SCH Preparation: Decoding the Hearing Question

Lesson Overview

Compelling Question

- Does historical context change how we understand an issue's importance today?

Suggested Grade(s)	Grades 5–12 Level 2 & Level 3	**Time Required**	One to two class periods

Lesson Objectives

- Analyze assigned We the People simulated congressional hearing (SCH) team question.
- Interpret the historical and contemporary context of the assigned We the People simulated congressional hearing team question.
- Assess the role individuals play in the political process by developing a deeper understanding of constitutional issues and opportunities for civic engagement.

Lesson Assessments

- Students demonstrate their understanding of simulated congressional hearing questions by unpacking their assigned question and beginning to develop research.

- Teachers may assess by using the Assessment Rubric.
- Students will participate in self-reflection by completing the Inquiry Reflection Tool.

Civic Skills & Dispositions

- Active listening
- Alternative points of view
- Close reading
- Collaboration
- Critical thinking
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Positive communication
- Relationship skills
- Self-reflection
- Self-regulation
- Sense of purpose
- Social awareness
- Teamwork

Civic Competencies

Students will develop their social awareness and positive communication by

- demonstrating a respect for others during our collaborative team experiences and
- practicing active listening to show appreciation for the diversity of perspectives shared during the question decoding activities.

Alignments

Lesson Overview

Center for Civic Education
We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution
(Level 2, third edition, and
Level 3, fourth and fifth editions)

- Simulated congressional hearing experiential learning preparation

Educating for American Democracy Roadmap
Theme #7: A People with Contemporary Debates & Possibilities

- Grades 6–12: Cultivate an understanding of personal interests, motivations, and decisions as civic agents

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework

- **D2.His.6.6–8.** Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.
- **D2.His.11.9–12.** Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

Common Core Standards for Literacy in Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2: Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies in the data.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Supporting Question(s)

- What is the important historical context to your simulated congressional hearing question?
- How does using the Constitution help you answer your question?
- How is your question relevant today to you and your community?

Texts & Materials

- Objective of the Game slide deck
- Can I Identify Reliable Media Sources? video
- Decoding the Hearing Question organizer
- Deciphering SCH Question Inquiry Assessment Rubric
- Simulated Congressional Hearing Scoring Rubric
- Exit Ticket

Vocabulary

- **congressional hearing:** meeting or session of a Senate, House, joint, or special committee of Congress to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation, conduct an investigation, or evaluate/oversee the activities of a government department or the implementation of a federal law.

Educator Background

The hearing preparation process is an ideal opportunity to be instructional and empower all students when educators do the following:

- **Create diverse, inclusive teams:** When forming teams, consider students' backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles. Aim for a mix that encourages collaboration and helps students learn from different perspectives.
- **Set clear expectations:** Be explicit about the goals and expectations for teamwork, speech writing, delivery, and feedback. Share rubrics or guidelines so students know what success looks like.
- **Foster an inclusive classroom:** Build a classroom culture where every student feels safe sharing their ideas. Establish norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
- **Support effective collaboration:** Give students clear strategies for working together—active listening, brainstorming, dividing tasks, and reaching consensus. Make sure every student has a chance to contribute meaningfully.
- **Scaffold speech writing and delivery:** Chunk the process into manageable steps. Provide models, graphic organizers, or templates to guide students as they organize ideas, use evidence, and connect their arguments to constitutional and historical examples.
- **Encourage feedback and reflection:** Include time for peer feedback and self-reflection. Teach students how to give feedback that's specific, respectful, and useful, and help them set goals for continued growth.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Lesson Preparation:

1. The teacher should review the Simulated Congressional Hearing Procedures to become familiar with the steps and timing involved.
2. Before this lesson, the teacher should group students in teams of four to six (depending on class size) and assign each team a simulated congressional hearing. Sample questions are available.
3. Organize desks to accommodate all members of the teams. This will help students communicate verbally and nonverbally with each other.
4. It is recommended that students participate in the SCH Candy Hearing Lesson prior to this lesson.

Additional resources for teacher background 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 lesson materials prior to delivering 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. Share the Objective of the Game slide deck, pausing to discuss each game presented.
3. As the image of the game appears on the screen, ask students what is the objective of this game and solicit student input about how to play the game.
    - When presenting a new game, keep in mind that students' prior experience may differ depending on where they grew up.
4. Ask students if it is easier/more fun to play a game when they know the objective.
5. Utilize Slide 10 of the Objective of the Game slide deck to explain that the hearing questions are "the objectives" for the hearings—the questions govern what you and your colleagues will research, write, and discuss for your simulated congressional hearings at the end of this project.
6. Display each team's assigned hearing question and allow time to review.
7. Tell students that being able to break down their question will guide them in knowing what to research in order to answer the question and write their testimony.
8. Play the Center's Media Literacy video Can I Identify Reliable Sources?
9. As students watch, have them identify tips on how to identify reliable sources.
10. Facilitate discussions on how students can most effectively and accurately research their question.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Desks arranged in tables/clusters are recommended to facilitate better student collaboration.
- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, lived experience, and other factors that might influence students' familiarity with individual games.
- Rely on sentence starters and graphics found on slides to support concept attainment.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Slide deck could be modified to include additional games that may be familiar to multilingual students.
- Utilize translation options on YouTube.

Civic Competencies

- Active learning
- Alternative points of view
- Positive communication
- Self-regulation
- Social awareness

Extending Learning

- Consider completing the Y2C1_Lesson 4: Can I Identify Reliable Media Sources? (Pilot) or parts of the lesson to prepare students for identifying and using sources in their testimony.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

1. Display the compelling question: Does historical context change how we understand an issue's importance today?
2. Allow students to make predictions about the inquiry question, brainstorm possible answers, and formulate their own supporting questions.
3. Distribute the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer and review to ensure students understand expectations.
4. Instruct students to read their assigned question and capture their initial ideas about their question in their graphic organizer independently.
5. Using your routine strategy, divide the class into their assigned simulated congressional hearing teams. This will be called their SCH Home Team for this activity.
6. Tell students they will now work collaboratively with their teams to decipher their hearing question.
7. As a team, instruct students to complete pages 1 and 2 of the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer.
8. Remind students of class norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
9. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
10. Return to a full-class format and ask students to share their initial thoughts on this process of deciphering or decoding their question.
11. Distribute the Simulated Congressional Hearing Scoring Rubric and review to ensure students understand how their teams will be evaluated during their hearing.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Consider giving students their choice of a simulated congressional hearing question and/or choice of team members.
- Encourage SCH Home Teams to split up the research organizer.
- To support emerging readers, preteach additional academic vocabulary. Use images, word banks, or word walls to support students.
- Flexible pacing for the lesson can provide additional time for students who need it. Consider breaking up research throughout several days.
- Teachers may show how to use the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer by modeling a question as a class example.
- Run a visible countdown timer for this section's activity.
- Consider allowing students to utilize a speak-to-type feature to record their answers on the graphic organizer.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Translate the compelling question into students' native language, if needed.
- To support multilingual students, preteach additional academic vocabulary. Use images, word banks, or word walls to support students.
- Use translation tools to give students access to websites in their native language.

Civic Competencies

- Alternative points of view
- Close reading
- Positive communication
- Social awareness
- Teamwork

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Explain: Discuss and Share

1. Tell students that you will now mix the class again so that they can provide feedback and suggestions to other teams.
2. Split up the SCH Home Teams into new groupings so that a team member from each SCH question is represented.
3. In new groupings, students will share their question and initial findings from the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer with their new teammates.
4. During the sharing session, teammates will encourage the speaker to elaborate and provide reasoning for their explanation by practicing active listening skills strategies, such as asking the following:
    - What I hear you say is [insert summary of speaker's comments]. Is that accurate?
    - What makes you say that?
    - I like your point about [insert summary of speaker's comments]. Have you also considered [offer suggestion of alternative viewpoint]?
5. Allow time for classmates to give and receive feedback and suggestions for ideas to explore more.
6. While teammates are providing feedback, the speaker should be encouraged to make additional annotations on their Decoding the Hearing Question organizer.
7. Circulate to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
8. Return to a full-class format and debrief this civic learning by facilitating a discussion, asking the following:
    - What were your initial thoughts about your question?
    - How does using the Constitution help you answer your question?
    - What surprised you about your question/research?
    - How did this process help you consider other points of view?

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Consider preassigning the new teams to display for easy transition.
- Display the active listening prompting questions for the class.
- For students who may struggle with group discussions, allow them to record a written response prior to the team discussion portion.
- Run a visible countdown timer to ensure each team member has ample time to share.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Translate the active listening prompting questions as needed.
- Allow ML students to use assistive technology to record or translate their responses.

Civic Competencies

- Active listening
- Alternative points of view
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Positive communication
- Relationship skills
- Social awareness

Extended Learning

- Conduct a vote on which sites and resources are the best and most reliable to use for conducting research.
    - Make a point to emphasize this act of voting. Explain that everyone's opinions matter, and we want everyone to have a voice in classroom decisions. Furthermore, voting is a civic responsibility we are modeling now.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Elaborate: Apply New Learning

1. Have students return to their SCH Home Teams.
2. As a team, discuss the feedback each team member received and update pages 1 and 2 of the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer.
3. Teams will complete page 3 of the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer together.
4. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
5. Return to a full-class format and debrief this civic learning by reviewing page 3 of the Decoding the Hearing Question organizer, paying particular attention to sharing how this question or topic impacts the students and their community.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Consider having examples of court cases and current events that work for each simulated congressional hearing question, in case students have trouble finding some.
- Consider identifying a few examples of reliable sources for each question to provide to groups.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Use translation tools to give students access to websites in their native language.

Civic Competencies

- Active listening
- Collaboration
- Positive communication
- Sense of purpose
- Teamwork

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage

1. Facilitate a brief discussion on student takeaways of the simulated congressional hearing questions. Possible discussion questions:
    - Were your initial thoughts about the question changed by the history you researched?
    - How do current events help shape your argument?
    - What are you excited to look further into?
    - What questions do you still have?
2. Ask students to revisit the inquiry question: "Does historical context change how we understand an issue's importance today?"
3. Encourage students to consider their initial thought to their question and reflect on their new learning in order to complete the Exit Ticket.
4. Consider utilizing the Inquiry Reflection Tool.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Consider allowing students to utilize a speak-to-type feature to record their answers on the exit ticket.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider allowing students to utilize translation technology options to complete the reflection tool.

Civic Competencies

- Critical thinking
- Positive communication
- Self-reflection

Extending Learning

- Have students make a plan for how they will develop their testimony moving forward, for example, assigning different roles, brainstorming new topics to research, writing further questions they would like to explore, etc.