this time I'm going to think hard about who I want to run the country.”

QUESTIONS: *Support answers to question 2 with evidence from the text.*

1. What do you already know about the electoral system?
2. Why is it important to vote?
3. Why is a vote confidential?
4. Why are you not allowed to vote until you are eighteen years old?
5. How did you feel when you heard this story?

GROUP SINGING

LET'S VOTE!

(music and lyrics by Richard Braithwaite)

I had a funny feeling just the other day,
That I gotta give a message, gonna find a way,
There's so many things I wanna say to you,
But I can't pick up the phone, so tell me what should I do.

Chorus: Why, let's vote,
Let's vote (one more time)
So let's vote,
If there is something that you've got on your mind,
Say it, don't get left behind.

Hear so many people, they got something to say.
"Yeah, it took me twenty hours just to get on my way.
It seems I'm paying too much, I got nothing to show,
Save for a broken train-track and a traffic cone".

Chorus: So let's vote ...

Seems people have been fighting for a long, long time,
They've been fighting for your right to join the end of the line.
It only takes two minutes, not a lot of fuss,
And if you can't get a train, then why not catch the bus?

Chorus: So let's vote ...

If there is something that you've got on your mind,
Say it, don't get left behind.

GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Group discussion on 'The importance of voting'.
2. Elect 5 candidates - each representing one of the five values. Each candidate presents a case why their value is important. The other class members then vote for whichever value/candidate they feel has given the best case. The winning value/candidate then presents a lesson on that value the following week.

Extension exercise: Research the electoral system

Links to Other Subjects:

History Link: Look at Women's Suffrage