Overview

The Congressional Moments videos related to the theme The Impact of Congress each highlights a period in American history when the United States Congress passed legislation that changed the course of our lives.

Featuring primary source materials from the Library of Congress, each Congressional Moments video illuminates a significant new legislation in our nation's history.

This lesson plan, titled Life, Liberty..., focuses on six of these videos, all related in some way to rights and education. See page 2 for a list and summaries of the videos represented in this guide. A second guide (Congressional Moments: Preserve and Protect) targets another seven Congressional Moments videos related to economics and our land.

Use this guide to help you select videos and explore classroom suggestions from this collection. The suggested class activities are designed to help you guide your students in examining key legislation throughout our country's history that impacts our lives today.

TPS Resources

Congressional Moments Videos on Rights and Education
- About 2 minutes each

Target Audience

Grades 7–12

Instructional Time

Less than 1 class period each

Big Ideas

- The U.S. Constitution is a living document based on evolving interpretations of the meaning of democracy.
- Governments should reflect the will of the people.
- Laws are necessary to protect civic and human rights.

Concepts & Key Terms

- Labor
- Civil rights
- Suffrage
- Symbolism
- Higher Education
- Lobby
- Filibuster
- War on Poverty
Video Summaries

The following summaries can be used to help you select videos that meet your curricular needs. Each summary is followed by a direct link to the full transcript of the 2-minute video. See the next pages for classroom activities you can use to support these videos.

Child Labor

Passed in 1938. The Fair Labor Standards Act was passed to put an end to the injustices of child labor that plagued our country throughout the Industrial Revolution. Told through journal entries from the early 20th century and LIBRARY images of young children working in harsh conditions, this is a story of citizen outrage and the triumph of Congress protecting children without interfering with state’s rights.

Civil Rights

Passed in 1964. This is the story of how a few key Senators, along with President Lyndon Johnson, managed to pass a law protecting the civil rights of African Americans after one of the longest debates in Senate history.
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cmTranscript_Civil_Rights.pdf

Women’s Suffrage

19th Amendment, passed in 1920. Through photos from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, this video tells about the struggles to gain women the right to vote, from Susan B. Anthony’s draft of a constitutional amendment, through the extensive marches and picketing efforts, to the time when Tennessee approved it.
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cmTranscript_Suffrage.pdf

Morrill Land Grant Act

Passed in 1862. Justin Smith Morrill, Representative and Senator from Vermont in the 19th century, proposed legislation that would set aside federal land in every state for the sole purpose of building at least one college to promote regional development, offering higher education to all, no matter the class or income.
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cmTranscript_Morrill.pdf

The GI Bill

Passed in 1944. This video tells the story of the benefits veterans can obtain from the GI Bill through the life of one recipient, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Not only did the bill boost post-WWII prosperity, but it still serves as a major recruiting tool for the armed services.
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cmTranscript_GI_Bill.pdf

Head Start

Passed in 1964. The Head Start program was one of ten federal programs established by Congress in The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. This video explores its scale and impact and how it went from an 8-week experiment to an ongoing program still going strong today.
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cmTranscript_Head_Start.pdf
Classroom Suggestions

Each of the six videos highlighted in the Life, Liberty... Congressional Moments collection is unique and offers different classroom support opportunities. The following are merely suggestions that you might find helpful with your own students.

Child Labor
- Either project the two photographs provided in this guide or navigate to and project the images from the Library of Congress website (see images and links on page 5).
- Ask students to select one child from these images, either a boy or a girl, whom they would like to use as the main character of a short story.
- Students are to give their selected child a name and family history. Their story should highlight one day in the life of this child, from waking up in the morning to bedtime that night.
- Provide time for students to research the daily life of children during this era of American history. Resources for such research might include:
  - **The 1900 House**, an interactive tour from PBS: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/1900house/
  - **A Year in the Life of America**, from genealogy.com: http://www.genealogy.com/76_life1900.html
  - EXTENSION IDEA: Write another “Day in the life of...” story for this child’s great grandchild, who lives in the 21st century. How are the two children’s lives similar? How are they different?

Civil Rights
- Divide the class into two groups, one to research the Senate filibusters of opponents of the bill and one to research the lobbying efforts of its champions.
- Provide time for students to research the two opposing actions. Resources for such research might include:
  - **Major Feature of the Civil Rights Act**, From U.S. Department of State: http://infousa.state.gov/life/people/rights/essay.html
  - EXTENSION IDEA 1: Have pairs or small groups take one section of the Act and explore the specific rights each ensures.
  - EXTENSION IDEA 2: Ask students to research amendments to the Act since it was passed by the Senate in 1964. Which amendment efforts were successful? Which failed?

Women’s Suffrage
- This video’s primary sources include two political cartoons that explore the attitudes of the day toward women and voting rights.
- Project one at a time the cartoons on page 5 (“The sky is now her limit” and “Shall women vote?”), and conduct a class discussion about how each cartoonist makes his point, beginning with the following prompts:
  - What is the cartoon saying?
  - Look for images (such as the ladder and the chain) that the cartoonist uses as a symbol. Explain the symbolism.

Time
Varies: 15–50 minutes

Materials
- Computer(s) with Internet access: one for teacher and one for each small group
- (Optional): Projector
- See each classroom activity suggestion for additional materials

Preparation
- Either project or have students navigate to the Center on Congress Teaching with Primary Sources website link for the videos, found at: http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/activities.php?id=6
- See each classroom activity suggestion for additional preparation

© 2012 Center on Congress
• What persuasive techniques can you identify in the cartoon?
• Was the cartoonist in favor of or against women’s suffrage?
• Ask students to vote on which cartoon they found most persuasive, and discuss why.
• EXTENSION IDEA: Divide the class into small groups and have them scour newspapers for political cartoons on a current issue facing Congress. Ask them to analyze their cartoon in the same way they did the ones on women’s suffrage, and then present their opinions to the class.

Morrill Act
• Provide students with a link to the Morrill Land Grant document from Our Documents.gov (see page 6 for link). Note that the document is also available via printable PDF. Then assign the following:
  • Imagine it is 1861. You have just listened to a speech by Justin S. Morrill, the Senator from Vermont. His ideas regarding the need for federal assistance in education fits with your own beliefs. You are convinced by this speech that education should be available to all.
  • Read the text of the Morrill Land Grant Act and use facts found there to convince your congressman to support this bill pending in Congress.
  • Write a letter or prepare a speech to convince the congressman.

The GI Bill
• Project the image of returning veterans being welcomed home (see page 6) as you conduct the following discussion of the G.I. Bill.
• Explain that, before the Bill’s passage, the U.S. government hadn’t planned a postwar replacement for the economic productivity of wartime mobilization. Ask students to consider what would happen when the soldiers came home to find that their pre-war jobs had been given to someone else.
  • Do you think it is the responsibility of the federal government to help veterans after a war? Why or why not?
  • Do you think such responsibility is better left to private initiative? Why or why not?
• EXTENSION IDEA: Locate someone in your community who used the G.I. Bill (or whose parents used it) to improve their lives after serving the country. Write a narrative about their story.

Head Start
• Project the two images of people who benefited personally from the Head Start Act, Deion Sanders and Rep. Loretta Sanchez.
• Discuss the benefits this early childhood program offers to students from lower-income families. Ask if they think either of these people would have reached their current station without this assistance.
• Have students work in pairs to research the implications of federal budget cuts on programs such as Head Start, considering specifically:
  • Any cuts that are currently on the table for this program.
  • How these cuts would affect beneficiaries of the program.
  • The basic arguments for and against the cuts.
  • Quotes from representatives or advocates arguing both for and against cuts to the program.
• EXTENSION IDEA: Have each pair brainstorm a short list of ways that they as citizens could campaign for or against financing for the Head Start program.
Primary Sources for Use in Activities

Glass works. Midnight. Location: Indiana.

Interior of tobacco shed, Hawthorn Farm
Hine, Lewis W., photographer. "Girls in foreground are 8, 9, and 10 years old. The 10 yr. old makes 50 cents a day. 12 workers on this farm are 8 to 14 years old, and about 15 are over 15 years. Location: Hazardville, Connecticut". 1917. Photograph. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division: National Child Labor Committee Collection, Washington, DC.

The sky is now her limit.

Shall women vote?
Morrill Land Grant Document

Morrill Act (1862).
Document. From the National Archives: Our Documents, Washington, DC.

Deion Sanders.
n.d. Photograph. From Big Brothers Big Sisters, Houston.

Rep. Loretta Sanchez.
n.d. Photograph. From Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez Website.

GI Bill Image

Wells Welcoming Vets
[P0023856]" 1946. Photograph. IU Archives (Indiana University Archives).
http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/archivesphotos/results/item.do?itemId=P0023856&searchId=7&searchResultIndex=1. (accessed December 3, 2011)

Project Head Start Images
Primary sources used in these videos

The citations for each Congressional Moments video are available online at the following sites. NOTE: Teachers should preview all assets to ensure they are age-appropriate for their students. At the time of publication, all URLs were valid.

Child Labor
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cong_moment/child_labor/popup.html

Civil Rights
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cong_moment/civil_rights/popup.html

Women’s Suffrage
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cong_moment/suffrage/popup.html

Morrill Land Grant Act
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cong_moment/morrill/popup.html

The GI Bill

Head Start
http://www.tpscongress.org/teachers/cong_moment/head_start/popup.html

The Library of Congress

Library of Congress collections contain over 147 million books, periodicals, manuscripts, maps, music, recordings, images, and electronic resources. More than 16 million records describing these collections are located in the Library’s online catalog, found at http://catalog2.loc.gov/.

Our Documents

A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service

At the heart of this initiative are 100 milestone documents of American history. These documents reflect our diversity and our unity, our past and our future, and mostly our commitment as a nation to continue to strive to “form a more perfect union.” Found at http://www.ourdocuments.gov/.

Teaching with Primary Sources is supported by funds from the Department of Education’s Representative Democracy in Action (RDA).