

Teacher Background for Redrawing Democracy – 8th Grade

(This is for a refresher and to save you some Google-ing!)

Redistricting and Gerrymandering: What You Should Know:

What is Redistricting?

Redistricting is the process of redrawing the boundaries of voting districts every 10 years after the U.S. Census to reflect population changes. This ensures each district has roughly equal populations, supporting the principle of “one person, one vote.”

What is Gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering occurs when electoral district boundaries are drawn unfairly to favor one political party or group.

- **Cracking:** Splitting up a group so their votes are spread thin.
- **Packing:** Stuffing one group’s voters into a few districts to weaken their power elsewhere.

Georgia-Specific Background

- Georgia’s legislature redraws its maps after every census.
- In 2021, the maps were challenged in court for reducing Black voting power.
- In 2023, a federal court ruled the maps unfair and ordered new, fairer maps.
- For the 2024 elections, Georgia used new maps that added a majority-Black district; however, overall control of Congress remained the same.

National Context

- Many states are facing similar issues with unfair maps.
- The Supreme Court recently ruled in Alabama (Allen v. Milligan, 2023) that more majority-Black districts were needed.
- Some states use **independent commissions** to draw fairer maps, aiming to remove politics from the process.

Where to Use This in Class

Topic	Useful Activities
Definition of Gerrymandering	Show simple local examples (such as school zones and cafeteria seating maps); have students practice identifying unfairness.
Georgia's Redistricting Story	Provide printed Georgia district maps (old vs. new); have students color or mark differences.
Recent Legal Changes	Discuss fairness in simple terms: Why does it matter if some groups are underrepresented?
Civic Engagement	Use the civic reflection sheets to guide students in brainstorming how they can participate in their communities in the future.

Key Teacher Takeaways

Keep it simple. Focus on fairness, representation, and students' role as future voters. Avoid overwhelming them with legal details or technical data.

