Lesson Title: How to Gerrymander a Map

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:
What is gerrymandering and what are its consequences?

I HAVE:
Two days

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
Students will be able to:
1. Construct a definition for the term gerrymandering.
2. Examine and analyze the impact of gerrymandering on elections in PA and MD.
3. Participate in a simulation activity.

In order to...
Understand how gerrymandering works and its influence on politics.

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES:
1. Watch TEDEd video to introduce the concept.
2. Gerrymander 101 worksheet
3. Redistricting Game, Lessons 2-3
4. Case study of Pennsylvania and Maryland
5. Polarization simulation

MATERIALS:
- Projector or smartboard for video
- Computers for class
- Handouts
- Method for tabulating votes (apps like https://www.polleverywhere.com/plans may be helpful)

STEP-BY-STEP:

Introduce the lesson by watching this TEDEd video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcUDBgYodlE

In a discussion of the video, ask students:

1. Why would legislators want to gerrymander a voting map?
2. Define the concept of "cracking" (spread your opponents' supporters across many districts, diluting their influence in a single district.)
3. Define the concept of "packing" (Pack as many of your opponents into as few of districts as possible, to dilute their influence in a large number of districts.)

Then share the Gerrymandering 101 worksheet and have students do their own gerrymanders.

In the lesson "Redistricting in the United States," students played the first mission of The Redistricting Game. Now to take their practice to the next level, return to the game and have them play Missions 2-3: http://redistrictinggame.org/game/launchgame.php.
- Mission 2 asks users to create a partisan gerrymander
- Mission 3 asks users to create a bipartisan gerrymander to protect incumbents.

After they complete their missions, hand out the "*Redistricting Game* Discussion" sheet. give them the opportunity to share their responses with another student (Think-Pair-Share). After this, have a larger class discussion. Teachers can use the reflection questions as an exit ticket for the end of class.

Finally, run a voting simulation to demonstrate the impact of gerrymandering on polarization in politics.

1. Present a simple issues chart (see handout), and quickly help students select one or two issues.
2. Help students identify via discussion what each party generally believes.
3. Select four volunteers from the class for a "mock election." Two of the students will be Republicans, and two will be Democrats.
4. Those two pairs will face each other in a mock primary.
5. Divide the rest of the class into three groups: Republican voters, Democratic voters, and unaffiliated. They should not be evenly divided… one party should have double the other party. Only the Republican voters can vote in the Republican primary, and only the Democratic voters can

STEP-BY-STEP (cont.):

vote in the Democratic primary. Unaffiliated voters can't vote in the primary.

6. Assign a passion level to each primary voter. Half of Republican voters care very deeply and hold strong views, and thus are definitely going to vote in the primary. Same with half of the Democratic voters. The other half care a little bit, but probably won't vote until the general election, because they don't pay much attention to politics until the general election, they have other stuff to do at home and work, and they just aren't that motivated to vote.

7. Hold brief debates between each pair of candidates. Assign one candidate from each party to hold very strong, more extreme views, and assign one candidate to hold moderate views.

8. After the debate, the primary voters will vote on their preferred choice only in their party. Unaffiliated voters can't vote, and moderate voters don't vote because they ran out to time or interest. Thus, only the passionate, more ideological voters will vote. They will be far less likely to choose the moderate candidate who talks about working with the other party or finding compromise.

9. The two winning candidates from the primaries will then hold a mock debate with each other for general election. This time, all voters are eligible to vote, and can do so.

10. Hold a class election. Most should pick their preference based on party. However, because the candidates are from the extreme poles on the ideological spectrum, some voters may not want to participate.

11. Have a discussion with students as the simulation ends. Some discussion questions:
    - What happened if you weren't eligible to vote in the primaries?
    - Was seeking compromise a motivation for the primary candidates? Why or why not? What are your thoughts or feelings about this?
    - What policy positions or ideas rose to the top as a result of this system? Do you think the majority holds these views?

Draw the Lines

Gerrymandering 101

You are a political consultant for the Yellow Party, which controls the state's redistricting process. You want to ensure Yellow maintains control, by "packing" and "cracking" the Green Party. **Draw the precincts (dots) into groups to create districts.**

1) Create **three districts**, but ensure that the Yellow Party wins two of three (groups of three dots). (Note that Green has more voters, 5-4.)
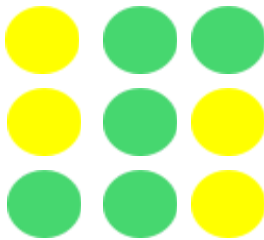
2) The state grows to **four districts** (six voters per party). Draw a map where the Yellow Party wins three districts and keeps a majority (groups of three).
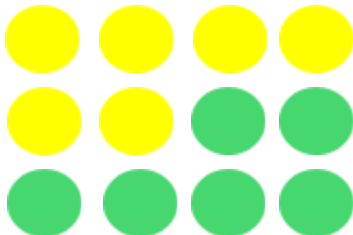
3) Green Party voters move in and the Yellow Party has fewer voters again (9-6). However, the state loses a district because other states grow even faster. Make sure the Yellow Party keeps its advantage with the state's **three districts** (groups of five).
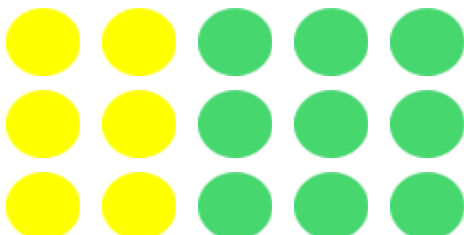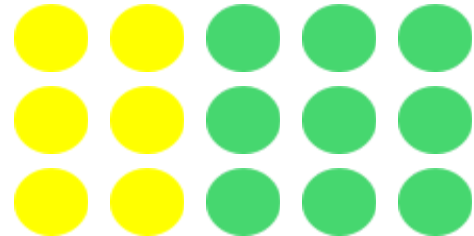
4) The Yellow Party remains in the minority (10-8), and now their voters don't live next to each other. The state still has **three districts**. Make sure Yellow Party keeps its majority (groups of six).
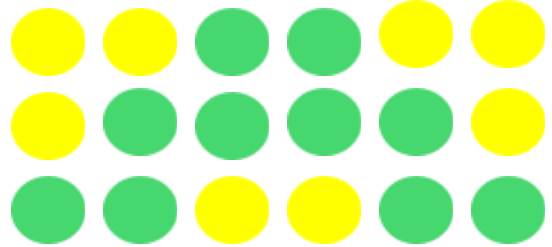
BONUS: Draw boundaries that yield the following results. This state has **five districts** (groups of three).
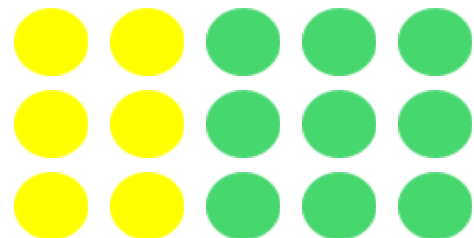
The **Green Party** receives the most advantageous map possible.

How many districts will go yellow? _____

How many districts will go green? _____

BONUS: The **Yellow Party** receives the most advantageous map possible.

How many districts will go yellow? _____

How many districts will go green? _____

Redistricting Game Discussion

1. What strategy did you use to gerrymander a member of the opposition party out of their seat to gain a seat for your party?

2. What strategy did you use to get all incumbents above 55% support from their party?

3. Why might it not be good for democracy if incumbents from both parties work together to protect each other? Isn't that good for democracy?

4. Did you have your map denied by the legislature, governor, or courts? What did you do to fix it?

5. What were the differences in motivations for a partisan gerrymander versus a bipartisan gerrymander?

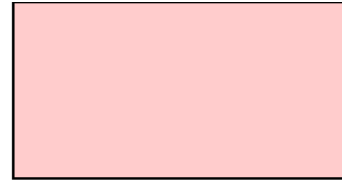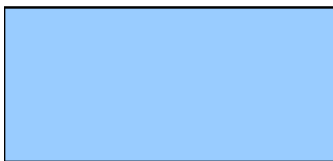## Issues Chart

MINIMUM WAGE

IMMIGRATION

HEALTH CARE

ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

GUN CONTROL

TAXES