



Rule of Law Lesson Plan

Sponsored by the Supreme Court Historical Society

Topic:

Teaching The Rule of Law Across Writing Genres

Duration:

90 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Writing materials
- Internet access

Grade Level(s):

8-12

KUD Objectives:

By participating in this lesson, students will:

- **Know** what the rule of law is and how it is defined in their country and abroad.
- **Understand** that the rule of law impacts human rights, peace and security, law and its enforcement, and government systems.
- **Be able to** write a personal narrative, opinion piece, or creative work (poem, play, short story, etc.) for WtW's competition sponsored by the Supreme Court Historical Society, about the rule of law.

Outline:

1. Define & Describe
2. Compare & Contrast
3. Take a Stand
4. Write
5. Share
6. Revise

Standards:

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts:

The following lesson aligns with these standard codes across grades 6-12:

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| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.10 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7 |

1. Define & Describe - 15 minutes

Welcome students into class with a **five-minute guided freewrite**; ask them to keep their pencil moving or fingers typing, documenting their free-flowing thoughts in response to the following prompt: ***“What is ‘the rule of law’? When have you seen ‘the rule of law’ in action?”*** You might create a welcoming environment by streaming “writing music” (instrumental, lofi, etc.) in the background. Be sure to project the prompt on the screen/board so students can refer back to it while writing.

When the timer is up, ask students to **popcorn share**—each student calling on a peer—a summary of their definition and real-world example. Then, in a **whole group discussion**, ask students to **identify similarities and differences** between their definitions and examples. Finally, return to the central definition your class agreed upon during [“The Jigsaw of Justice” activity detailed on the Write the World blog](#), if you partook, or introduce The World Justice Project definition to solidify students’ understanding: [What is the Rule of Law? | World Justice Project](#)

2. Compare & Contrast - 20 minutes

Once students have defined the rule of law, share with them this brief (4 minute) video: [Measuring What Matters: The WJP Rule of Law Index - YouTube](#)

In pairs or small groups, ask students to look at the [WJP Rule of Law Index](#) described in the video. Invite them to select 2-3 countries and compare the latest (2024) rankings. They should take notes in response to the following questions (and may utilize sources beyond WJP):

- *Would you define the countries’ Rule of Law rankings as positive or negative? Why?*
- *What factors contributed to each countries’ ranking? Were these factors similar or different across countries?*
- *Do these countries define the rule of law similarly or differently? How do you know?*
- *What do you notice about these countries’ data? What do the data make you wonder?*
- *What surprised or intrigued you the most about these countries’ data?*

After a 10 minute rapid-fire research session, invite students to share their findings with the class.

3. Take a Stand - 10 minutes

Once students have defined, compared, and analyzed the rule of law in a global context, they have background knowledge that positions them well to explore their personal opinions about it. For five minutes, ask them to write a **“This I Believe”** statement (inspired by [NPR’s “This I](#)

[Believe” project](#)) about the rule of law. They can begin with the words “I believe...” and take a stand on personal, local, national, or global issues of peace and security, law and justice.

When the timer is up, ask students to highlight or star 1-2 sentences they especially resonate with or would like to further develop. Then, invite round-robin sharing of those sentences—asking students to practice active listening as their peers share. Remind them that they may hear opinions that differ from their own, and that such opposition can foster meaningful learning if we remain open to it.

4. Write - 15 minutes

Next, with their convictions top-of-mind, position students to prepare for Write the World’s writing competition. This competition invites students to choose one or more genres through which to explore the rule of law: opinion writing, personal narrative, and/or creative writing. To get them started, introduce a rapid-fire writing activity; restart your writing music, and ask students to keep their pencils moving or fingers typing in response to the following writing sprints:

- 1. Five-minute sprint — personal narrative:** What memory from your life demonstrates the rule of law? Perhaps it was a missed curfew, or a local environmental justice rally, or an international crisis you watched on the news. In your writing, recreate that moment on the page using dialogue, setting descriptions, and sensory details that immerse your readers in the scene. Consider what point of view (POV) and tense (present, past) most invites your readers to experience this moment as you did.
- 2. Five-minute sprint — opinion writing:** Return to your “This I Believe” statement and rework it into a thesis statement that makes **one core point** about the rule of law. This 2-4 sentence thesis can form the basis of an Op-Ed in which you convince your readers to support your perspective. If you’re done early, make bullet point notes about the types of **evidence** you will use to support your position and refute your naysayers: personal experience, primary sources, interviews with experts, statistics, and more.
- 3. Five-minute sprint — creative writing:** From *Hamilton* to the poetry of Pablo Neruda, creators around the world—and of all mediums—have entertained and examined the rule of law through their work. Create a map, diagram, or outline of a poem, short story, play, children’s book, or other creative approach to the rule of law that you might further explore in a full draft after class.

5. Share - 20 minutes

Invite students to take a quick stretch break or walk around the room after their 15-minute writing sprint. Then, ask them to return to their seats and popcorn share about their writing.

Specifically, invite them to **share with the group which writing sprint they felt most excited about and why**, and to share either the topic or a summary of their writing process (allowing agency and challenge-by-choice in their verbal participation). Encourage them to take notes if peers' ideas spark new thoughts of their own.

6. Revise - 10 minutes

For the final ten minutes of class, ensure students are registered on the Write the World website and able to log into their accounts to access the competition; remind them that they can click on the competition prompt to start writing and can work on their drafts directly in the text box on the website.

Ask them to complete these steps before leaving class, so that you can field any questions, and invite them to edit their free-writes or begin outlining a first draft of their submission in the genre they feel most excited about (reminder: they can submit to more than one genre!).

Finally, assign at least one competition entry as students' homework assignment—optionally including a round of peer and teacher feedback on a rough draft in advance of final submission.

We invite you to use any or all of the activities above to scaffold students' understanding of the rule of law in preparation for [Write the World's October competition](#). If you've done so, we'd love to hear from you! Reach out to educators@writetheworld.org to share how it went, ask any questions about the activities, or to celebrate with snapshots of student work—you might even be featured on our blog or social media channels!



Thank you to the **Supreme Court Historical Society** for making this resource possible. The Supreme Court Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to preserving and collecting the history of the United States Supreme Court, increasing public awareness of the Court's contribution to the constitutional heritage of the United States, and acquiring knowledge covering the history of the entire Judicial Branch. Learn more at supremecourthistory.org and explore resources at civics.supremecourthistory.org.