Gerrymandering: Right or Wrong?

An Explanatory Performance Task

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Gerrymandering: Right or Wrong?   Classroom Activity

This Classroom Activity introduces students to the concept of gerrymandering.   The purpose of this activity is to develop background information so that students are not disadvantaged in demonstrating the skills the task intends to assess. Contextual elements include: an understanding of the setting or situation in which the task is placed, potentially unfamiliar concepts that are associated with the scenario; and key terms or vocabulary students will need to understand in order to meaningfully engage with and complete the performance task. The Classroom Activity should be easy to implement with clear instructions.

Please read through the entire Classroom Activity before beginning the activity with students to ensure any classroom preparation can be competed in advance.

Throughout the activity it is permissible to pause and ask students if they have any questions.

Resources Needed:
- Ability to play a video with sound for the class
- Ability to draw on transparency or project the **Gerrymandering - Handout 1** (NOTE: Teacher may need to create a screen capture of the handout or the area maps to use with electronic whiteboard technology (SMARTBoard).
- A copy of **Gerrymandering - Handout 1** sheet and pencil for each student (Students who need an accommodation may use their preferred tool for writing.)

- **For Performance Task: (Pages 1-17 – back pages)**
    - One copy of Gerrymandering: Right or Wrong? Performance Task per student
    - Paper for notes and writing tool
    - Lined paper for final writing
    - OPTIONAL Delaware Map (Page 17)

Learning Goal:

- Students will understand the context of the key concepts related to the topic:
    - Gerrymandering is a term to describe how election district boundaries are decided.
    - Gerrymandering can be seen as beneficial if a new election district is more homogeneous with like-political views afforded to minorities and may also be seen as harmful if a new district does not have the diversity that may be required so that alternative viewpoints be shared.
    - There are rules about what boundaries can be used to create a district, the ideal number of voters per district, and that a district should be contiguous when possible.

Gerrymandering: Right or Wrong?   Classroom Activity

 [Purpose: The facilitator's goal is to help students understand the key concept of gerrymandering, how drawing regions differently may create regions of homogeneous voters or diverse voters. This activity will allow students to be active participants as they explore the concept of gerrymandering and creating regions based on demographic data in the context of the performance assessment.]

Note: The following section can be modified to accommodate various teacher-student interaction types such as teacher-led discussion with the entire class, teacher-student discussion for remote locations with a single student, or small groups.

[Place the students in small groups of two to four students, seated so that all can view the video.]

Facilitator says: "Gerrymandering is a term to describe how some election districts have been created. Essentially, it is the process of giving one political party an advantage over another political party by redrawing district lines. Districts that are 'gerrymandered' often have unique shapes to create an election district of voters with similar characteristics, such as race, age, occupation, or income. In preparation for your performance task, we will discuss the different ways that election districts can be created. First let's view a short video on gerrymandering**. During the video note the different ways that election districts have been formed.** "

Facilitator shows the following video:

Gerrymandering: How drawing jagged lines can impact an election - Christina Greer, 3:53

http://ed.ted.com/lessons/gerrymandering-how-drawing-jagged-lines-can-impact-an-election-christina-greer

Facilitator says: "Did you note the different ways that gerrymandering occurs? In your group, take two minutes to discuss the different ways that district lines can be formed to get one political party an advantage.   Be prepared to share the different ways discussed by your group.**"**

[Give students two minutes to discuss their thoughts.]

[After about two minutes, have students share their ideas with the class. The teacher should write down the different methods discussed

Possible class discussion answers *(unscripted):*

- Gerrymandering
    - The process of giving one political party an advantage over another political party by redrawing district lines
- Packing a district
    - Decreases the opponents voting strength and influence
- Cracking a district
    - Breaks up a monopoly of voters

Facilitator says: "That is correct. Packing and cracking are two ways to organize districts so that one party would remain in control. Now we will look closer at how district lines are drawn.

Each group will receive a simulated population map of voters represented by Xs and Os. The location of the Xs and Os represents the location of that voter's home. Each group will read the description of the voting area and create 3 voting districts."

[Facilitator distributes 1 copy of Handout 1 to each group. Read the directions and three separate plans to the students if needed.]

Facilitator says: "Each of the boxes below represent a region. The region has X voters and O voters. There are 15 total voters. Which voters make up the majority and which voters make up the minority?"

[Wait for responses. There are 9 X voters making the majority and 6 O voters making a minority.]

Facilitator says: "That is correct. With 9 X voters, they are the majority. And with 6 O voters, they are the minority. I will now show you how to draw districts. I will read the directions to the example. "

[The facilitator will read the directions and show the students how to create 3 equal-sized districts.]

Facilitator says: "Example. Draw three districts. Use the edges of the boxes as boundaries. Each district must be contiguous, meaning that all five voters must be in a single group and adjacent or touching. Count the number of minority and majority voters in each district. How many minority districts and majority districts were created?"

[As you draw the first district, model your thinking]

Facilitator says: "I'll draw the first district by going across the top and picking up three voters, then down to pick up the two Os." [Draw the first district.] Then I need another district of 5 voters. So I'll pick up the X from row two and make a "L" district. [Draw the second district.] That leaves these 5 voters in a district. [Outline the third district.] I can label these as District 1, 2, and 3. [Draw the numbers 1, 2 and 3 in the appropriate districts.][The district should look like:]
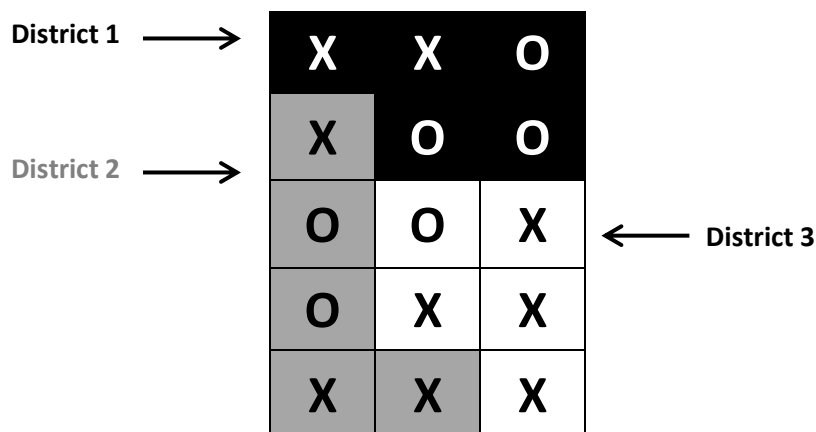
Facilitator says: "How many Xs and Os are there in District 1? Is it a majority district or minority district?" [Next to the Number 1, write O]. "Yes, District 1 is an O or minority district. What about District 2? Majority or minority?" [Next to the Number 2, write a X]. "That's right. District 2 is a X district or majority district. And the last district, District 3…Is it a majority or minority district?" [Next to the number 3 write X.] "Yes, District 3 is also a majority district. So there is one minority district and two majority districts. If there was an election, it is highly likely that the majority party would win."

[At this point it is up to the teacher's discretion as to whether students should work through all three plans as a group and then have a discussion **or** to work through each plan one at a time. The following is scripted for working through each plan individually.]

Facilitator says: "Now we will work through each plan: A, B, and C in our groups and discuss the plan one at a time. Take a minute to read the directions for Plan A and take two minutes in your group to discuss how to create the three districts."

[Give students two minutes to work on Plan A. Call on a group to share their solution which should look like the following:]

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

Facilitator says: "That's correct. In order to have three contiguous, uniformly shaped districts, the districts would be drawn using the columns. How many majority and minority districts are there in Plan A? [pause] Yes, each district is a majority or X district. Now take two minutes in your group to decide how to meet the criteria for Plan B."

[Give students two minutes to work on Plan B. Call on a group to share their solution which should look like one of the following or the example that was given earlier.]

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

← This solution was suggested by Brianna during field testing.

Facilitator says: "That's correct. You can draw the districts this way in order to have three contiguous districts with 2 minority districts and 1 majority district. Now take two minutes in your group to decide how to meet the criteria for Plan C."

[Give students two minutes to work on Plan B. Call on a group to share their solution which should look like one of the following:]

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

These solutions were suggested by Alex and Anthony during field testing.

Facilitator says: "That's correct. You can draw the districts this way in order to have three contiguous districts with 2 minority districts and 1 majority district. Every 10 years the U.S. Government takes a census, which means to count the number of people. The data from the census is then used by legislatures to make sure that districts are as close to equal in number as possible. From this exercise you can see how the way the districts are drawn can give different political parties an advantage.

With your group discuss and list the different labels or demographic identities that could be considered when creating new election districts. In other words what maps or data should be considered when creating new election districts? Take 2 minutes to discuss with your group."

[Examples may include: age, race, income, political party affiliation.]

Facilitator says: "Yes, age, race, income, and political party affiliation are all good examples of the data that is required to make redistricting decisions. This information will help you in completing the remainder of the Performance Task."

Gerrymandering - Handout 1

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

Example. Draw three districts. Use the edges of the boxes as boundaries. Each district must be contiguous, meaning that all five voters must be in a single group and adjacent or touching.

Count the number of minority and majority voters in each district. How many minority districts and majority districts were created?

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

Plan A

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

Plan B

X	X	O
X	O	O
O	O	X
O	X	X
X	X	X

Plan C

Directions: Each of the areas above are the same. Each area is populated by 9 Xs and 6 Os, but by gerrymandering each area into three districts, different results can be obtained. You and your group should draw lines to form three equal area districts (5 squares) with the following characteristics:

> **Plan A** – Very uniform districts (same shape). Each district will have a 3Xs and 2Os. In each district the Xs are the majority.

> **Plan B** - Packed district. Create three contiguous districts with one minority district "packed" by two majority districts.

> **Plan C** – Cracked district. Create three contiguous districts with two minority districts "cracked", so that only one majority district is formed.

With your group discuss and list the different labels or demographic identities that could be considered when creating new election districts.

Scoring Rubrics (Teacher Use Only)

Part I – Research Questions (35 Minutes)

Item #	Grade	Claim	Target	DOK	Item Standard	Evidence Statement
1	11	4	4	3	RH-1	Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

1. Some of the sources suggest problems with gerrymandering. Provide **two** pieces of evidence, one piece of evidence from each of two different sources, and explain how each piece of evidence supports this claim. Identify the source of each piece of evidence by title or number.

Rubric:

Score	Rationale
2	Response provides an adequate evidence-based explanation of how the evidence in a source supplements the information in another source. The explanation is supported by one piece of evidence from each of the two other sources. Student cites the source for each piece of evidence.
1	Response provides a limited evidence-based explanation of how the evidence in a source supplements the information in another source. The explanation is supported by one piece of vague or loosely related evidence from each of the two other sources. Student cites the source for each piece of evidence.
0	The response is incorrect, insufficient, or irrelevant for this question.

Exemplar:

(2 points)- Although not all cases of gerrymandering are problematic, most do affect the democratic process in a negative way. One obvious problem with gerrymandering is that it gives one political party an advantage over the other by unfairly drawing district lines. In the article titled "Not All Gerrymanders are Bad" they mention Maryland's 3rd congressional district. In this district, the legislatures have used gerrymandering to favor Democrats and it is working. Seven Democrats and only one Republican represent the constituents of Maryland. Another problem with gerrymandering is that it limits and sometimes eliminates the third party option in elections. According to the article "Midterms Prove Gerrymandering's Effect", no other political parties even bother running in Virginia. The voters are "cheated out of choice" which is opposite of a democracy.

(1 point)- There are many problems with gerrymandering. One problem with gerrymandering is that it gives one political party an advantage over another (Source 5). Another problem with gerrymandering is that it doesn't allow voters a choice in elections. In some districts in Virginia politicians are redrawing lines to benefit their party (Source 3).

(0 points)- Gerrymandering is a problem. We need to try and stop it. We should go to Congress and fight against it.

Item #	Grade	Claim	Target	DOK	Item Standard	Evidence Statement
2	11	4	2	3	W-8,WHST-8	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source.

2. Choose the **two** answers below that correctly paraphrase information about gerrymandering by integrating information from both Source #2 and Source #3.
   a. Gerrymandering gives one political party an advantage over another
   b. Gerrymandering does not allow third party options
   c. Legislators gerrymander to benefit some districts over others
   d. Legislators in some districts gerrymander to favor their party leadership
   e. Gerrymandering ensures that ethnic groups earn majority status
   f. Legislators gerrymander to ensure other parties have no influence

Answer is A and D.

Item #	Grade	Claim	Target	DOK	Item Standard	Evidence Statement
3	11	4	3	3	WHST-8	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source.

3. Explain which source most likely has the most credible information about the negative effects of gerrymandering. Support your explanation using **two** pieces of evidence from the most credible source. Identify the source of the evidence by title or number.

Rubric:

Score Point	Description
2	Response is an identification and an adequate evidence-based explanation of which source most likely has the most credible information for students researching about the negative effects of gerrymandering supported by two pieces of evidence from the identified source.
1	Response is an identification and an adequate evidence-based explanation of which source has the most credible information for students researching about the negative effects of gerrymandering supported by one piece of evidence from the identified source.
0	Response is an explanation that is insufficient, incorrect or irrelevant. Just identifying the source is insufficient.

Exemplar:

(2 points)- Sources 2 gave examples of how Gerrymandering can be used to manipulate the democratic process. In Source #2, "Not All Gerrymanders are Bad" the author cited Maryland's 3rd Congressional District in which Republicans are underrepresented by 7 to 1 due to redistricting. Also, in Source 2 Maryland was cited as having examples of redistricting done to give an advantage to one political party.

(1 point)- In source #3, "Midterms Prove Gerrymandering's Effect" they give the example of Virginia in which 11 out of 11 seats in the House of Representatives were won by Republicans.

(0 points)- In many states gerrymandering is allowed and it isn't fair. The articles all mention that.

	4-Point Explanatory Performance Task Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)				
Score	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**NS**
Organization/Purpose	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure, creating a sense of unity and completeness. The organization is fully sustained between and within paragraphs. The response is consistently and purposefully focused:	The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness. Though there may be minor flaws, they do not interfere with the overall coherence. The organization is adequately sustained between and within paragraphs. The response is generally focused:	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure. Some flaws are evident, and some ideas may be loosely connected. The organization is somewhat sustained between and within paragraphs. The response may have a minor drift in focus:	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure. The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no focus:	• Insufficient (includes copied text) • In a language other than English • Off-topic • Off-purpose
	• thesis/controlling idea of a topic is clearly communicated, and the focus is strongly maintained for the purpose and audience	• thesis/controlling idea of a topic is clear, and the focus is mostly maintained for the purpose and audience	• thesis/controlling idea of a topic may be somewhat unclear, or the focus may be insufficiently sustained for the purpose and/or audience	• thesis/controlling idea may be confusing or ambiguous; response may be too brief or the focus may drift from the purpose and/or audience	
	• consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between and among ideas	• adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety to clarify the relationships between and among ideas	• inconsistent use of transitional strategies and/or little variety	• few or no transitional strategies are evident	
	• effective introduction and conclusion	• adequate introduction and conclusion	• introduction or conclusion, if present, may be weak	• introduction and/or conclusion may be missing	
	• logical progression of ideas from beginning to end; strong connections between and among ideas with some syntactic variety	• adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end; adequate connections between and among ideas	• uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end; and/or formulaic; inconsistent or unclear connections between and among ideas	• frequent extraneous ideas may be evident; ideas may be randomly ordered or have an unclear progression	

	4-Point Explanatory Performance Task Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)				
Score	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**NS**
Evidence/Elaboration	The response provides thorough elaboration of the support/evidence for the thesis/controlling idea that includes the effective use of source material. The response clearly and effectively develops ideas, using precise language: • comprehensive evidence (facts and details) from the source material is integrated, relevant, and specific • clear citations or attribution to source material • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques* • vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • effective, appropriate style enhances content	The response provides adequate elaboration of the support/evidence for the thesis/controlling idea that includes the use of source material. The response adequately develops ideas, employing a mix of precise and more general language: • adequate evidence (facts and details) from the source material is integrated and relevant, yet may be general • adequate use of citations or attribution to source material • adequate use of some elaborative techniques* • vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose • generally appropriate style is evident	The response provides uneven, cursory elaboration of the support/evidence for the thesis/controlling idea that includes uneven or limited use of source material. The response develops ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • some evidence (facts and details) from the source material may be weakly integrated, imprecise, repetitive, vague, and/or copied • weak use of citations or attribution to source material • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques*; development may consist primarily of source summary • vocabulary use is uneven or somewhat ineffective for the audience and purpose • inconsistent or weak attempt to create appropriate style	The response provides minimal elaboration of the support/evidence for the thesis/controlling idea that includes little or no use of source material. The response is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • evidence (facts and details) from the source material is minimal, irrelevant, absent, incorrectly used, or predominantly copied • insufficient use of citations or attribution to source material • minimal, if any, use of elaborative techniques* • vocabulary is limited or ineffective for the audience and purpose • little or no evidence of appropriate style	• Insufficient (includes copied text) • In a language other than English • Off-topic • Off-purpose

*Elaborative techniques may include the use of personal experiences that support the thesis/controlling idea.

2-Point
Explanatory
Performance Task Writing Rubric (Grades 6-11)

Score	2	1	0	NS
Conventions	**The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions:** • adequate use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling	**The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions:** • limited use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling	**The response demonstrates little or no command of conventions:** • infrequent use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling	• Insufficient (includes copied text) • In a language other than English • Off-topic • Off-purpose

Holistic Scoring:

- **Variety:** A range of errors includes sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling.
- **Severity:** Basic errors are more heavily weighted than higher-level errors.
- **Density:** The proportion of errors to the amount of writing done well. This includes the ratio of errors to the length of the piece.

Gerrymandering: Right or Wrong? Performance Task

Task:

Every 10 years, the Delaware State Senate is tasked with redrawing the 21 senatorial districts based on the federal census results.   According to a press release from the Delaware State Senate, there is currently a four-week comment period in which residents may submit their plans, suggestions, and requests in writing to the Delaware State Senate. Proposals will then be circulated to the media and reviewed at a public hearing in the spring. During that hearing, officials will collect opinions on the proposal, which will be taken into account as the state senate revises its final redistricting plan.

You become intrigued and decide to do some research about redistricting. During your own research, you found five sources about gerrymandering and the current state law regarding redistricting.

After you have looked at these sources, you will answer some questions about them. Briefly scan the sources and the three questions that follow. Then, go back and read the sources carefully so you will have the information you will need to answer the questions and complete your research. You may use scratch paper to take notes on the information you find in the sources as you read.

In Part 2, you will write an explanatory proposal on a topic related to the sources.

Directions for Beginning:
You will now examine several sources. You can re-examine any of the sources as often as you like.

Research Questions:
After examining the research sources, use the remaining time in Part 1 to answer three questions about them. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, your answers will help you think about the information you have read, which should help you write your explanatory article.

You may refer back to your scratch paper to look at your notes when you think it would be helpful. Answer the questions in the spaces below the items.

Your written notes on scratch paper will be available to you in Part 1 and Part 2 of the performance task.

Part 1: Sources for Performance Task

Source #1

The following is the current law and policy statement in Delaware regarding the determining of senatorial district boundaries.

DEL CODE § 804 : Delaware Code - Section 804: DETERMINING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES; CRITERIA
In determining the boundaries of the several representative and senatorial districts within the State, the General Assembly shall use the following criteria. Each district shall, insofar as is possible: (1) Be formed of contiguous territory; (2) Be nearly equal in population; (3) Be bounded by major roads, streams or other natural boundaries; and (4) Not be created so as to unduly favor any person or political party. 29 Del. C. 1953, § 606; 54 Del. Laws, c. 360; 56 Del. Laws, c. 243; 63 Del. Laws, c. 183, § 1; 68 Del. Laws, c. 188, § 1; 73 Del. Laws, c. 243, § 1.;

§ 804A Determining district boundaries for incarcerated individuals; criteria.

(a) The General Assembly, in determining the reapportionment and redistricting for the State, applying the criteria set forth in § 804 of this title, and using the official reporting of the federal decennial census as set forth in § 805 of this title, shall not count as part of the population in a given district boundary any incarcerated individual who:

(1) Was incarcerated in a state or federal correctional facility, as determined by the decennial census; and

(2) Was not a resident of the State before the person's incarceration.

(b) The General Assembly, in determining the reapportionment and redistricting for the State as provided in this subchapter, shall count as part of the population in a given district boundary any individual incarcerated in a state or federal correctional facility, as determined by the decennial census, if the individual was a resident of the State prior to incarceration. Such individual shall be counted for reapportionment and redistricting purposes at the individual's last known residence prior to incarceration.

Policy Statement Excerpt: Delaware State Senate, 2011.

"Each representative district must contain an average of 21,900 residents and be within plus or minus 5 percent (20,805 to 22,995 people);

Each district must:

 "As required by Delaware law, the Senate will create 21 senatorial districts in the 2011 redistricting plan, with those districts generally apportioned according to the population's concentration and/or disbursement throughout the state. The ideal senatorial district population based on the 2010 census count is 42,759. By law, districts may be within plus or minus five per cent of this number.
 Citizens of Delaware may offer input on the redistricting process, including matters such as community and civic interests, and population and statistics related to counties, municipalities and various localities throughout the state."

Source #2

This is an article about gerrymandering in Arizona.

Not All Gerrymanders are Bad

Wednesday, May 5, 2010.   2:08 pm *in Uncategorized by* <u>inoljt</u>

By: Inoljt, http://mypolitikal.com/

Attacking gerrymandering these days is as popular as saying Wall Street needs reform. It's a truism; everybody agrees with that "gerrymandering is bad," just as everybody agrees that breathing is good.

Gerrymanders do get pretty ridiculous. Consider Maryland's 3rd congressional district:
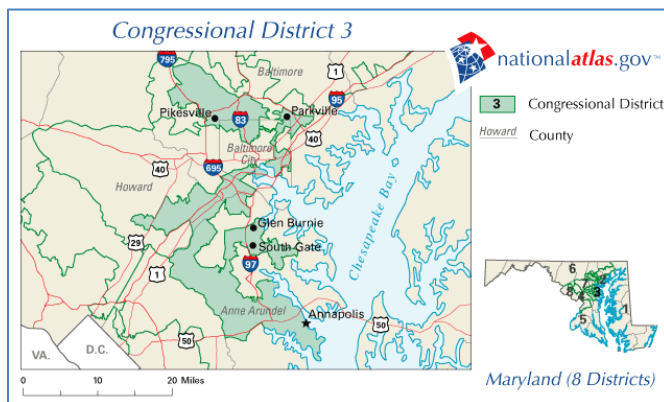
Maryland's legislature designed this gerrymander to favor Democrats. And it worked: Maryland is represented by seven Democrats and one Republican.

You can probably go search a few terrible gerrymanders of your own; they're not exactly difficult to find. For the purposes of this post, however, I will be concentrating on one particular gerrymander: Arizona's 2nd congressional district.

Here is how it looks:
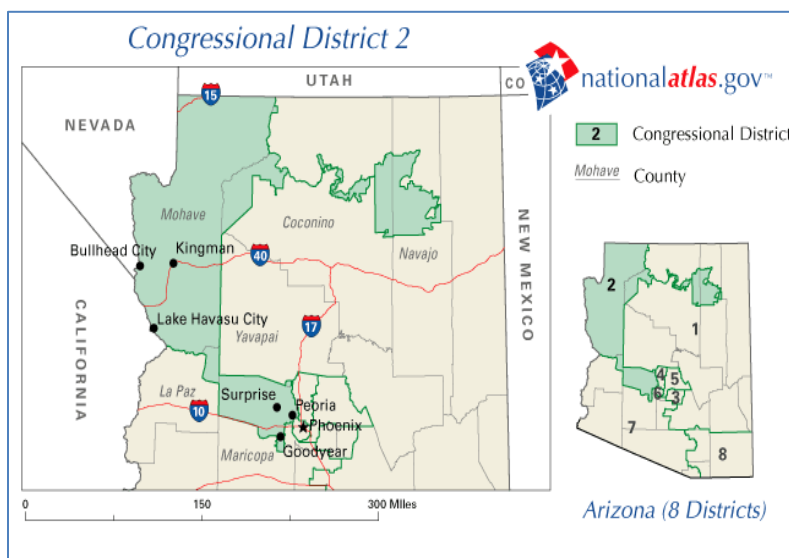
Most observers will probably label this example as just another egregious attempt to favor one party or the other. One look at that incredibly strange-looking right arm certainly adds credence to this theory.

Arizona's congressional districts, however, are drawn by an independent redistricting committee, not the state legislature. The purpose of this gerrymander is distinctly different from what most casual observers would first presume.

Take a look at Arizona's Indian reservations:
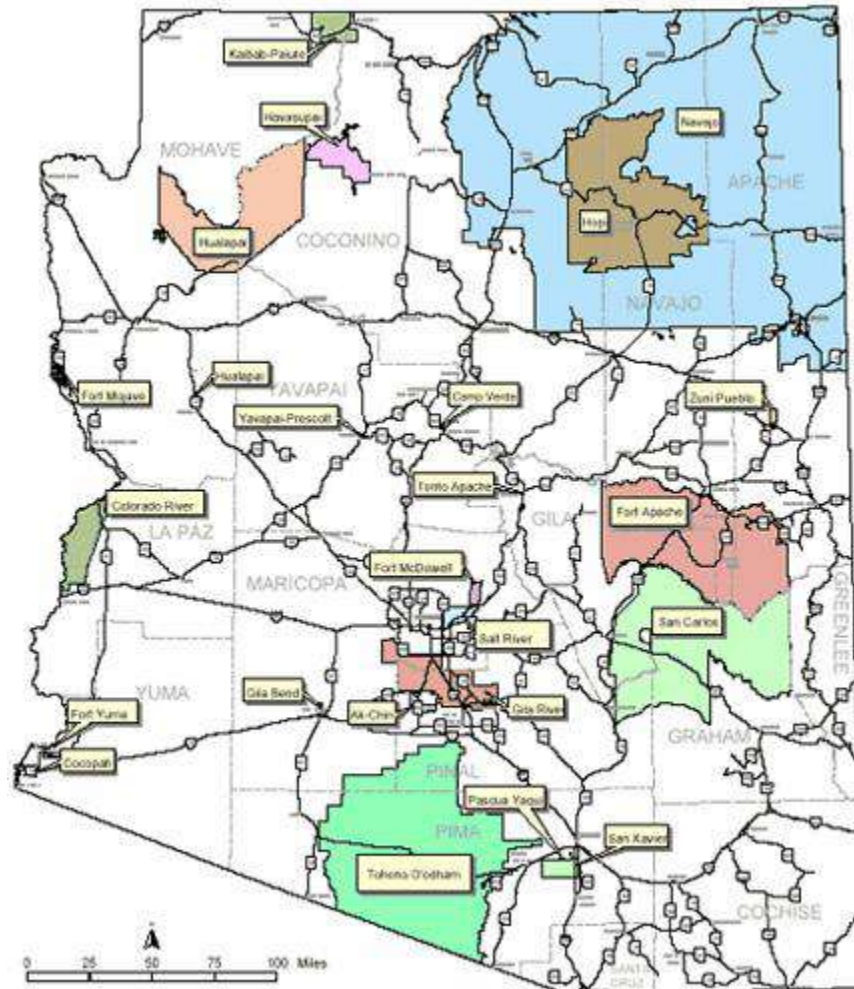
That brown-colored northeast reservation perfectly matches Arizona's 2nd district. It's the Hopi Indian reservation. Completely encircling it is the Navajo Indian reservation, colored in blue.

The Hopi and Navajo tribes have a long history of conflict and land disputes. Having both tribes represented by one congressman would be inappropriate; Arizona's Independent Redistricting Commission therefore gerrymandered its districts to separate the tribes.

The lesson here is not that gerrymandering is good, but that it can be used for good. 99% of gerrymanders are probably bad; the practice badly needs reform. But we ought be wary when labeling anything as universally negative, lest we forget the other 1%.

Source: User "INOLJT". (May 5, 2010). Not All Gerrymanders are Bad (Blog post). Retrieved from http://my.firedoglake.com/inoljt/tag/hopi/

Source #3

This article is an editorial written gerrymandering in Virginia.

Opinion/Column: Midterms prove gerrymandering's effect

Bob Gibson | Posted: Sunday, November 16, 2014 12:45 am

This month's elections proved again that Virginia is one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation.

Eleven out of 11 winners of seats in the House of Representatives won in blowout landslides.

The closest election for a House seat was the 16-point triumph by newcomer Barbara Comstock, a McLean Republican, over Democrat John Faust of Fairfax in a 36,000-vote thumping.

Virginia is one of the top seven most gerrymandered states, according to a study in Governing magazine that measured compactness of congressional districts.

In congressional as well as in state legislative districts, politicians are choosing their voters when district lines are drawn instead of allowing voters to choose their politicians in fairly drawn, competitive districts.

Maryland, Louisiana, North Carolina and West Virginia are worse — if there is any cold comfort in finding states with congressional districts drawn in even more bizarre shapes than in Virginia, that make even less sense to voters and that render competition unrealistic.

What is gerrymandering? It is the deliberate manipulation of legislative district boundaries to benefit a particular party, or to cause harm to an opposing party or group.

It is one of the worst forms of unethical political corruption, according to Greg Lucyk, a leader in the group OneVirginia2021: Virginians for Fair Redistricting.

Lucyk is no casual observer of the process. He is a Richmond lawyer who handled redistricting cases for the Virginia attorney general's office for decades and later held a top administrative job at the Virginia Supreme Court.

He views the current redistricting process in Virginia as pure, self-interested political manipulation and believes districts should be drawn by an independent commission to take gerrymandering out of the process.

A.E. Dick Howard, the University of Virginia law professor who helped draft Virginia's 1971 revised Constitution, agrees that the issue is massively important.

"If the mandate of one-person-one vote was the generational issue of the 1960s, then eliminating political gerrymandering may be the issue of our time," Howard said in the January issue of Virginia Business magazine.

State legislative districts are even worse in many cases than gerrymandering is in Virginia for Congress, as last year's lack of competitive races proved.

In 24 Democratic-controlled districts and 33 Republican-controlled House of Delegates districts, no other party even bothered to run a candidate. In several other House districts, only nominal opposition surfaced from relatively unknown third-party candidates.

When a state has 100 House of Delegates districts and only at most a dozen are considered competitive, then voters are cheated out of a choice and democracy is seriously undermined. The cost of running and winning an election in a competitive district skyrockets as a result.

Gerrymandering distorts Virginia's electoral maps, reduces or eliminates competition in November elections, promotes partisanship and polarization and impedes compromise while producing legislative gridlock.

Lucyk made all of those points Nov. 6 in a public hearing at the University of Virginia held by the bipartisan ethics commission appointed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe.

At the public hearing, Herb Stewart, a University of Virginia assistant professor of psychiatry, told the commission that fair redistricting is the No. 1 remedy needed to increase public trust in government.

After Lucyk and Stewart spoke, about 40 members of the public showed their support for redistricting reform in a nearly unanimous show of hands that impressed the commission, said Rick Boucher, who co-chairs commission with former Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling.

Boucher plans to submit recommendations to the General Assembly to improve redistricting in the session that starts Jan. 14.

Lucyk said he would like to see the General Assembly ask the people of Virginia about redistricting reform. He is proposing that the legislature pass a referendum for voters to consider: "Should the Virginia General Assembly adopt a resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of Virginia establishing an independent Virginia Redistricting Commission that will create redistricting plans and bills for the House of Delegates, state Senate, and congressional districts?"

Simply put: Should the General Assembly, regardless of which party controls it at the time, give up the power to gerrymander?

The referendum would be advisory and it is intended to demonstrate broad support by Virginian voters for a change from self-interested gerrymandering by the legislature.

The change would be to new criteria in the hands of an independent commission that could draw districts that would be compact and reflect true communities of interest instead of monster figures, salamanders or twisted snakes on a map.

Bob Gibson is executive director of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership. The opinions expressed here are his own and not necessarily those of the institute.

Source: Gibson, Bob (November 16, 2014). Midterms prove gerrymandering's effect. *The Daily Progress.* Retrieved from http://www.dailyprogress.com/opinion/guest_columnists/opinion-column-midterms-prove-gerrymandering-s-effect/article_6255a1e6-6c54-11e4-94de-138345013b70.html
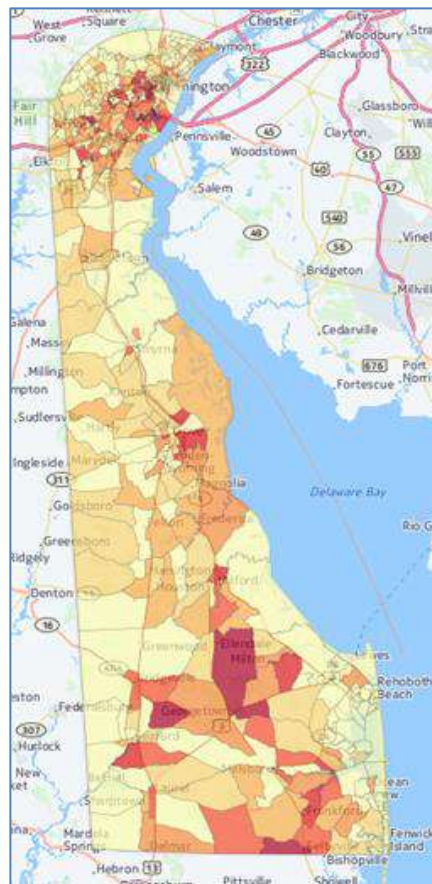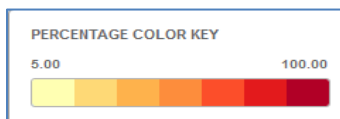
DEMOGRAPHIC	COUNTS	PERCENTAGE

Delaware Demographics

Black Population 2012

PERCENTAGE COLOR KEY

5.00   100.00
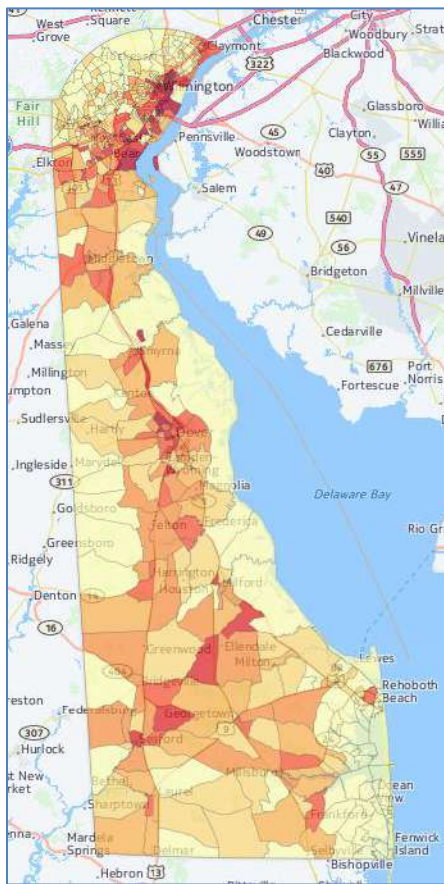
Hispanic Population 2012

PERCENTAGE COLOR KEY

2.90   72.00

White Population 2012

PERCENTAGE COLOR KEY

35.00   100.00
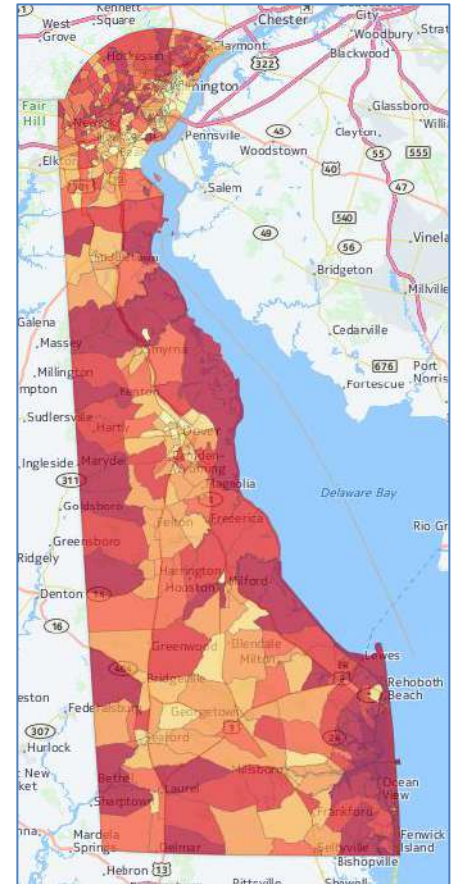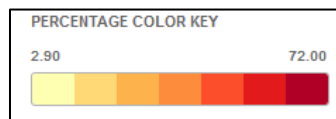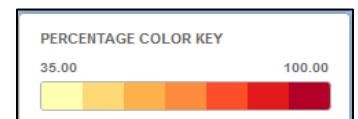
Total Population	897,934	100.00%
Population by Race		
American Indian/Alaska Native	4,181	0.47%
Asian	28,549	3.18%
Black or African American	191,814	21.36%
Hispanic or Latino	73,221	8.15%
Native Hawaiian	400	0.04%
Other	30,519	3.40%
Two or more races	23,854	2.66%
White	618,617	68.89%
Population by Gender		
Female	462,995	51.56%
Male	434,939	48.44%
Population by Age		
Under 18	205,765	22.91%
18 and over	692,169	77.09%

Population per Square Mile for Delaware (2012)

Wilmington

Persons per square mile
- 100,001 or more people
- 25,001 to 100,000 people
- 10,001 to 25,000 people
- 1,001 to 10,000 people
- 101 to 1,000 people
- 100 or less people
- No population

0   50 miles

N

PopulationByState.com (2014)
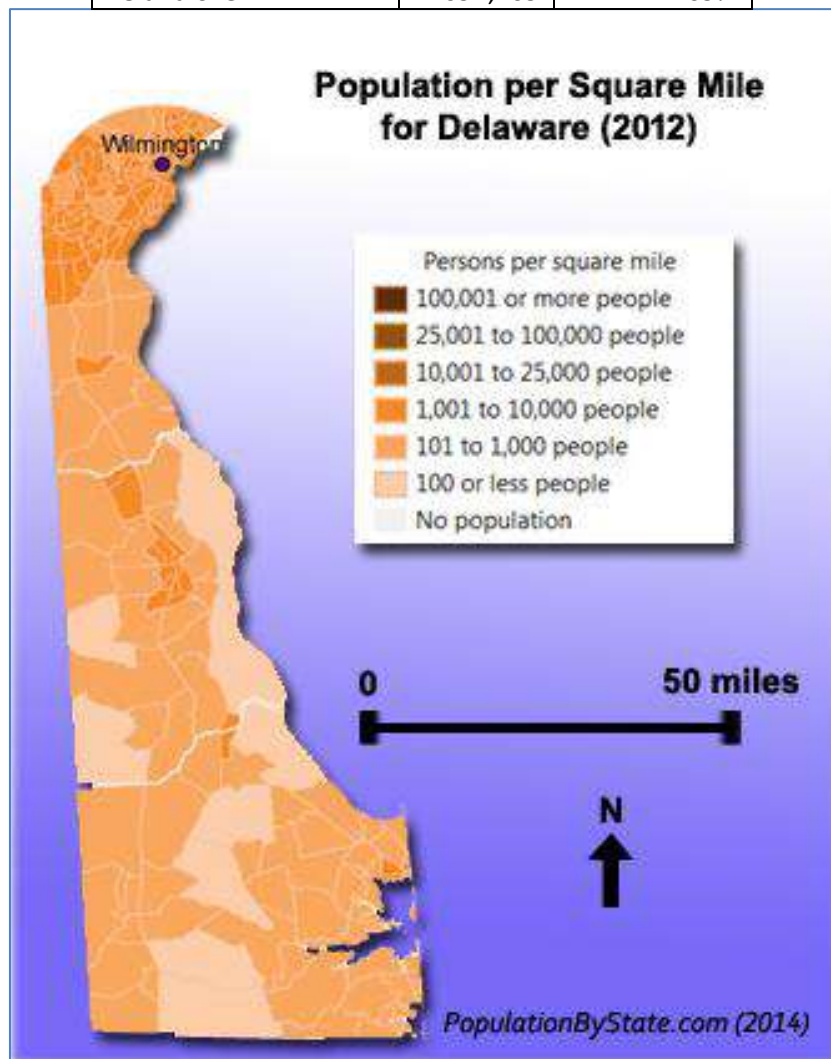
Source #5

Gerrymandering - Proving All Politics Is Local

What is Gerrymandering, how does it happen and why? We look at examples and explore some alternatives.

What is it?

Gerrymandering refers to the process of carving out legislative districts for political advantage. In 1810, Elbridge Gerry, Governor of Massachusetts, began the process of redistricting, or repositioning congressional districts based on population changes. Shortly after he had finished and passed into law the new districts he had created, writers at the Boston Gazette compared the shape of one district to that of a salamander. Combining the name of Governor Gerry with the word salamander, they coined Gerry's new district as a "Gerry"-mander, and the name has stuck ever since. The practice of Gerrymandering predates Governor Gerry, as founding father Patrick Henry originally designed Virginian electoral districts with the intent of foiling the election of James Madison.

How does it work?
By shaping legislative districts in various ways, officeholders are able to affect which voters they will be responsible to on election day. The opportunity for this arises out of the once-a-decade district re-apportionment required by a set of 1960s Supreme Court cases. As voters move into different congressional districts, the population in each of these districts becomes uneven, which results in residents of relatively unpopulated districts having greater representation (because a single vote from a less populated district will comprise a greater proportion of the total votes cast).

These Supreme Court cases require state legislatures to redraw districts every ten years (coinciding with the national Census) to ensure that legislative districts are roughly equal in population. In redrawing districts, officeholders can dilute the opposition party's votes by "cracking" its voters across several districts, making it more difficult to construct a majority in any district, and can waste the opposition party's vote by "packing" its voters into unnecessarily safe districts, reducing its capacity to compete in the remaining districts.

Following the early creation of the term and its first use in American politics, Gerrymandering has been a highly visible part of the redistricting process. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 added racial considerations into the mix. Rather than creating districts based solely on party registration, states began to manipulate districts to concentrate certain minorities thereby altering the political landscape. Though in recent years this practice of racial redistricting has been ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, gerrymandering remains constitutional and continues across the country.

Where do we see it?
States have responded to attempted gerrymandering in several different ways. In Texas, a 2003 controversy erupted when the Republican dominated legislature redistricted in the middle of the decade, without new census data. Since no decision was reached about redistricting in 2000 when census data had first been released, Republican leaders believed they had the ability to carry out a redistricting at any point before the next census. Using the power of their majority, they maximized the number of Republican House representatives in the state and, more significantly, seemed to discriminate against minorities in the process. Democrats took the legal battle first to state then to Federal court. The Supreme Court took the case and in 2006, ruled that the redistricting itself was legal.

The Court found however, that one district diluted the votes of minorities in violation of the Voting Rights Act. The Republican redistricting was largely preserved and a belief in gerrymandering with it.

A 2003 redistricting attempt in Colorado saw Republicans attempt a similar strategy as in Texas in order to maximize Republican representation. However, unlike Texas, Colorado had already redistricted in that decade. The Supreme Court of Colorado therefore struck down the redistricting, saying it could only occur once per decade according to the state constitution.
The Supreme Court of the United States refused to hear the case after a lengthy debate, ending the attempt.

In Florida, voters in the 2010 election approved a measure that outlawed drawing a district to benefit an incumbent party or politician. Although this amendment effectively outlaws gerrymandering, it does not create any new protections against the practice or change how redistricting occurs. What it does is create a new legal tool for the state's courts to deal with cases related to electoral politics and redistricting. However, redistricting in Florida continues to be a partisan affair. Republicans control the governorship, the House, and the Senate in Florida, so they are the party primarily responsible for planning Florida's new districts. Democratic leaders in the state have promised a legal challenge. In Florida, it appears that the amendment simply moved the fight over redistricting from the legislature to the courts.

Are there alternatives?

Unlike in Australia, Canada, or most European countries, anti-gerrymandering reforms have failed to gain much political traction in the United States due to entrenched political interests, however alternatives do exist. The most commonly proposed tactic for eliminating gerrymandering is the creation of an independent and objective commission to draw the boundaries of electoral districts rather than leave this task to the legislature; the United Kingdom and Australia have specially designated commissions for this purpose. These commissions, in the few places where they have been implemented in the United States, are usually made up of relatively apolitical members, selected with the aim of achieving equitable representation of Republicans and Democrats.

Commissions

At present, however, the only American state which consistently draws its electoral districts in this manner is Iowa, whose nonpartisan Legislative Services Bureau has sole oversight of the process. Instances of bipartisan commission failure are more common however; one established by the Missouri legislature after the 2000 Census to redistrict that state infamously ended in intractable deadlock. In 2005 the voters of Ohio soundly rejected a ballot measure that would have established a state-level districting commission. Moreover, employing a commission is no guarantee that gerrymandering will not take place—California's Congressional districts, for instance, are the result of a bipartisan gerrymander that effectively locks the balance of power in the state's delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives at the status quo. This strategy was so effective that in 2004 not a single one of California's 53 House seats changed hands.

Technology

As an alternative to human intervention, some political scientists and mathematicians have developed computer programs and mathematical algorithms to create electoral districts. One examples is the "shortest splitline algorithm" created by the Center for Range Voting which uses a computer to divide a state into the appropriate number of evenly populated districts using the shortest possible straight lines. Another example is a program written by software engineer Brian Olson which places voters in districts

such that the average distance from a voter to the center of his or her district is minimized. Although solutions of this kind do create unbiased districts, whether or not such districts are fair is subjective; since algorithmic solutions have no concept of "communities of interest," they can result in splitting a single city into multiple districts or lumping communities with very different interests (but geographic proximity) into the same district.

Where do we go from here?

Gerrymandering is a hallmark of American politics. The tactic serves the self-interests of whichever party is in power, and has become thoroughly entrenched in the political process. However, as recent attempts in Florida and Missouri show, there is a genuine desire for reforming the process of redistricting. Alternatives, such as bipartisan commissions and technological solutions, do exist and while both have drawbacks and have not proven successful in practice, they need to be better developed in order to compete with the status quo.

Source: Gerrymandering—Proving All Politics is Local. (January 2012). Retrieved from: http://politicsandpolicy.org/article/gerrymandering-proving-all-politics-local

Part 1-Research Questions (35 minutes)

1. Some of the sources suggest problems with gerrymandering. Provide **two** pieces of evidence, one piece of evidence from each of two different sources, and explain how each piece of evidence supports this claim. Identify the source of each piece of evidence by title or number.

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2. Choose the **two** answers below that correctly paraphrase information about gerrymandering by integrating information from both Source #2 and Source #3.
   a. Gerrymandering gives one political party an advantage over another
   b. Gerrymandering does not allow third party options
   c. Legislators gerrymander to benefit some districts over others
   d. Legislators in some districts gerrymander to favor their party leadership
   e. Gerrymandering ensures that ethnic groups earn majority status
   f. Legislators gerrymander to ensure other parties have no influence

3. Explain which source most likely has the most credible information about the negative effects of gerrymandering. Support your explanation using **two** pieces of evidence from the most credible source. Identify the source of the evidence by title or number.

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Part 2 – Gerrymandering: Right or Wrong? Explanatory Writing Task (70 minutes)

You will now review your notes and sources, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your writing. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. Now read your assignment and the information about how your writing will be scored; then begin your work.

Your Assignment:

Using the map, identify **ten** senatorial districts based on the state regulations. Write a proposal to the Delaware State Senate explaining how you designed your districts. Clearly organize your proposal by providing arguments, clear reasons, and relevant evidence to support your proposal referring to the articles you read where relevant. Be sure to revise and edit your draft before submitting your essay.

Explanatory Article Scoring:

Your explanatory writing will be scored using the following:

1. **Organization/purpose**: How well did you state your thesis/controlling idea, and maintain your thesis/controlling idea with a logical progression of ideas from beginning to end? How well did you narrow your thesis/controlling idea so you can develop and elaborate the conclusion? How well did you consistently use a variety of transitions? How effective was your introduction and your conclusion?
2. **Evidence/elaboration**: How well did you integrate relevant and specific information from the sources? How well did you elaborate your ideas? How well did you clearly state ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose?
3. **Conventions**: How well did you follow the rules of grammar, usage, punctuation, capitalization and spelling?

Now begin work on your explanatory article. Manage your time carefully so that you can

1. plan your multi-paragraph explanatory article
2. write your multi-paragraph explanatory article
3. revise and edit the final draft of your multi-paragraph explanatory article

Write your response in the space provided. Write as much as you need to fulfill the requirements of the task; you are not limited by the size of the response area. If you need additional writing paper, please raise your hand and your teacher will give you additional paper.

For Part 2, you are being asked to write a multi-paragraph explanatory article, so please be as thorough as possible. Type your response in the space provided. The box will expand as you type.

Remember to check your notes and your pre-writing/planning as you write and then revise and edit your explanatory article.

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This map is provided to assist you in determining the location, shape, and size of your ten proposed districts. This map is **optional** and will not be scored as part of the proposal.

Delaware Physical and Transportation map

Retrieved from: http://www.fortsaulsburyde.com/Introduction.html