

Gerrymander Exercise by Peter Pappas

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Fig. 6.4. Elkanah Tisdale's original Gerrymander, as it appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, March 26, 1812. (From James Parton, *Caricature and Other Comic Art* [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877], p. 316.)

Directions:

1. Show students the attached map call "My State: 2010"
2. Explain the three symbols used in the map: R, D, I. Each stands for a unit of population which has a majority of voters registered as Republicans, Democrats or Independents.
3. Ask them how voters in each district would likely

vote? A: They would tend to vote along party lines.

4. Ask them how that information would be available? A: Board of Elections records that are publicly available.

5. Assuming voters followed party lines, how many delegates from each party would be elected to the legislature? A: Let them calculate likely results for each district.

Task:

Tell the students that they have been asked to serve as consultants to the state legislature. The results of the 2010 census have been reported. The state legislature now has to redraw the district lines to reflect changes in population. Divide the students into two groups: Republican and Democrats. Workings individually (or in groups) ask them to develop legislative districts that will favor their party on the map "My State 2012"

Rules:

1. All legislative districts must contain the same number of population units.
2. District must be contiguous – no split districts allowed

Follow up:

1. Compare the results. Hint: If you turn My State: 2012 into an overhead you can project it on a whiteboard. Trace the map symbols and let students add their district lines.
2. Discuss the historical roots of the term gerrymander.
3. Ask students to research district lines in your state, county, or local area
4. Hold a contest among students to bring in the most outrageous district lines
5. Discuss the impacts of gerrymandering on the legislative process. Is it fair to the voters?
6. Research and discuss the demographics of party affiliation.

My State 2012

District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Majority Party							

