



Lesson Plan

Mayor Moe Sees Stars

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

Grade Level: 2 - 6

Specific Student Learning Objectives:

- Students will explore the fairness of laws and rules that limit fundamental rights and freedoms.
- Students will question a law's purpose, effectiveness, and side-effects

Enduring Understanding + Big Ideas:

- 1) Rights and freedoms are guaranteed in democracies
- 2) One of our rights is to be safe from harm
- 3) Rules and laws limit rights and freedoms and they are created in order to accomplish important goals (for example, to keep us safe).
- 4) Sometimes rules/laws are fair, sometimes they are unfair.

Essential Questions

- How do you know when a rule/law is fair or unfair?
- Is a rule fair just because it has a good purpose and works well?

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/acorntest. 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.

Is there a Connection for Students? The content of the lesson is linked to democratic issues/concerns – rights, rules – that students confront every day. In particular, this lesson explores the concept of arbitrary rules/laws and more generally, limits to rights and freedoms. This lesson is constructed to help encourage students to become critical thinkers who are more aware and better prepared for civic engagement.

<p>PART 1: Minds On: Activating Prior Knowledge</p> <p>Introduction to Rights and Freedoms: Poll students: What does it mean to have rights? What does it mean to have freedom? <i>(Students will likely suggest that freedom means you can do whatever you want.)</i></p> <p>Discussion on the need for rules and laws which are limits to our rights and freedoms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) If I have freedom and can do what I want, what if I like to flap my arms? Should I be free to do this? (demonstrate by flapping your arms like a bird) 2) Should I be free to flap my arms with my eyes closed while walking around the classroom? Why or why not? <p><i>Students should be lead to the conclusion that one person’s freedom to flap their arms, can also interfere with another person’s right to feel safe.</i></p> <p>Discussion on REASONABLE limits: How do we know of a rule/law is fair or if it goes too far to try to achieve a certain goal?</p> <p>In order to keep us safe in school, we follow rules that tell us what we can and cannot do.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Since flapping my arms could be unsafe, shouldn’t we just make a rule that I am NEVER allowed to flap my arms? Why or why not? 4) If you were the teacher, how would you write the rule about arm flapping to make it more fair and reasonable? <p><i>Conclusion: Rules and laws (limits to our freedoms) are necessary, but they need to be FAIR and reasonable.</i></p>	<p>Materials</p> <p>Mayor Moe Sees Stars Word-Wall Words: http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TNF-Word-Wall-Sees-Stars_NastyNews.pdf</p>
<p>PART 2: Action - What is a fair limit to our rights and freedoms?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Take an initial vote: If a rule or law has a good purpose, AND it is able to achieve that purpose, does that make the rule/law fair? Optional: Students may use their Fair/Not Fair voting paddles (see Materials) if they wish. <p>Introduce and watch <i>Mayor Moe Sees Stars</i>: <i>In this video, City Council passes a by-law in response to a problem that Mayor Moe has identified. 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.</i></p> <p><i>Review the Acorn Test (see materials for printable anchor chart)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Divide the class into smaller groups. Ask each group to apply the Acorn Test to the No-Lights after Dark Regulation to decide whether or not they think the by-law is fair. 3) After the small group discussions, ask students to share their responses to each of the questions from the Acorn Test with the rest of the class. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Was there a good purpose for creating the No-Lights after Dark Regulation? Do you think it’s important to be able to see the stars at night? Is there another good reason to turn off the lights at night? ii. Did the rule work? Were the stars more visible when the lights were turned off? iii. What else did it do? Were there any consequences or side-effects when the lights were turned off at night? 4) Take a second vote: After applying the Acorn test, who thinks the No-Lights after Dark Regulation is fair? Unfair? Optional: Students may use their Fair/Not Fair voting paddles (see Materials) if they wish. 	<p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chalk or white board or flip chart. • AV equipment • Mayor Moe Sees Stars Video: http://thatsnotfair.ca/may-or-moe-sees-stars/ • Optional: Fair/Not Fair voting paddles printouts (one for each student). Download paddle template here: http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TNF_voting_paddle.pdf • Acorn Test anchor chart http://thatsnotfair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Acorn_Test_Anchor_Chart.pdf

<p>PART 3: Consolidation and Debrief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concluding statement: Just because a law is effective in achieving its purpose, it doesn't mean it's fair. What else do we need to ask ourselves in order to determine if a law is fair and reasonable? (What else does the law do? Are there any consequences or side-effects that arise as a result of trying to achieve the purpose?)• Law makers and judges (and now you!) are able to apply these questions in situations where there is a conflict of rights and freedoms. Do you think this can help you to figure out if something is unjust? What other questions could help you to decide if something is fair or unfair?• Is there an issue or a rule in your school or elsewhere that you feel is unjust? Use your critical thinking skills and go through the Acorn Test to assess whether or not the rule/issue is unfair, and if so, see if you can come up with a more reasonable way to address the problem.	<p>Materials</p>
<p>Next Steps – Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit http://thatsnotfair.ca/mayor-moe-sees-stars-game/ to play the Mayor Moe Sees Stars video game.• Continue exploring issues of fairness in your classroom using the rest of the videos, teacher resources and games• Next time you hear students say, "That's not fair," see if they can apply the Acorn Test to help resolve conflicting viewpoints.	