



# Lesson Plan

## Mayor Moe and the Nasty News

Subject(s): Language Arts; Social Studies/Humanities

Grade Level: 2 - 6

### Specific Student Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn that Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press are guaranteed in democracies
- Students will identify when it might be fair or unfair to limit freedom of expression
- Students will learn about city council and participate in a mock city council debate and vote.
- Students will practice considering multiple points-of-view.

### Enduring Understandings + Big Ideas

- Everyone in Canada has freedom of expression, including freedom of the press.
- Freedom of expression allows everyone in Canada to share their opinions and ideas in different ways (through talking, writing, art, clothing etc...). It also allows everyone to *hear/see* the opinions and ideas of others.
- Sometimes, we may need to protect a person's freedom of expression even if they are saying something unpleasant. Complaining sometimes hurts peoples' feelings, but it can also be an important way to make things better for everyone.
- Sometimes, we may need to limit a person's freedom of expression when it is being used to hate or hurt other people.

### Essential Questions

- Why is freedom of expression and freedom of the press important?
- Should we (or the press) be allowed to say anything we want, whenever we want? When could it be fair to limit freedom of expression?
- What could happen if we never allow anyone to say unpleasant things? When is it unfair to limit freedom of expression?

**Context:** This lesson would be most effective if students have already been introduced to the "Acorn test" that will be reinforced in this lesson plan. If students are not familiar with the Acorn test, an interactive presentation explaining this three-question critical-thinking test is accessible via this link: [www.ccla.org/acornetest](http://www.ccla.org/acornetest). This lesson is supported by web resources.

### PREAMBLE:

In order for this lesson – or any critical-thinking lesson – to be effective, students must be given clear permission to disagree. Divergent points of view must be encouraged throughout the lesson, so that the issues raised can be fully and meaningfully explored. There are no right answers to these questions, and part of the lesson is to help students understand how challenging and interesting issues of fairness, citizenship and justice can be. Quite aside from adding to the debate, encouraging diversity of opinion and point of view is vital to fostering democratic habits and active citizenship.

**Connection for Students:** The content of the lesson is linked to democratic, citizenship issues/concerns – rights, rules – that students confront every day. In particular, this lesson grapples with the issue of freedom of the press & freedom of expression vs. censorship (a.k.a. "if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all"), which nearly all students have experienced.

**PART 1: Minds On: Activating Prior Knowledge** [20-30 min]

**Freedom of expression; points of view**

Assessing prior knowledge questions:

- 1) What do you think freedom of expression/freedom of the press means? (Everyone is free to create and share their ideas with others. Ideas and opinions can be communicated widely to other people in a newspaper, TV, magazines, internet etc).
- 2) What are different ways you can express yourself? (Talking, singing, dancing, visual arts, clothing, writing, sign language, body language, etc.)
- 3) Why do you think freedom of expression/freedom of the press is important? (You can express how you feel and who you are, and you can hear/learn about what others have to say).
- 4) If freedom of expression is so important, should we be free to express anything we want, whenever we want to? Can you think of some types of speech that should not be allowed in certain situations? (Students will likely give examples that limit speech when it hurts others or when it is expressing something unkind/nasty/unpleasant)

**Preparation for watching the video:**

Introduction to video:

“We’re going to watch a video to see what happens when a city makes a Be Nice Law to prevent anyone from saying nasty or unpleasant things. While you’re watching, keep in mind the questions from our Acorn test to help you decide whether or not you think the law is fair.”

Review the Acorn Test (see materials for printable anchor chart)

Review Word Wall words and definitions (see materials)

**PART 2: Action** [20 min]

**Video**

Watch video “Mayor Moe and the Nasty News”

**City Councilor’s debate and vote on the “Be Nice” bylaw:**

After watching the video, students will be assigned the role of city councilors who must make a decision about the “Be Nice” bylaw.

Preparation for activity: Remind students that they have the right to disagree. It is important and helpful to think about different people who care about the issue and try to take on their point of view. Provide learners with a framework to speak respectfully and cooperatively: “I think..., because...” and “I disagree with... because...”

*Start whole-class councilors’ debate using the 3 questions from the Acorn Test. Point to the anchor chart as you go:*

**Question 1:** Why did the city want to ban unpleasant remarks? What was the purpose of the Be Nice bylaw?

**Question 2:** Did the bylaw work to prevent people from saying nasty things?

**Materials**

Blackboard / Whiteboard /  
Chart Paper

Nasty News Word-Wall  
Words:

[http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TNF-Word-Wall-Sees-Stars\\_NastyNews.pdf](http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TNF-Word-Wall-Sees-Stars_NastyNews.pdf)

Acorn Test anchor chart  
[http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Acorn\\_Test\\_Anchor\\_Chart.pdf](http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Acorn_Test_Anchor_Chart.pdf)

AV Equipment  
Video: “Mayor Moe and the Nasty News”  
<http://thatsnotfair.ca/may-or-moe-and-the-nasty-news/>

<p><i>Small group committees debate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide the class into 3 – 5 committees, each of which represents one of the characters affected by the bylaw (be sure to select characters that are affected in different ways, i.e. some who like the bylaw, some who don't):</li> </ul> <p>Possible characters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Caramela (Mayor Moe's wife)</li> <li>- Cucaracha Festoon (Traffic reporter)</li> <li>- Councillor Bug</li> <li>- Mayor Moe</li> <li>- Newscaster Barry Bullmastif</li> <li>- Officer Bluestein</li> <li>- Councillor Feather</li> <li>- Councillor Fuzz</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In their small groups, each committee will answer the third question of the Acorn test from the point of view of their assigned character:</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3:</b> "What else did the bylaw do? How were you affected by the bylaw?"</p> <p>Student discuss with their committee members for ~5 minutes.</p> <p><i>City Council Meeting and Vote</i></p> <p>Each group can elect a spokesperson to share their committee's ideas. After all groups have shared their ideas, the entire class will act as councilors and vote on whether to strike down the bylaw. Students may use their Fair/Not Fair voting paddles (see Materials) if they wish. Ask students to explain why they voted for or against the bylaw.</p>	<p><b>Materials</b></p> <p>Optional: Fair/Not Fair voting paddles printouts (one for each student). Download paddle template here: <a href="http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TNF_voting_paddle.pdf">http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TNF_voting_paddle.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>PART 3: Consolidation and Debrief</b> [10 min]</p> <p>Consolidation questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What could happen if we never allowed anyone to complain or say unpleasant things? When could saying something unpleasant actually <i>help</i> people?</li> <li>2) Pick an unpleasant issue or problem in your community that you think needs to be addressed. Create a front page news headline complete with an illustration to report on your chosen issue. (See sample TNF City Newspaper headline attached)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Materials</b></p> <p>Blackboard / whiteboard / chart paper</p> <p>Paper, markers/crayons</p> <p>TNF City Newspaper Sample Headline (see below)</p>
<p><b>Next Steps – Suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit <a href="http://thatsnotfair.ca/mayor-moe-and-the-nasty-news-game">http://thatsnotfair.ca/mayor-moe-and-the-nasty-news-game</a> to play the Mayor Moe and the Nasty News video game.</li> <li>• Continue exploring issues of fairness in your classroom using the rest of the videos, teacher resources and games</li> <li>• Next time you hear students say, "That's not fair," see if they can apply the Acorn Test to help resolve conflicting viewpoints.</li> </ul>	

# Sample News Headline from TNF City Newspaper

