

HOW CAN CITIZENS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MATTERS THAT AFFECT THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS?



WPA workers vote to strike inside Eagles Hall, Seattle, 1937.
Courtesy Museum of History & Industry.

How do the citizens of the state work together to solve problems?

What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens in Washington?

How does government respond to the needs and wants of the people of Washington? How can citizens make a difference?

Did Washington state residents have the opportunity to provide input into decisions about the bridges – their placement, concepts, etc. How did the government respond?

Did residents of the SR 520 corridor region have the opportunity to provide input into decisions about the bridges – their placement, concepts, etc.? How did the government respond? How can you have your voice heard in neighborhood, city, and state decisions – especially those that directly affect you?

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PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF THIS UNIT

To provide non-fiction materials, educational resources, and primary and secondary resources that will assist students to:

- understand that people from different cultures have different ideas and different ways of life, much like the students who make up their classroom and school.
- understand that our national, state, and city governments have developed processes for people to have input into decisions regarding their needs and wants.
- research decisions that have affected the use of the land, water, and resources of Lake Washington and the neighborhoods in which they live or attend school
- identify links to governmental websites listing their state, county, and city elected officials.
- identify ways they can make their voices heard about a current issue involving the lake's resources or an important environmental issue in the area that concerns their school or home.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Students will read (or listen to) recommended HistoryLink.org essays and participate in directed class discussions.
- Students will analyze how the lives of those living in the Lake Washington area during specific time periods were changed because of intervention by state, county, and local governments.
- Students will use selected primary sources to research how interested individuals or citizen groups have used available

governmental processes to take a stand on issues involving the environment or the accessibility of the Lake Washington region's resources.

- Students will use worksheet provided with this unit to study major government rulings or decisions on issues that had significant impact on the environment, resources, and people living in the Lake Washington region (one current and one that occurred between 1850 and 1965.) Students will take a position on these issues and decide if all interested parties had an equal voice in the making of these decisions.
- Students will compose a letter to a government official that states their individual or class opinion on the current issue facing the people or environment of the Lake Washington region.

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MATERIALS INCLUDED

- Maps that tracks transportation routes: tribal/canoes, steamers, bridges throughout the years. (MAP #4)
- Set of primary sources, including newspaper articles (DOCUMENTS #2: NEWSPAPER ARTICLES) and oral histories.
- Links to government websites.
- WORKSHEET #9

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Computer, Internet access, and overhead projector, or copies of sets of primary sources.
- Copy of worksheet for each student or small groups of students

TIME MANAGEMENT

- 2-3 class periods

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVELS

- Grade 4



Aerial view, Union Bay marshland (bottom left), University Stadium, Montlake Cut and bridge, Lake Union, Seattle, ca. 1927
Courtesy UW Special Collections (Neg. No. UW2169)

HOW CAN CITIZENS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MATTERS THAT AFFECT THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS?

Throughout the years, the leaders of Washington State have made laws that protect our personal rights, the environment, and public safety. Many of the laws that govern us today were designed and enacted more than 100 years ago. With changing times, it is important for people to review the laws that are currently in effect and take an active role in supporting or challenging new laws or decisions that are being proposed. People have always had the right to respond to the government's decisions and cast their votes, but it was not always easy because of difficulties in communicating effectively. There were language barriers and delays in getting information about government rulings. There was no Internet and postal service was more limited. Several environmental protection laws were passed at the federal and state levels in the early 1970s, including the National Environmental Policy Act and the State Environmental Policy Act, which required the consideration of public input about government-funded projects. This made it easier for people to get involved and have their voices heard.

Although they cannot vote, children also must be responsible citizens by helping keep their schools and neighborhoods clean, respecting others' property, and listening to adults and teachers when they discuss issues that will affect their homes, schools, or neighborhoods. They should be aware that it will soon be their responsibility to guide the government by staying informed and electing officials who will make wise choices for the citizens and environment of Washington State. They can start by learning to negotiate problems by weighing the alternatives, using good judgment, thinking about what is best for everyone who will be affected by the decision, and looking into ways of letting government officials know how they feel about the issue.

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Accessible: capable of being reached

Donation Land Claim Act: passed in 1850, this act allowed anyone living in Oregon Territory to claim 320 acres of land (640 acres for married couples) at no cost. Later arrivals to the territory were allowed to claim 160 acres (320 for married couples). The act was passed before treaties were negotiated with local Native Americans.

Filth: dirt, grime

Harvest: process of gathering a crop

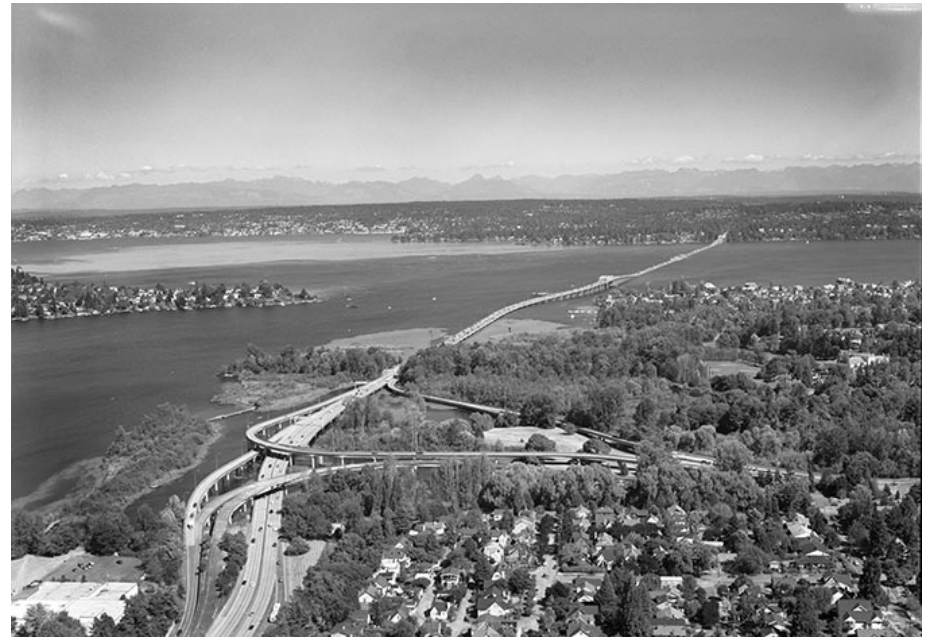
Landfill: an accumulation of discarded materials and garbage at a specific location

Significant: having meaning

Toll: a tax or fee paid to pass over a highway or bridge

Tradition: an inherited or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior, such as a religious practice or a social custom

Treaty: an agreement in writing between two or more nations or political groups



Looking east along the SR 520 corridor. The WSDOT Peninsula is in the foreground, and the “Ramps to Nowhere” can be seen extending southbound. Photo courtesy of Jet Lowe, NPS

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SUGGESTED CLASSROOM BASED ASSESSMENT (CBA)

You Decide: Citizens in a democracy have the right and responsibility to make informed decisions. Students will make an informed decision on a public issue after researching and discussing different perspectives on that issue.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Have students read (or listen to) recommended WSDOT and HistoryLink.org essays to prepare for participation in directed class discussions and activities.
- Discuss the rights and responsibilities guaranteed to citizens of Washington State. Have they always applied to people who lived in this area? Discuss the difference between “individual rights” and the “common good.” Does the government allow citizens to have input into decisions that affect their neighborhoods? Provide information to students about when Washington’s state laws and constitution were written and enacted – and when that was in relationship to the time periods studied in this unit.
- Using WORKSHEET #9, ask students to research two environmental or political issues involving the lake’s resources – one current and one that occurred from 1850-1965. Direct your students to investigate which of these governmental rulings had significant impact on the environment, resources, and people living in the Lake Washington region.
- Help students use the Internet to identify primary and secondary sources that will allow them to research these events. Check out HistoryLink.org’s Education Page – there are dozens of online resources that students can access, including newspaper archives (e.g. The Seattle Times Historical Archive) and government documents (NARA). Encourage them to investigate and analyze how interested individuals or citizen groups have used available governmental processes to take a stand on issues involving the environment or accessibility of the Lake Washington region’s resources. Each student will take a position on both a past and a current issue and state their reasons in a one-paragraph essay.
- Lead a class discussion that requires students to investigate whether or not the people affected by the decision had a voice in making it. Students may share their positions with the class by reading their paragraph. Then have students compose a letter to a government official that states their individual or class opinion on the issue facing the people or environment of the Lake Washington region. They should use their position paragraph and the research that they did in preparing this paragraph as the basis for their letter.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

DOCUMENTS

- **DOCUMENTS #2: NEWSPAPER ARTICLES** Newspaper articles that are relevant to controversies about the environment and bridge planning/place-ment.

SECONDARY SOURCES

WASHINGTON: OUR HOME

- Chapter 7 – Our Government (Our Rights, Our Laws, Our Responsibilities)

RELEVANT HISTORYLINK.ORG ESSAYS

- **9501** Donation Land Claim Act
- **10171** Miller Street Landfill
- **5402** Treaty of Point Elliott

RELEVANT 520HISTORY.ORG PAGES

- Contact, Construction, and Change 1851-1915
- Montlake Dump and Union Bay Natural Area
- Looking Forward to the Future 1956-Present
- R. H. Thomson Expressway Project and the WSDOT Peninsula
- The Evergreen Point Floating Bridge
- Planning and Development
- Engineering and Construction
- Building the New SR520 Bridge

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ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- **iCivics:** iCivics.org prepares young Americans to become knowledgeable, engaged 21st century citizens by creating free and innovative educational materials
- **League of Women Voters:** Find your state, and national representatives
- **Seattle Municipal Archives:** Seattle's city archives has a number of online resources relating to city government
- **Seattle Times Historical Archive** is now accessible free through the Seattle Public Library (SPL) website. Digitized copies of the Seattle Times from 1900 to 1984 are found under the reference category "Magazines & Newspapers." You must have a valid **Seattle Library Card** or go to a library in order to access this SPL resource.
- **Historic Newspapers in Washington State Online** Project is part of the Washington State Library's program to make its rare, historical resources more accessible to students, teachers, and citizens across the state. Search the Digital Collections at The Seattle Times Newspapers in Education offers educational materials for students and curricula for teachers. <http://services.nwsources.com/nie/times/>
- **Washington State Legislature: Civics Education**, includes how a Bill Becomes a Law and Tribal Sovereignty
 - **Civics Education - Teachers**
 - **Civics Education - Grades K-5**
 - **Civics Education - Grades 6-12**
- **Let's Cross That Bridge When We Come to It:** Curriculum developed by HistoryLink.org that explores the history of bridges in Washington.

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SOCIAL STUDIES EALR 1: CIVICS

- **1.4.1** Understands that civic participation involves being informed about public issues and voting in elections.

SOCIAL STUDIES EALR : HISTORY

- **1.4.1** Understands that there are multiple perspectives regarding the interpretation of historical events and creates an historical account using multiple sources..
- **4.4.1** Understands that significant historical events in Washington State have implications for current decisions.

SOCIAL STUDIES EALR 2: ECONOMICS

- **2.4.1** Understands how geography, natural resources, climate, and available labor contribute to the sustainability of the economy of regions in Washington State.

SOCIAL STUDIES EALR 3: GEOGRAPHY

- **3.2.1** Understands how the environment affects cultural groups and how cultural groups affect the environment.

SOCIAL STUDIES EALR 4: HISTORY

- **4.2.1** Understands and analyzes the causal factors that have shaped events in history.
- **4.2.3** Understands how technology and ideas have affected the way people lived and changed their values, beliefs, and attitudes.

SOCIAL STUDIES EALR 5: SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS

- **5.1** Uses critical reasoning skills to analyze and evaluate positions

- **5.2** Uses inquiry-based research.

- **5.1.1** Creates and uses a research question to conduct research on an issue or event.

- **5.1.2** Evaluates accuracy of primary and secondary sources.

- **5.4.1** Draws clear, well-reasoned conclusions and provides explanations that are supported by artifacts or primary sources in a paper or presentation. (Grade 4)

- **5.4.2** Prepares a list of resources including title, author, and type of source, date published and publisher for each source. (Grade 4)

READING EALRS

- **1.3.2** Understand and apply content/academic vocabulary critical to the meaning of the text. Use new vocabulary in oral and written communication and content/academic text.

- **2.1.3** State the main idea of an informational/expository text passage and provide three or more text-based details that support it.

- State the main idea of an informational/expository text passage and provide three or more text-based details that support it.

- **2.1.6** Applies comprehension monitoring strategies before, during, and after reading, monitor for meaning, create mental images, and generate and answer questions in grade-level informational expository text and literary/narrative text.

- **2.1.7** Applies comprehension-monitoring strategies before, during, and after reading, summarize grade-level, informational/expository text and literary/narrative text.