



YES-NO-MAYBE: THE INSURRECTION ON THE CAPITOL BUILDING



Pro-Trump mob storms Capitol Building (Newsela)

Was the insurrection an attack on our democracy?

Rationale: In this lesson, students will learn how to take a stance by answering “yes”, “no” or “maybe” to a statement about the January 6th insurrection on the Capitol Building and explain their stance. This will enable students to further develop the fundamental habits for respectful listening, engaged dialogue, and peer opinion sharing, which are the foundations of democratic action.

Objective(s): Students will reflect on their opinions related to the insurrection on the Capitol Building and the message it sent about the current state of our country’s democracy.

Target Grade Levels: 5-8

Standards:

- **NJSLS-SS.6.1.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people’s lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information.
- **NJSLSA.R1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Focal SEL Skill(s): Social Awareness

- Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others.

Materials & Resources:

- Signs that indicate “Yes”, “No”, and “Maybe” (posted in corners of the room)
- Pencils
- Highlighters
- Notebook
- Copies of [Yes-No-Maybe Student Resource](#)
- Pictures of the attack on the U.S. Capitol Building (end of lesson plan)
- Copies of article ["Pro Trump mob storms U.S. Capitol, tries to overturn election"](#) by Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff
- Copies of [Yes-No-Maybe Lesson Reflection](#)

Timing: Two, forty-five minute periods

Lesson Procedure:

Part I: Introduction & Free Write (20 minutes)

1. Present two pictures to the students (see end of lesson plan) and explain that they both show pictures of the attack on the U.S. Capitol Building. ***“Today, we are going to examine your views on the insurrection that took place on January 6, 2021 at the Capitol Building, by engaging in activities with your classmates. We will then explore several statements related to the insurrection and the individuals and groups involved and have the opportunity to take a stance on each.”***
2. Explain that students will first engage in free writing related to the following prompts. First, they will record the statements as they are presented below on their worksheet. Then, given a statement, the students will write a few sentences

explaining their thoughts. *“For each statement, write whatever comes to your mind and do not focus on the structure or conventions. The intent is to help you sort out your thinking.”*

- *A: It is possible to take freedom too far.*
- *B: There are instances when insurrection is justified. (According to the Oxford Dictionary, an insurrection is a “violent uprising against an authority or government.”)*
- *C: The event was an attack on our democracy.*
- *D: Every individual who breached the Capitol committed a crime.*
- *E: The January 6th Capitol Breach was another attempt at voter suppression.*

Part II: Yes-No-Maybe Round I (25-30 minutes)

1. Tell students: *“Today, we are going to start learning some skills that you will need, now and as you get older, to be effective and involved citizens of your classrooms, your school, your community, and the wider world. It involves thinking about our own opinion on issues and considering others’ opinions as well.”*
2. Designate 3 separate spaces/areas in the room, one for “Yes”, “No”, and “Maybe”.
3. Tell students: *“I am going to read a sentence and when I am done, you will move to the Yes, No, or Maybe spot of the room depending on if you agree or not (Yes=agree, No=disagree, Maybe=not sure). If you agree and move to ‘Yes’, you have to share one reason why you agree. If you move to ‘No’, you have to say why you do not agree. If you pick ‘Maybe,’ you have to share both something you agree with and something you disagree with about the statement. Then, we will have a spokesperson from each of the areas summarize the main points of your discussion with the whole class.”*
 - *A: It is possible to take freedom too far.*
 - *B: There are instances when insurrection is justified. (According to the Oxford Dictionary, an insurrection is a “violent uprising against an authority or government.”)*
 - *C: The event was an attack on our democracy.*
 - *D: Every individual who breached the Capitol committed a crime.*

- *E: The January 6th Capitol Breach was another attempt at voter suppression.*
4. Have students return to their areas and reflect in their journals: “What surprised you about the activity? Did your opinion(s) change at all? If so, how?”

Part III: Reading about the Insurrection at the Capitol Building (15 minutes)

1. Have students read the article ["Pro Trump mob storms U.S. Capitol, tries to overturn election"](#) by Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff. Prior to the reading, you may want to define the term *insurrection* for your students as an act of revolting against the government. As they are reading, encourage students to annotate the article related to the four statements (either display them on the board or have the students refer to them in their notebooks). Students can annotate by assigning a color for each statement or using the letters they are assigned when writing notes in the margin.
2. Then, in your notebook, respond to: “What is the argument the author is trying to make? What evidence does he have to support the argument?”

Part IV: Yes-No-Maybe Round II (10-12 minutes)

1. Tell students: *“I will read the same statements from before, and you will move to the Yes, No, or Maybe spot of the room depending on if you agree or not (Yes = agree, No=disagree, Maybe=not sure). We will briefly share out after each YES-NO-MAYBE round. Then, reflect on this experience when you’re back to your seat.”*

Part V: Reflection & Assessment (5 minutes)

1. In your notebook, please respond to each of the following reflection prompts. (If you prefer for students to have a copy of a the worksheet with reflection questions, please refer to the Materials & Resources section.):
 - a. **Reflection 1:** Did your responses to any of the prompts change during this round? If you did experience changes, explain why that occurred as best as you can.
 - b. **Reflection 2:** What did you learn from this activity? Please be specific.
2. As a whole class, debrief how their perspectives have changed from the beginning to the end of the activity.

Formative Assessment: The reflection questions in Part IV can be presented as an “exit slip” or in an interactive format, using Jamboard. You can also have students create a Flipgrid video presenting their answers orally as another alternative.

Lesson Extension: Identify two examples of how the media’s portrayal of insurrections has influenced people’s perceptions. This can be a video clip, article, or social media post. Write a letter to the media outlet challenging their biased portrayal of the insurrection(s) and task them to consider all sides of the story.

Pro-Trump mob storms U.S. Capitol, tries to overturn election

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.07.21

Word Count **714**

Level **610L**



Image 1. A mob of Trump supporters are pictured before they broke through a police barrier on January 6, 2021, and stormed the Capitol in Washington, D.C. The rioters delayed but did not stop Congress voting to affirm President-elect Joe Biden's victory. Photo: John Minchillo/AP Photo

A violent mob loyal to President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, January 6. The Capitol is in Washington D.C. A mob is a large crowd of people that want to cause trouble or violence.

Lawmakers were forced to hide. They had to hide under their desks. Some had to hide in their offices. This was a surprising effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election. It was an effort to keep Joe Biden from replacing Trump in the White House. Trump is a Republican. Biden is a Democrat.

Biden is a former vice president. He worked under President Barack Obama. He was declared the winner of the November 3 election. He will become the president on January 20.

Lawmakers put gas masks on. Gas masks help you breathe if there is toxic gas in the air. Meanwhile, police tried to block the mob. A woman was killed inside the Capitol. More than 12

people were arrested.

Trump Encouraged The Rioters

Trump spent weeks attacking the election results. On Wednesday, he told supporters to go to the Capitol to protest. That is the same day Congress formally approved Biden's victory. Some Republicans had concerns about the presidential election results. The mob arrived before the vote was finished.

By evening the Capitol was cleared out. Lawmakers went back to counting votes. They were upset by the attack. They said they would stay all night to finish voting. Before dawn on Thursday, they finished. They confirmed Biden won the presidential election.

Vice President Mike Pence led the meeting. He announced the final tally. It was 306 for Biden. Trump got 232 electoral votes.

The vice president of the U.S. presides over the federal Senate. The vice president does not vote with the Senate. However, if there is a tie the vice president can break the tie.

Each state has a certain number of votes in the Electoral College. The number depends on the size of its population. For example, Wyoming has 585,000 people. So it gets three votes. California has 39,000,000 people. It gets 55 votes. The candidate who gets 270 out of 538 electoral votes wins the presidency. In almost every state, a candidate who wins more than half of the popular vote is awarded all of its electoral votes.



Trump tweeted at his followers. He told them it was time to "go home in peace." However, he said he still supported their cause.

Biden said American democracy was "under" attack. It was a comment echoed by many in Congress. Some Republican lawmakers agreed.

Protesters Broke Into The Capitol Building

There have been protests in front of the Capitol building for hundreds of years. There has also been violence. However, this time was different. This time it appeared the events started with the blessing of the president. It was also done to overturn a lawful election.

Electoral College results have to be officially counted. It is required by the Constitution.

The mob fought past police. This happened just after lawmakers began counting votes. The group broke into the building. They shouted and waved Trump and American flags. They marched through the halls. Lawmakers were told to duck under their seats for cover. They were told to put on gas masks after tear gas. This was after it was used in the Capitol Rotunda. Tear gas is often used by police to make crowds break up. Some House lawmakers tweeted they were sheltering in place in their offices.

Staff members grabbed the boxes of Electoral College votes as the evacuation took place. Senator Jeff Merkley is a Democrat from Oregon. He said if the boxes had not been grabbed the ballots likely would have been destroyed by the protesters.

Trump has repeatedly said there was voter fraud in the presidential election. Voter fraud is illegal action meant to change the election results. However, election officials do not agree. Members of Trump's government do not agree either. They say there were no problems that would change the results. All the states confirmed their results are fair and accurate. Officials from both parties confirmed the results.



(Retrieved from www.wburg.org - Thousands of Trump supporters storm the United States Capitol building following a "Stop the Steal" rally on Jan. 06, 2021 in Washington, DC. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)



(Retrieved from www.forbes.com - WASHINGTON DC, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES - 2021/01/06: Pro-Trump protesters break windows ... [+] PACIFIC PRESS/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES)