

Grade 8 Civics

Oak Meadow Teacher Manual

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Grade 8

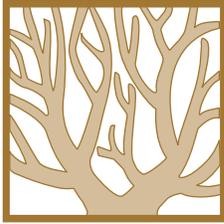


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Lesson



Values of Citizenship

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete reading selections.
- Reflect on and discuss issues.
- Explain the concept of equality.
- Give an example of a conflict of personal freedoms.
- Describe an example of justice in action.
- Give an example of disrespect or injustice.
- Collect and summarize positive news articles.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Express thoughts and ideas in civil discussion.
- Identify real life examples related to concepts of equality and justice.
- Summarize news articles.

Reading

Read the following sections (found in Reading Selections at the end of this lesson).

- **What Is Civics?**
- **Qualities of Good Citizenship**
- **Being an Informed Citizen**

In each lesson, before you begin reading, glance over the length of the reading selections to get an idea of how much reading is involved. If you find a lot of reading material, you will probably want to read one or two sections and then take a break before reading more. This will help you better understand and remember the material.

In addition to the reading selections in this coursebook, you are encouraged to learn more about topics you are interested in by visiting the library, reading newspapers, and doing research online. You'll find a list of online resources at oakmeadow.com (click on the Resources tab, and then click on Curriculum Resource Links). You can use these links to learn more about lesson topics. Your community may also have helpful resources that you can use.

You may find it useful to keep a journal for this course, using it to record your reflections, questions, ideas, and other thoughts about what you are learning. It will also help to practice active reading skills: underline reading passages that you want to remember or go back to, circle or highlight key ideas, define important terms in the margins, write down questions, or underline things you are curious about and would like to learn more. Active reading will help you gain a deeper understanding of the lesson topics and remember and retrieve the information more easily.

See the student coursebook for the reading selections. Encourage your students to view the online links noted above.

Reflect and Discuss

Many communities struggle with unwanted graffiti, which can range from annoying to obscene to evidence of dangerous activity. Graffiti is considered by some to be an art form and those who draw graffiti (“taggers”) are sometimes called “graffiti artists.” Is tagging public property (or the property of others, such as the fence of a business or a train car) ever justified or acceptable? Are there ways that graffiti could contribute to a community in a positive way? Under what circumstances might graffiti be acceptable?

Take some time to reflect on your feelings about this topic, and then find someone—a friend, family member, neighbor, or community member—to discuss it with. Find out what they think and why. Share your thoughts. This is civic debate and *rhetoric* (the art of persuasive speaking or writing) and it is at the heart of any democracy.

Throughout the course, students are offered reflection and discussion prompts. Giving students the opportunity to think about issues and share ideas in conversation is vital for helping them develop skills in reasoning, constructing an argument, considering alternate viewpoints, and forming and changing opinions as new information is gathered. Some students will be eager to discuss issues while others will need to be coached in how to engage in effective, respectful civic debate. Adults can model listening skills, ask questions to prompt discussion, and state opinions in well-reasoned arguments.

Assignments

Before you begin the first assignment, read through all the assignments. This will help you figure out how to best manage your time. Do this for each lesson. All assignments in this course are done after completing the required reading (listed above).

1. In any society, citizens do not have equal jobs, equal education, equal ability, or equal money. Explain what you think equality means in this country.

Answers will vary. Comments may touch on the ideas of equal opportunity, social equality, and equal liberties. The United States is, at least in principle, a classless society in which the same rights are guaranteed to all.

2. We have the freedom to play the kind of music that we like. But do we have the freedom to walk down the street playing loud music? We have the freedom to have pets, but do we have the right to allow our animals to roam in other people's yards? How might your freedom interfere with another person's freedom? Give at least two specific examples.

Examples should include specific situations in which one person is infringing on another's sense of freedom, such as siblings sharing a room and disagreeing on the arrangement of furniture or state of chaos; teenagers playing music that is distasteful to parents and vice versa; and someone's speech being offensive or distasteful to others.

3. Define justice in your own words. Describe an example of justice in action in your own life, the life of someone you know, or in the life of a public figure.

Justice is the quality of being fair, of having moral rightness. However, many disagree on what is fair or moral, so justice, in the context of civics, is usually discussed in terms of upholding the law. Examples from the student should make the meaning of justice clear through the circumstances of the story or situation described. Examples might include someone being fined for littering or people accused of a crime successfully defending themselves in court.

4. Do you know of an incident in which a person or group experienced disrespect, injustice, or a lack of freedom? This can be a real example from your life, the life of someone you know, or something you read about or heard on the news. Explain what happened.

Examples should offer specific situations to back up the student's claim that unequal respect, freedom, or justice was present in the real or fictitious situation described. This is an opportunity for the student to think about how inequality exists in our daily lives, despite the ideals and principles we hold.

5. For two weeks, look for news articles that tell a positive story about a person or event that contributed to our society. Assemble these articles in a collage or little booklet. Next to each article, briefly summarize this “good news.”

Students will find relevant, reliable news sources on the Curriculum Resource Links page at oakmeadow.com or they can search other outlets for news with a positive spin. Often news outlets focus on the problems of the world rather than highlighting solutions. In fact, students may be used to viewing “the news” as all bad. This assignment helps them gain an understanding that there are all types of news, good and bad, and that very little national attention is paid to news of people making positive impacts on their communities. This project is designed to help students become aware of positive contributions being made by people every day.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to keep track of how your skills are progressing. Include notes about what you need to work on. Please remember that these skills continue to develop over time, and you aren’t expected to be able to do all of them yet. The main goal is to be aware of which skills you need to focus on.

Students are encouraged to fill in the learning checklist included in their coursebook. You can use the checklist below to keep notes on the progression of skills. Use any notes from the student to help develop a plan of support.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Express thoughts and ideas in civil discussion				
Demonstrate understanding of concepts of equality and justice				
Identify real life examples related to concepts of equality and justice				
Identify relevant, accurate news sources				
Summarize news articles				
Identify key ideas in primary and secondary sources				

Lesson



Community Leaders

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete reading selections.
- Interview a first responder.
- Perform helpful tasks in your neighborhood and write about it.
- Complete your collage or booklet of positive news articles.
- Choose an activity to complete.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Identify needs of community members.
- Describe civic work done by international groups and individuals.
- Conduct and summarize an interview.

Reading

Read the following sections (found in Reading Selections at the end of this lesson).

- **Champions of Freedom**
- **International Cooperation**
- **Community Leaders**

Assignments

1. This week, try to do at least two things to be a good citizen of your neighborhood. Here is a list of some things you might do, or you can come up with your own ideas:
 - Take a neighbor a gift of flowers you picked or food you prepared.
 - Help your neighbors do yard work.

- Run an errand for a neighbor.
- Visit an elderly neighbor who lives alone and might enjoy company.
- Clean up around your neighborhood to make it look better.
- Offer to help a mother with young children with childcare, chores, or errands.
- Organize a potluck or neighborhood block party.
- With your parents, check the listings on Freecycle.org, an online forum for people to exchange things for free, and see if you have something to give away to someone who needs it.

Afterward, write down what you did. How did you feel after being a good neighbor? What was your neighbor's response? How can you continue to be a good neighbor? Write down your thoughts.

The student should not only report on the experience of doing three neighborly acts but consider how he or she can continue to be a good neighbor in the future. While students should not be forced to do something that makes them feel uncomfortable, part of the purpose of this activity is to challenge students to move out of their comfort zone and try something new. At this age, students are growing into a more mature sense of compassion and an awareness of life outside their family unit. Putting the needs of others before their own is an excellent way to encourage this growth.

2. Choose one of the following activities.

Students will choose an activity that focuses on humanitarian work being done by individuals and international groups to benefit people around the world. Encourage your student to talk about what they've learned.

- a. Read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (found in the appendix). Draw a poster or create a picture that celebrates this vital document.
 - b. Choose one of the agencies of the United Nations to learn more about. Give a summary of what the agency does and who benefits.
 - c. Choose one of the "champions of freedom" mentioned in the reading selection, or someone else in whom you have an interest, and learn about their life's work. Describe some of the person's most significant contributions to humanity.
3. Interview a local firefighter, police officer, or EMT or paramedic. Ask questions such as the following (feel free to come up with more questions of your own):
- What are the requirements for your job? What was the training like?

- What do you do in a typical workday?
- What is one of the hardest parts of your job?
- What is the most rewarding part?
- Why did you choose this career? What other careers did you consider? Would you make the same career choice again?

Write a summary of the interview, making sure to give the person's full name and job title. Alternately, you might like to record the interview on video and then edit it down to show the highlights of what you talked about.

Interviewing an adult in person can be challenging for many students. When evaluating the student's work, take into consideration the effort involved in organizing, conducting, transcribing, and summarizing the interview as well as the self-confidence needed to carry it out.

4. Continue to collect positive news articles. Summarize each one and add it to your collage or booklet. Complete this project by the end of the week.

Students should have a collection of stories from various news outlets. Each story should include its source and a brief description written by the student. Stories should be compiled in an organized way.



Up for a Challenge?

Have you ever seen a Little Free Library? These small structures are popping up in neighborhoods all around the country. Learn about how to construct one of your own and find books to stock it with that anyone is welcome to take and keep or read and return. If you don't have a place to put up a Little Free Library, you can still build one and then offer it to anyone who wants one.

Students will be offered optional challenges in some of the lesson. These activities provide students with more ways to explore the lesson topic. These activities are not required.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to keep track of how your skills are progressing. Include notes about what you need to work on. These skills will continue to develop over time.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Identify needs of community members				
Conduct an interview				
Summarize an interview				
Summarize news articles				
Identify key ideas in primary and secondary sources				

Lesson



Landmark Cases and Civic Debate

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Learn about a landmark court case.
- Define unknown legal terms.
- Complete “Landmark Case: Looking Inside.”
- Write a summary of the court’s decision and your opinion of it.
- Give an opinion on a controversial issue.
- Complete “Compare and Evaluate.”
- Locate or create an artistic commentary on a social or political issue.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Identify key aspects of a court case.
- Compare the merits of opposing sides of an issue.
- Express or interpret a political or social stance in artistic form.

At the end of each unit, you will have the opportunity to read about an actual case that was decided by the United States Supreme Court, the highest and most influential court in the nation. Important cases that come before the Supreme Court are often called *landmark cases* because they have a powerful impact on society, and they inform and influence other court cases for decades afterward.

You will also have a chance to examine an important civic issue. You will look at the issue from the perspective of a concerned citizen, researching both sides and forming an opinion on the topic.

Look over the entire lesson before you begin so you can get a sense of what you will be doing.

This end-of-unit lesson requires students to read material that may be challenging on a technical and conceptual level. Take into account how much support and guidance your students might need. A glossary of legal terms is included in the student coursebook but there will undoubtedly be additional terms they will need to define or have explained.

Landmark Supreme Court Cases

Read through the following list of cases that were decided by the United States Supreme Court. After the name of the case, you will see the year the case was decided by the court and how the Supreme Court justices (judges) voted. A 5–4 decision means that 5 justices voted in favor of the case and 4 justices voted against it.

- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) (7–1 decision for Ferguson) Racial segregation is allowed in “separate but equal” public facilities
- *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* (1942) (9–0 decision for New Hampshire) Freedom of Speech (the 1st Amendment) does not protect “fighting words” that can provoke violence or cause an immediate breach of the peace.
- *Korematsu v. United States* (1944) (6–3 decision for United States) Confinement of U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry during WWII is justified.
- *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) (9–0 decision for Brown) Racial segregation of schools is ruled unconstitutional.

You will choose one of these cases to learn more about. There are many technical and legal terms used in court cases. But before you begin your research, familiarize yourself with the glossary of legal terms. As you read cases and do research, you are likely to find other terms you don’t know. Look up the definitions and then add them to this glossary.

See the student coursebook for the [Glossary of Legal Terms](#).

There are many good sources for easy-to-understand summaries of cases and decisions of the Supreme Court. As the course progresses, students will be asked to refer to primary source material such as majority and dissenting opinions handed down by the Court. The assignments are designed to lead students through this process to develop their understanding and critical thinking skills in a sequential way. However, some students may need additional support and guidance through the process.

While court cases often refer to Constitutional amendments, these cases are first presented to students as human rights issues rather than constitutional rights. Later in the course, the United States Constitution will be explored in detail and students will be asked to apply knowledge of the Constitution to Supreme Court cases. Students are not yet expected to explain this connection.

Landmark Case Assignments

1. Choose a case and read a summary. You can easily find these online or in a library. Check the Curriculum Resource Links for this course under the Resources tab at oakmeadow.com.

These cases may be challenging to read, not just because of the subject matter but because highly educated adults are writing them for an adult audience. You aren't expected to understand everything you read. However, you should be able to understand enough to answer the questions below. If you have trouble understanding the case you have found, you might ask an adult to help explain it. *Uscourts.gov* is an excellent place to gain a general understanding of a topic. You can find basic explanations of each of these cases on numerous other sources as well. (See Curriculum Resource Links at oakmeadow.com for more ideas.)

Students are not expected to gain a complete and comprehensive understanding of a complex case; however, they are expected to gain an overview of the issues raised. See below for summaries of the cases.

2. As you read, make a list of words and phrases you don't understand. Find out the definitions and add them to the glossary of terms.

Check that the student is writing down and taking the time to learn unfamiliar words. This will help greatly in understanding the proceedings and outcomes of the cases.

3. Once you have read a summary of the case and the decision, complete "Landmark Case: Looking Inside" (on the next page). Answer the questions in your own words. The information you need is often included in the summary but if not, you will have to do more research to find out how the lawyers for each side presented their case.

Case #1 *Plessy v. Ferguson*

Plaintiff: Homer Plessy

Defendant/Respondent: John H. Ferguson

Case background: A Louisiana law required railroad companies to provide separate but equal coaches for white and non-white passengers. On June 7, 1892, Homer Plessy, a Louisiana resident of one-eighth African descent and Caucasian features, entered a train car that was designated for Caucasian passengers. When asked by the conductor to move to a train car designated for those of African descent, Plessy refused and was forcibly removed from the train, jailed, and accused of a criminal act. At his trial in Louisiana district court, Plessy argued that the Louisiana law violated the "equal protection" clause of 14th Amendment, but the judge in his case, John H. Ferguson, stated that the law did not violate the Constitution and ordered Plessy to pay a \$25 fine. After this verdict was upheld in the Louisiana Supreme Court, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to review the case.

What is the plaintiff arguing for or against? Plessy argued for his right to sit where he chose on the train.

Give one reason supporting the plaintiff's claim. By being prevented from riding in the train car of his choice, he was being discriminated against and deprived of his rights. Students may cite other reasons.

How did the defendant respond to the claim? The defendant argued that the Louisiana law was valid and since Plessy was breaking the law, the conductor was justified in removing Plessy from the train.

Give one reason supporting the defendant's response. Providing separate facilities to different races does not constitute discrimination because facilities are "equal" and do not imply inferiority based on race. Students may cite other reasons.

Case #2 *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*

Plaintiff: Walter Chaplinsky

Defendant/Respondent: New Hampshire Supreme Court

Case background: In 1942, a New Hampshire law prohibited anyone from using offensive or derisive language or name-calling in public. Walter Chaplinsky was speaking on a public sidewalk and passing out religious pamphlets. A town marshal, who passed by Chaplinsky shortly after he began, allegedly warned him that, although the gathering was lawful, he was going to cause trouble with his language. Eventually, a large crowd gathered, blocking streets and causing a disturbance. Despite the fact that it was the crowd causing the disturbance, police took Chaplinsky into custody, whereupon Chaplinsky saw the town marshal who had spoken to him earlier and called the marshal a "God-damned racketeer" and a "damned fascist." Chaplinsky was then arrested and convicted of breaking New Hampshire's "offensive speech" law and assessed a fine. Chaplinsky appealed this fine, claiming that the rule violated his right to free speech. His appeal eventually made it to the U.S. Supreme Court.

What is the plaintiff arguing for or against? Chaplinsky argued that the New Hampshire law infringed upon his right to free speech.

Give one reason supporting the plaintiff's claim. Chaplinsky was simply stating his opinion about the motives of the persons he felt were responsible for improperly detaining him. Students may cite other reasons.

How did the defendant respond to the claim? The state asserted that Chaplinsky's words served no purpose but to create a disturbance of the peace (i.e. they were "fighting words") and were in direct violation of the law.

Give one reason supporting the defendant's response. The New Hampshire law only restricted face-to-face speech that has a direct tendency to incite violence and breach the peace, and that such "fighting words" may be restricted under the 1st Amendment, as that type of speech serves no role in the exposition of ideas. Students may cite other reasons.

Case #3 *Korematsu v. United States*

Plaintiff: Fred Korematsu

Defendant/Respondent: United States

Case background: During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the United States military to remove people of Japanese descent from certain military areas and nearby communities, citing the need to prevent espionage and/or sabotage on U.S. soil. Over 120,000 people, more than half of whom were U.S. citizens, were forced from their homes and transported to detention camps. Fred Korematsu, a U.S. citizen of Japanese ancestry, refused to leave his home near San Francisco, California, and was subsequently arrested and convicted of violating military orders. Korematsu appealed his conviction, claiming that Roosevelt's executive order violated the 5th Amendment, which prevents the government from depriving persons of their life, liberty, or property without due process of the law. The U.S. Court of Appeals refused his appeal and the case was sent to the U.S. Supreme Court.

What is the plaintiff arguing for or against? Korematsu argued he was being forced from his home into an internment camp based solely on his race and without any sort of trial or other procedure to determine whether he posed a risk of espionage or sabotage.

Give one reason supporting the plaintiff's claim. Since *all* persons of Japanese descent were being relocated in detention centers without any sort of trial or procedure to determine whether they posed a risk to national security, they were being deprived of liberty and property without due process of the law. Students may cite other reasons.

How did the defendant respond to the claim? The United States was at war, the President and Congress had given the U.S. military the discretion to take actions it deemed necessary to waging that war, and these actions took precedence over the rights that individuals normally enjoy during times of peace.

Give one reason supporting the defendant's response. During times of war, the constitutional rights of all citizens are abridged in some way. Removing residents from their homes was permissible because of the "grave imminent danger to the public safety." Students may cite other reasons.

Case #4 *Brown v. Board of Education*

Plaintiff: Oliver Brown, Mrs. Richard Lawton, Mrs. Sadie Emmanuel, et al.

Defendant/Respondent: Board of Education of Topeka (Kansas)

Case background: This case arose from four cases in separate states, all of which involved African American students who had been denied admission to public schools that Caucasian students attended based on the states' various segregation laws. The students all claimed that these segregation laws violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Specifically, the students argued that the "separate but equal" doctrine set forth in *Plessy v. Ferguson* was invalid, and that segregated public systems are *inherently* unequal, even if the various schools are substantially equal in terms of curriculum, facilities, etc. After the four cases had worked their way through the state courts, with varying outcomes, the U.S. Supreme Court decided to hear all four cases as one because they all contained a common question of constitutional law.

What is the plaintiff arguing for or against? The plaintiff argued that African American children were being denied an equal education by being excluded from "white" schools, and that segregated public schools are inherently unequal, and the "separate but equal" doctrine was invalid.

Give one reason supporting the plaintiff's claim. By the very fact that they were forced to attend a separate school from Caucasian children, African American students were made to feel inferior. Students may cite other reasons.

How did the defendant respond to the claim? Under the law, public schools were allowed to be segregated and if segregated schools were truly made "equal," there was no violation of the law.

Give one reason supporting the defendant's response. As long as the facilities, curriculum, and other resources were "substantially equal," students would be given the same quality of education. Students may cite other reasons.

4. Write a brief summary of the decision and your opinion about it. If possible, include one direct quote from the decision in your explanation. Make sure to put the quote in quotation marks and specify who said or wrote it. Usually one justice will write an explanation of the majority opinion and one will write an explanation of the minority or dissenting opinion.

Students should write the summary in their own words. It may help them to explain the decision aloud before writing it down. Students are likely to have strong opinions about the fairness or justice of the verdict. Look for these opinions to be stated clearly and respectfully.

Civic Debate

Important issues are debated every day in towns and cities all around the world. Sometimes issues are decided by a small committee or town representatives, and other times the issues are brought to the general public in a statewide or national vote.

When an issue comes before a group of people, they must first clarify what the issue involves. This can be done by making a statement, such as “The legal driving age should be raised to 18 years old.” Creating a specific statement is essential. For instance, it is not enough to say “School shootings should be stopped.” This is a statement everyone can agree with. The real question is what to do about it. If the issue is not whether school shootings should be allowed or not (everyone agrees they should not be allowed), what is the issue? This needs to be clarified. For instance, it might be phrased as “States should ban automatic assault rifles” or “Schools should install metal detectors to keep people carrying guns out of school.”

Once a statement or claim is made, the group can discuss their opinions and debate what effects or consequences might arise if the claim is made into a rule, regulation, or law. To make debate more focused, the issue is often phrased as a YES/NO question that people can vote on.

In order to be fair to everyone involved, the group must make every effort to see the issue from many different perspectives. This helps ensure that the viewpoints and needs of all citizens are represented in the debate.

Let’s look at an example of how a group might tackle a difficult issue.

Identify the issue: A town library is requesting additional funds to develop programs to support the library users who are homeless.

Form the issue as a YES/NO question: Should the town fund library programs aimed at supporting patrons who are homeless?

Background of the case: In order to learn more about the issue, a librarian is invited to a meeting of the town council to explain the problem from her perspective. She states,

“At our library, the staff are taking a course in how to deal with homeless patrons. We have many homeless people that spend all day at the library, from when we open at 9:00 a.m. to when we close at 9:00 p.m. They only leave to go to the community kitchen for meals. Those with substance abuse problems will leave for brief periods to smoke, drink, or do drugs. Drunken people are the biggest problem. The smell in some of our rooms is like a bar at quitting time. It’s quite sad that there are no services for them during the day to guide them to health. We have a community problem that can only be solved through the generosity of the citizens.

“In our town, there are no services for these people except homeless shelters, which close during the day, and the community kitchen, which is only open for meals. I read that an Oakland, California library has a social worker on duty full time and volunteers are also on hand to guide homeless people to resources. In Santa Cruz, California, librarians have arranged for tutors to help patrons with creating resumes and job searches, which can help them find gainful employment, so they can afford a place to live. The librarians also connect patrons with other social services that may provide support. This issue is also being addressed in Boston and many other cities. Our community needs to figure out how to do our part in finding solutions to this problem.”

A spokesperson for a group of concerned citizens is invited to present their perspective on the issue:

“A library should be a safe and comfortable place for all patrons. Homeless people have begun loitering around the library building, sometimes blocking steps and entrances as they sit surrounded by their belongings. We are sympathetic to the problems facing the homeless population. The city has already committed funds to various social service agencies that support people who are homeless. This is the responsibility of each community and our community is already doing this.

“The library, however, should focus its resources and funds on programs that will benefit the majority of patrons, not just a small group of disadvantaged individuals. If programs aimed at homeless people are expanded, more homeless people will come to the library, making it harder and harder for others to feel comfortable there. Homelessness is a community problem but it’s not a library problem.”

Weigh both sides of the issue: Once both sides have been heard, the next step is to clarify the claims each is making and to look at the reasoning and evidence behind each claim.

- **Claim by Librarians:** The library needs more money for staff and resources to offer services to people who are homeless.
 - **Reasoning:** Helping this at-risk group will help the entire community.
 - **Evidence:** Helping people with computer access, technology skills, resumes, etc. will help them find work, get off the streets, and return to being productive members of the community.
- **Claim by Community Group:** The library should spend funds to improve programs that will benefit the majority of library users, not just one small group.
 - **Reasoning:** The library’s first priority is to provide a safe, welcoming place for the general public.

- **Evidence:** Providing services for the homeless population will encourage more homeless to congregate around the library building, which can lead to issues regarding health and safety.

After weighing the claims, reasoning, and evidence, the issue is put to a vote. Once the vote is decided, there may be more discussions, debates, and research as the group looks for practical solutions to solve the problem or carry out the ruling.

While civic issues may be easier for students to understand than Supreme Court cases, students may still be challenged by the skills of identifying key issues on both sides of an issue, articulating the reasoning given, and showing the evidence.

Civic Debate Assignments

1. Now it is your turn to make your voice heard on an issue! Here is a list of controversial issues. Some you might already be aware of; others might be new to you. All are issues being debated, discussed, argued over, and, sometimes, put to a vote. One day, you might be called on to help decide laws related to these issues. Give some thought to each topic and then choose one to focus on in this lesson (you'll have a chance to explore other issues on the list in other lessons).

Issues for debate:

- NFL football players kneeling in protest during the national anthem
- a cell phone company plans to build a tower near a popular scenic mountain resort
- expanding right to die or physician aid in dying (PAD) laws to more states
- abolishing daylight savings time
- oil pipeline projects and protests (in the Dakotas and elsewhere)
- using tigers, elephants, and other wild animals in circus acts
- juveniles accused of a crime being tried as adults
- statewide bans on smoking in public places
- animals used in science experiments or testing
- young men but not young women are required to register for selective service

Conduct some basic research into the issue and summarize your findings. You don't have to write a long report or do hours of research; just consult two or three sources to get a general idea of the concerns and opinions involved on both sides of the issue.

Students will need to do research on the topic of their choice. Look for the summary of the topic to be concise, balanced, informative, and accurate. If information is incomplete or disorganized, ask the student to clarify.

2. Imagine this issue is brought to your town council for a vote. Complete “Compare and Evaluate” (included here). The first thing to do is to form the issue as a YES/NO question. Using the first topic in the list as an example, the issue might be formed in several different ways:

- “Should football players be allowed to kneel in protest of racial discrimination during the national anthem?”
- “Should NFL football players be penalized for kneeling during the national anthem?”

COMPARE AND EVALUATE

Issue:

Form the issue as a YES/NO question (such as “Should _____ be allowed to happen?”):

Reasons in favor of issue (YES vote)

Reasons against issue (NO vote)

- “Should peaceful political protests be allowed by professional athletes at a nationally televised game?”

For the first and third example, a YES vote would be in favor of the kneeling players, and for the second question, a YES vote would penalize the players.

Students will identify the issue and form it as a question that can be answered yes or no. Students will then list reasons in favor of and against the issue. The goal is for the student to see the issue from the perspective of opposing sides to gain (and present) a balanced, comprehensive understanding.

3. Political cartoons, advertisements, paintings, songs, and other styles of art are commonly used as a political commentary. Try to find a piece of art that expresses issues related to the topic you’ve chosen or another current social or political issue. Write a brief explanation of what the art portrays and give credit to the source. Alternately, you might create a piece of art to express your views on an issue.

This assignment requires students to interpret or create an artistic expression of an issue. The issue and opinion should be clearly expressed by the piece.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to track how your skills are developing over time and identify skills that need more work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Locate primary source material				
Identify key aspects of a court case				
Summarize a court decision				
Cite direct quotations in a relevant context				
Express an opinion on a court case				
Research facts and perspectives related to an issue				
Compare the merits of opposing sides of an issue				
Express or interpret a political or social stance in artistic form				