

THE DORR REBELLION

FACILITATION GUIDE

PREPERATION BEFORE CLASS

REVIEW BACKGROUND

Here's some background information to help prepare you to lead your students through this role-play.

SUMMARY

In 1841, Rhode Island was still operating under its colonial charter, which gave more power to rural areas than growing urban areas like Providence. A group of reformers in Rhode Island, led by Thomas Dorr, want to rewrite the state's constitution to broaden representation to include more urban, immigrant laborers. Students work together to craft a new state constituion by voting on proposals (see page 5).

KEY QUESTIONS

- Who should have the right to vote?
- How do you balance power between rural and urban areas?
- Who get's to write a state's constitution?

STUDENT ROLES

As students log into VOXPOP, they are distributed across the following five groups:

ARISTOCRATS	FARMERS	BLACK AMERICANS	REFORMERS	LABORERS
Aristocrats believe that only people who pay taxes should have a say in government. In Rhode Island, taxes are paid by landowners, and no one else. We should control how our money is spent!	Many Farmers' families have owned land in Rhode Island for generations. They're skeptical about expanding the vote to Laborers, who go wherever jobs are, and aren't committed to the state in the long term.	Black people supported the Reformers until they rejected the idea of Black suffrage. Now they're allied with Farmers and Aristocrats to support the existing government.	Many Reformers are already in positions of power. But they want more Rhode Islanders to have a say in government. We should not ignore the voices of everyday people!	Laborers live in cramped cities working 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Many are immigrants who came to find work. If they have to follow the state's laws, they should get a say in how those laws are made!

SETUP

Prepare to run the role-play in your classroom.

CREATE A SESSION

Create a session for each class period in which you will run the role-play. Go to:

voxpath.io/role-plays/the-dorr-rebellion

You will be asked to **Name** your session. We suggest naming it after the class period in which you will run it.

Then you will be asked to enter your **email address**, so we can send you an email with the link to the session. Save the email and use it to open the session when the class starts.

VOXPOP saves your progress as you play, so you can run the role-play over multiple days. Just click on the link in the email to re-open it.

DECIDE ON DURATION

In this guide, we suggest timings for a 60-minute session, including notes about sections that you can skip if you are pressed for time.

For a more relaxed experience, you can split the role-play into multiple sessions. Running a VOXPOP over two 45-minute sessions works particularly well. Look for the + in suggested timings to see where it's beneficial to add time. If you split the role-play into two sessions, we suggest ending the first day after the Issues (page 3). You can always revisit the videos the next day if you like. Just hit the Back button at the bottom.

CLASSROOM SETUP

When you're ready to start the role-play, use the link in the email to open the session on your classroom's main screen.

Students should each use an individual device to log in and interact with the role-play. They can use any web-enabled device, including PCs, Chromebooks, tablets and phones.

You can leave desks in their normal configuration, but students will be moving around the class and meeting in different groups throughout the role-play. They should carry their device with them when they move.



INTRODUCTION

During this phase students are introduced to the situation, read their profiles and get into character.

10 minutes total

ASSIGN PROFILES - 3 min

Before class starts, open the VOXPOP session you created on your classroom screen.

As students arrive they can log in on their web-enabled device by going to the **URL**

voxpath.run/core

Students should then enter the 6-character alphanumeric **Code** displayed on the classroom screen.

They will be asked to type in a display name.

- If students are returning to a session that's already in progress, they must type their name exactly as they did before. Names are case- and punctuation-sensitive.
- Names will be displayed on the classroom screen.

As students log in, they will be assigned to **Groups** and their name will appear on the screen.

If students arrive late, you can bring up the **URL** & session **Code** by clicking on .

WELCOME - 1.5 min

A video introduces students to VOXPOP.

THE SITUATION - 4 min

A video provides the historical background that students need to know.

PROFILES - 3 min

Your students receive information about their roles, including their **Group** and a personal **Bio**.

Students should hit the yellow button on their screen when they're done reading.

INTRODUCTIONS - 3 min

In this phase, students get into character by introducing themselves to one another.

Walk around and look at your students' profiles to get a sense of who they are.



VALUES

During this phase students discuss their group's goals and share them with the class.

10 minutes total

VALUES INTRO - 1 min

A video explains the next activity.

DISCUSS VALUES - 4+ min

Students meet with their **Group** and establish common goals.

Each **Group** has a different question to discuss. The questions are listed below along with their group's perspective on the value. Each **Group** must each select one representative to explain the answer to the class.

REFORMERS value EQUALITY	FARMERS value LOYALTY	LABORERS value POWER	BLACK AMERICANS value RIGHTS	ARISTOCRATS value FAIRNESS
<p>Does the state treat Rhode Islanders equally?</p> <p>The government only listens to landowners. Poor Rhode Islanders deserve just as much say in government as any rich man!</p>	<p>Why can landowners be trusted to do what's best for Rhode Island?</p> <p>People who own land are committed to Rhode Island's future. Landowners will make decisions that are good for the state in the long term.</p>	<p>Who should have power in Rhode Island?</p> <p>Just because we don't own property doesn't mean we aren't Rhode Islanders! We should have a say in the laws that govern us.</p>	<p>Who will support Black rights?</p> <p>Dorr's supporters don't want Black people to vote. City workers attack us and our homes. At least we have a chance with farmers and country aristocrats!</p>	<p>Why is it fair for taxpayers to have the greatest say in government?</p> <p>Only landowners pay taxes. They should decide how state money is spent. City people would just use the government to enrich themselves!</p>

SHARE YOUR VALUES - 5 min

In this phase, students practice public speaking and learn about the other **Groups**.

Encourage **Groups** to cheer for each other and show support for the **Values** that align with theirs.

As you click **Next**, the software will call up the **Groups**, in this order:

- REFORMERS
- FARMERS
- LABORERS
- BLACK AMERICANS
- ARISTOCRATS

ISSUES

During this phase, we break the challenge facing the class into three issues.

8 minutes total

ISSUES INTRO - 1 min

A video explains the next activity.

THE ISSUES - 7+ min

VOXPOP divides the conflict into three main **Issues**. There is one video per **Issue**.


These are the **Issues**:

SUFFRAGE	LEGISLATURE	CONSTITUTION
<p>According to Laborers and Reformers, the American Revolution was fought so that the power of government could transfer to all men, not just some of them.</p> <p>Unlike Laborers who don't own land, Farmers and Aristocrats pay taxes. They argue you should have to pay taxes to earn the right to vote.</p> <p>When the Dorrites voted to only push for universal White male suffrage, Black Americans turned to the Farmers and Aristocrats. They hope that the existing government will appreciate their support, and expand their legal rights.</p> <p>Who should have the right to vote in Rhode Island?</p>	<p>The state legislature writes the laws that govern Rhode Island. Dorr and his supporters want to redistribute seats in the legislature: that is, to change how many representatives there are for each part of the state. The current legislature overrepresents rural areas at the expense of urban areas.</p> <p>How should we distribute power across the state?</p>	<p>Laborers and Reformers argue that the authority to change the government must come from the people.</p> <p>Black Americans, Aristocrats and Farmers argue that the Reformers are actually traitors. They're trying to overthrow the government from the outside.</p> <p>Who gets to write a state's constitution?</p>

POST-VIDEO DISCUSSIONS - Time-permitting

A discussion question will appear after each video plays, with suggestions for groups to call on. These classwide discussions are a good way to review the **Issues** and establish alliances between **Groups**.

However, **they are not necessary, and discussion is not included in the time estimates** given in this guide.

If you choose to answer the questions with your class, remind students to click the **Perspective** button  to learn more about what their group thinks.

COMMITTEES

During this section, students are divided into committees to work on one of the three issues.

10 minutes total

COMMITTEE INTRO - 1 min

A video explains the next activity.

WORK IN COMMITTEES - 9 min

In this phase, students must work with members of other **Groups** to select proposals that address the crisis.

Students from each **Group** are distributed across three **Committees**.

In their **Committees**, students:

- Vote on their individual devices to select one **Proposal** for a whole class vote,
- Pick a representative to explain and argue for their **Proposal** to the class,
- If applicable, pick a representative to present arguments against the proposal.

These are the **Proposals**:

COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE	COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATURE	COMMITTEE ON POWER
<p>SUFFRAGE FOR LANDOWNERS</p> <p>Keep the current voting system: only White men who own land in the state of Rhode Island can vote.</p> <p>Supporters: FARMERS, ARISTOCRATS</p>	<p>REPRESENTATION BY TOWN</p> <p>Each town and city ward gets one representative in the state legislature. This mirrors the U.S. Senate.</p> <p>Supporters: FARMERS, ARISTOCRATS</p>	<p>CONSTITUTION BY LEGISLATURE</p> <p>The current state legislature writes a new constitution and puts it to a statewide vote.</p> <p>Supporters: ARISTOCRATS, BLACK AMERICANS</p>
<p>SUFFRAGE FOR ALL WHITE MEN</p> <p>All adult White men who have lived in Rhode Island for over 1 year can vote.</p> <p>Supporters: REFORMERS, LABORERS</p>	<p>REPRESENTATION BY POPULATION</p> <p>Seats in the legislature are based on population. This mirrors the U.S. House of Representatives.</p> <p>Supporters: REFORMERS, LABORERS</p>	<p>CONSTITUTION BY MAJORITY</p> <p>All citizens of Rhode Island, including non-voters, write and vote on a constitution. They don't need government approval.</p> <p>Supporters: REFORMERS, LABORERS</p>

Your students' devices have more information about the proposals they can access by clicking 

Ask your students to tell you more about the proposals.

VOTE & EPILOGUE

During this section, students debate the solutions, cast votes, learn about what really happened and reflect on the experience.

17 minutes total

VOTE INTRO - 1 min

A video explains the next activity.

DEBATE & VOTE - 9 min

The class decides by majority vote whether to pass the **Proposals** selected by the **Committees**.

This is an opportunity for students to practice public speaking as they attempt to persuade classmates to vote for or against proposals.

Encourage debate! This is the last chance to address the crisis.

As you click **Next**, the website will prompt a **DEBATE** and then a **VOTE** on each proposal, in this order:

COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION

WHAT HAPPENED - 7+ min

An **Epilogue** video explains what really happened.

When the video is done playing, these suggested discussion questions appear:

- There are many people in the U.S. who cannot vote. Who are they? Do you think they should have the right to vote?
- If the government did not represent your interests, how would you try to change it?

The post-activity discussion gives students time to decompress from the role-playing experience.