Natural Rights

Lesson Overview

Compelling Question

- Do we need rules to protect our rights?

Suggested Grade(s)	Level 2: Middle School	Time Required	One to two class periods plus one summative assessment

Lesson Objectives

- Define key academic vocabulary terms and apply to real-life and historical examples.
- Identify natural rights and the purpose of government.
- Classify scenarios from everyday life according to the natural rights of life, liberty, or property.

Lesson Assessments

- Students demonstrate their understanding of natural rights philosophy by applying academic vocabulary in discussion, sorting activity, and real-world scenarios.
- Students will participate in self-reflection and answer the inquiry question by completing the Natural Rights Exit Ticket.

- Teachers may assess by using the Assessment Rubric.

Civic Skills & Dispositions

- Active learning
- Active listening
- Authentic experiences
- Close reading
- Collaborative decision-making
- Compromise
- Considering alternative points of view
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication
- Incorporating evidence
- Open-mindedness
- Reasoning
- Relationship skills
- Self-awareness
- Self-efficacy skills
- Self-reflection
- Sense of connection
- Sense of purpose
- Social awareness

Civic Competencies

Students will strengthen their relationship skills by collaborating in teams, learning about one another, and exploring shared values related to rights.

Lesson Overview

Alignments

Center for Civic Education
We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution
(Level 2 textbook)

- Lesson 2: Why do we need government?

Educating for American Democracy Roadmap
Theme #4: A New Government & Constitution

- Grades 6–8: Analyze the ideas and debates about rights, power, civic participation, and decision-making that shaped the Revolution and the framing of the Constitution.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework

- **D2.Civ.5.6-8.** Explain the origins, functions, and structure of government with reference to the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and selected other systems of government

Common Core Standards for Literacy in Social Studies

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.6-8.4**: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Supporting Questions

- Is everyone entitled to life, liberty, and property?
- What is the relationship between our natural rights and the purpose of government?
- What happens in a state of nature?

Texts & Materials

- *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* (Level 2 textbook)
- Compass Corners signs
- Sticky notes
- Visual Vocabulary organizer
- Natural Rights slide deck
- 60-second video: John Locke and the State of Nature
- Natural Rights Sorting Activity organizer
- Caption This cartoon
- Natural Rights Exit Ticket
- Assessment Rubric

Vocabulary

- **consent:** to agree and accept something, approve of something, or allow something to take place
- **natural rights:** a doctrine that human beings have basic rights, such as those to life, liberty, and property in a state of nature and that people create governments to protect those rights
- **purpose of government:** the reasons that people form governments, including the protection of their lives, their freedom, and their property
- **self-interest:** caring about your own needs and what is best for you, like keeping yourself safe, healthy, and happy
- **social contract:** an agreement among the people to set up a government and obey its laws
- **state of nature:** the basis of natural rights philosophy. A state of nature is the condition of people living in a situation without manmade government, rules, or laws.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Educator Background

John Locke, a key influence on the founding generation, argued that in a state of nature, all people are free, equal, and rational, and possess inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. To protect these rights, people enter a social contract to form a civil society, with government's role being to safeguard individual rights.

To support student understanding, teachers can note that natural rights philosophy emerged from European Enlightenment thought and shaped many democratic values. At the same time, it's important to recognize that diverse cultures and peoples have also developed influential ideas about government, justice, and the protection of rights.

The in-class voting activities in this lesson helps normalize the experience for students by showing that sharing opinions and participating in decisions is a regular and valued part of our classroom. By voting, students learn that everyone's opinions matter and that each voice is important in shaping our classroom community. We want all students to feel empowered to participate and be heard. Additionally, this act of voting models a key civic responsibility, helping students understand the importance of engagement and decision-making that they will carry with them beyond the classroom.

In this lesson, students explore natural rights, consider life in a lawless "state of nature," and compare their ideas to John Locke's views on social contracts, consent of the governed, and the government's role in protecting rights. Students should analyze Locke's ideas and consider how natural rights philosophy influenced the Founders and continues to shape Americans' understanding of government and the rule of law.

Additional resources for teacher background include the following:

- How do rights in the Constitution reflect the influence of classical republicanism & natural rights? (Video)
- What values from natural rights philosophy influenced the Founding generation? L2S2 (Video)
- Thomas Hobbes and "Leviathan:" Ideas that Informed the American Founders, Part 25 (Video)
- The Social Contract (Video)

Additional resources on pedagogical practices include the following:

- Simulated Congressional Hearings: Preparation & Practice (CEAS Pedagogy Video 1)
- Literacy Integration: Vocabulary & Paraphrasing (CEAS Pedagogy Video 2)
- Building Relational Capacity through Peer Feedback (CEAS Pedagogy Video 3)
- Creating Community Agreements (CEAS Pedagogy Video 4)

Educators should preview all student materials and resources prior to the lesson.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Engage: Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Greet students upon entry into the classroom and welcome them to social studies.
2. Utilize the Compass Corners to post four signs around the classroom.
3. Share the following prompt with students:
    - Think about our rights as individuals and consider the rights that are protected and denied to you or those in your community. Do you think everyone in our community enjoys equal rights?
4. Using your routine strategy, divide the class into four collaborative teams and assign one team to each of the Compass Corners.
5. Distribute four to six sticky notes to each student and allow them to share their responses to each of the Compass Corners questions:
    - E = Equally Enjoyed: What rights do all members of our community share? Which rights are most precious?
    - W = Withheld: What rights are not shared by all members of our community? Which rights are denied?
    - N = Need to Know: What do you need to know about the rights of your community members? What questions do you have about your rights?
    - S = Sources: What sources spell out or guarantee our rights?
6. Allot time for students to respond to Compass Corners questions and discuss responses with their corner team.
7. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
8. Stop teams at their final corner after they have visited all four corners so that students can look for common themes or patterns that emerged in their classmates' responses.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Establish norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
- Be mindful of potential cultural differences and other factors that might influence expectations or opinions around rights.
- Illustrations for each Compass Corner question could be accepted
- Display a timer to provide visual cues and time allotted for each corner.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Encourage students to list responses in their native language first, then to be translated.

Civic Competencies

- Active learning
- Considering alternative points of view
- Open-mindedness
- Sense of connection

Lesson Plan: Day 1

9. Encourage volunteers to share common themes or patterns observed for each Compass Corner.
10. Return to a full-class format and debrief this civic learning activity by facilitating a class discussion. Ask students:
    - Do you think everyone in our community enjoys equal rights?
    - What examples can you think of where certain groups in our community may face disadvantages or barriers that others do not?
    - Does government play a role in our rights? If so, in what way?
    - What actions can individuals, schools, or communities take to help ensure that everyone's rights are respected and protected?

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

1. Tell students, Today we will explore our basic rights and how these ideas helped to form our government.
2. Introduce the compelling inquiry question: Do we need rules to protect our rights?
3. Allow students time to make a prediction about the inquiry question as well as offer their own supporting questions.
4. Distribute the Visual Vocabulary organizer and review to ensure students understand expectations.
5. Using your routine strategy, divide the class into collaborative trio teams.
6. In trio teams, students will take turns reading pp. 14–17 in the *We the People,* Level 2 textbook in order to complete the Visual Vocabulary organizer.
7. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
8. Return to a full-class format and ask for volunteers to share their responses to the organizer. Educators should seek out opportunities to incorporate academic language into this class discussion.
9. Debrief this civic learning activity by facilitating a class discussion, asking students:
    - What is the purpose of government?
    - How did the Founders use Locke's ideas?
    - What three natural rights did Locke identify?

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Arrange desks in tables/clusters to facilitate better student collaboration.
- Alternatively, sections of the reading could be completed in a full-class format, with pauses to address questions.
- Use assistive technology tools to adjust text readability and give students better access to the content.
- Consider reading readiness when forming trio teams.
- Consider using a word wall to help learners understand and use new academic language by providing clear, accessible reminders of important terms.
- Model how to complete the first vocabulary term on the Visual Vocabulary organizer as a class.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Provide the compelling inquiry question in the students' native language as needed.
- Use translation tools to give students access to text in their native language.
- Translate Visual Vocabulary organizer into students' native languages as needed.
- Partner multilingual students with strong language speakers to support concept understanding, build confidence, and encourage meaningful conversation.

Civic Competencies

- Close reading
- Critical thinking
- Reasoning
- Relationship skills
- Sense of purpose

Extending Learning

- Teams might create riddles for classmates to solve using academic vocabulary.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Explain: Discuss and Share

1. Remind students of class norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
2. Utilize the Natural Rights slide deck to support students' concept attainment of three natural rights identified by Locke: life, liberty and property.
3. Ask volunteers to restate the definition of each natural right in their own words.
4. Discuss examples of life, liberty, and property provided and solicit additional examples from students.
5. Play the Center's 60-second video titled John Locke and the State of Nature.
6. As students watch, they should listen for Locke's views on natural rights.
7. Play the video a second time to support comprehension as needed.
8. Allow time for a brief discussion or an opportunity for students' questions.
9. Distribute the Natural Rights Sorting Activity organizer and review to ensure students understand expectations.
10. Return to your collaborative trio teams, where students will discuss each example on the Natural Rights Sorting Activity organizer, explain their reasoning, and come to consensus when matching to the respective natural right.
11. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
12. Return to a full-class format and encourage volunteers to share their responses to the sorting activity. Educators should seek out opportunities to incorporate academic language into this class discussion.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Provide students guidance for respectfully discussing differences and seeking common ground.
- Utilize slide deck to encourage conversations that bring forth examples of students' lived experiences.
- Allow sufficient wait time for students to formulate answers.
- Be mindful of students' different experiences of protection of rights and experiences with the government and/or law enforcement.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Translate Natural Rights slide deck into students' native languages as needed.
- Explore subtitle options and change the language if viewing the video via YouTube.
- Partner multilingual students with strong language speakers to support concept understanding, build confidence, and encourage meaningful conversation.
- Provide visual of natural rights examples to assist with sorting activity.

Civic Competencies

- Active listening
- Authentic experiences
- Collaborative decision-making
- Compromise
- Critical thinking
- Self-awareness

Extending Learning

- Students might identify other examples from their lives that could be added to the Natural Rights Sorting Activity organizer.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

13. Debrief this civic learning activity by facilitating a class discussion, asking students:
    a. Which example was the most challenging to match?
    b. Which example might match more than one natural right?
    c. What other examples could you add to each natural right column?

Elaborate: Apply New Learning

1. Share the following prompt with students:
    - Kids are playing on a playground with no adults or rules to guide them. Everyone decides for themselves what is fair, which can easily lead to arguments, confusion, or pushing. What type of situation is this?
2. As a class, revisit the definition of state of nature: the basis of natural rights philosophy; a state of nature is the condition of people living in a situation without man-made government, rules, or laws.
3. Ask students how self-interest comes into play with regard to state of nature. Refer to page 17 in the text as needed.
4. Share that Locke explains self-interest in the state of nature as follows:
    - People try to protect themselves and take care of their own needs. (natural rights)
    - Reason tells them they should not hurt others or take their rights. (social contract)
    - Sometimes people disagree or act unfairly because they put their own wants first. (self-interest)
    - To stay safe, people join together and create a government with rules. (purpose for government)
5. Distribute Caption This cartoon and review to ensure students understand expectations.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Provide students with an opportunity to discuss the scenario before responding.
- Allow sufficient wait time for students to formulate answers.
- Model caption creation as a class.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Multilingual students can share their observations and caption suggestions in their native language first and use translation technology as needed.

Civic Competencies

- Active listening
- Collaborative decision-making
- Critical thinking
- Relationship skills
- Self-efficacy skills

Extending Learning

- Students might create their own cartoon to illustrate topics incorporating themes of academic vocabulary.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

6. Return to your collaborative trio teams, where students will discuss their observations about the cartoon and then create a caption. Guide students to refer to the Visual Dictionary in order to create their captions, incorporating academic vocabulary.
7. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
8. Return to a full-class format and encourage volunteers to share their captions.

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage

1. Thank your young scholars for their investigation of natural rights today.
2. Ask students to revisit the inquiry question: "Do we need rules to protect our rights?"
3. Encourage students to consider their original answer and reflect on their new learning in order to complete the Natural Rights Exit Ticket.
4. Guide students to refer to the Visual Dictionary in order to incorporate academic vocabulary into their response for the exit ticket.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Students can orally share their answer to the inquiry question with the teacher instead of a written response to the exit ticket.
- Consider allowing students to utilize a speak-to-type feature to record their response to the exit ticket.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Provide the compelling inquiry question translated into the native language of students as needed.

Civic Competencies

- Effective communication
- Incorporating evidence
- Self-reflection
- Social awareness

Extending Learning

- Students might practice public speaking by delivering their responses to either the exit ticket or the position statement to their trio teammates.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Simulated Congressional Hearing Connection Summative Assessment

Guide students to write a brief statement taking a position on John Locke's view that natural rights are best protected through a social contract and government. The statement should include a clear thesis and three supporting pieces of evidence drawn from the text, class discussions, current events, or personal experiences. This activity is a good way to practice the written testimony expectations in preparation for their simulated hearings.