Big Question Unit
4th Grade

Big Question: Why do we need laws?

Goals and Objectives:
1. The student will recognize and define the rationale for the existence of governments by examining the following: Who makes laws in the United States, What might happen in the absence of government and laws.
   - Students will describe the three branches of the U.S. government established by the constitution their primary functions and their relationship.
   - Students will identify laws for different jobs.
   - Students will discover what the pledge of allegiance means.

2. Students will identify and research community problems and recommend solutions.
   - Students will write a letter to city counsel about a law or change you would like to make to their community.

Sub-Questions:
- How are laws different form place to place?
- How are laws made?
- How can we be supportive of laws?

Resources:
Posters: pledge of allegiance, 3 branches
Books: Regions textbook, Odd Jobs by Ellen Weiss, Community Helpers from A to Z By Bobbie Kalman.
Movie: “I’m only a bill” History Rock

Assessment:
- I will have observation checklists that I will be using for the whole unit.
- There is an activity sheet for the first lesson plan. I will be look that they attempted every question.
- I will have a rubric for the letter they write to the city counsel.
- Students will turn in a journal entry for the 4th lesson.
- Students will make a poster and present it to the class to show their understanding of the big question.
Why Do We Need Laws?
Lesson One

Grade Level: 4th grade

Objective: Students will identify laws (rules) that different jobs have to follow.

Sub-Question: How are laws different from place to place?

Materials: dictionary, activity sheet, descriptions of different jobs, Odd Jobs by Ellen Weiss, Community Helpers from A to Z by Bobbie Kalman.

Introduction: Talk to the students about what the big question unit is all about. Tell them that they will be doing some different activities to help them answer the big question. Then ask them why they think we have laws, what’s the purpose. Ask them who has to follow the laws (or rules). Does everyone have to follow laws (ex: teachers, principals, doctors, students, presidents)? Next talk about how rules change ever where you go (from place to place). How are the rules different from the classroom and the hall? How are they different from the gym to the classroom? How are they different in countries? (drive on the different sides of the roads, if they didn’t know that what would happen?)

Procedure: As a class we will read about a job. Together we will discuss the different laws that this job has to follow. We will fill out the work sheet as a class for an example, so that they know what they are doing. Then I will put the students in pairs. Each pair will get a description of a different job. Their job is to read about a job and talk to each other about what kind of rules they might follow. Students can also look up the job in the dictionary for extra information about the job. What would happen if they didn’t follow the rules?

Assessment: Ongoing checklist, students must also turn in the activity sheet totally filled out, and answers make seem to follow the job that the students have.

Summary: The class will come back together. We will discuss about a couple different jobs and what it would be like if there was no laws.
Jobs Laws

Job_______________________

1. Job description:

2. Laws (or rules) this job must follow:

3. What would happen if someone didn't follow these laws (rules)?

4. What other jobs might follow the same laws or rules?
Why We Need Laws?
Lesson Two

Grade Level: 4th grade

Time: 35-45 minutes

Objective: Students will discover what the pledge of allegiance means.

Sub-Question: How can we be supportive of laws?

Materials: Poster of the pledge of allegiance, big piece of paper, white paper, markers, dictionary

Introduction: Ask the students why they say the pledge every morning. What does it mean? Tell them that when they say the pledge they are making a promise to be loyal (faithful, devoted) to the United States. How can they show this? (Following laws a rules, being a good neighbor, etc.) Ask the students if they know what all the words mean.

Procedure: The students will talk about the words that they don’t really understand what it is. I will underline them on the poster and write them on the board. They will look them up in the dictionary. (They will use their activity sheets to record the definitions of the words.) Together we will rewrite the pledge in words that they can understand. (Again they will be filling this out on their activity sheet.) Then they will write them on their papers. If there is time then they will be able to decorate their new pledges. Example of new pledge is attached.

Assessment: Using the same checklist, watch that all students are participating

Summary: Have the students as a big group read the new pledge out loud. If any of them are interested in reading it out loud by themselves then they can do that too. Ask again what each word from the original pledge mean.
Melissa Trafton

Writing our Pledge

Name_____________________

Write the definitions of each word:

Pledge:_________________________________________________________________________

Allegiance:_______________________________________________________________________

Republic:________________________________________________________________________

Nation:___________________________________________________________________________

Indivisible:_______________________________________________________________________

Liberty:___________________________________________________________________________

Justice:___________________________________________________________________________

Our New Pledge

I __________________________

To the flag

Of the United States of America

And to our __________________________

For which it stands

One __________________________

Under God

__________________________

With __________________________

And __________________________ for all
Pledge
I pledge allegiance to the Flag
of the United States of America,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation under God, indivisible,
With Liberty and Justice for all.

Pledge: vow, promise
Allegiance: loyalty to a government, group
Republic: democracy, government
Nation: community, country, body of people
Indivisible: cannot be divided, not separated
Liberty: freedom
Justice: fairness

New Pledge
I promise loyalty
To the flag
Of the United States of America
And to our government
For which it stands
One community
Under God
Unable to be separated
With freedom
And fairness for all
**Why Do We Need Laws?**  
**Lesson Three**

**Grade Level:** 4\textsuperscript{th} grade  
**Time:** 30-40 minutes

**Objective:** Students will write a letter to city counsel about something they would like to change in their community.

**Sub-Question:** How can we be supportive of laws?

**Materials:** paper, pencil, Regions textbook

**Introduction:** Is there anything in the community that the students see that they don’t like. Is there anything that they would want to change? (cleaner parks, cleaner lakes, cross walk and sidewalks, safer playground equipment) I will read “A Citizen Speaks Out” from the textbook on page 47. We will talk as a class what Heumann did to make a difference in her community. Tell the students that each one of them can make a difference to make the world a better place.

**Procedure:** After the students get an idea about something that they would like to change in the community, they will write a letter to their city counsel. They will write about an issue that they are concerned about. They will come up with at least two different solutions or actions that they would like to see happen to fix the problem. They can even make up a law that they would like to see pass. (For those students that don’t know the different parts to writing a letter, they can write their thoughts down in an organized fashion.)

**Assessment:** Rubric for letter

**Summary:** Ask the students in what ways can they make a difference. What other steps could they take to make a difference?
## Letter-Writing : Letter to City Counsel

**Teacher Name:** Ms. Trafton  

**Student Name:** ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas</td>
<td>Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.</td>
<td>Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.</td>
<td>Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.</td>
<td>The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization and Punctuation</td>
<td>Writer makes no errors in capitalization and punctuation.</td>
<td>Writer makes 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.</td>
<td>Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.</td>
<td>Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentences &amp; Paragraphs</td>
<td>Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed and of varied structure.</td>
<td>All sentences are complete and well-constructed (no fragments, no run-ons). Paragraphing is generally done well.</td>
<td>Most sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing needs some work.</td>
<td>Many sentence fragments or run-on sentences OR paragraphing needs lots of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness</td>
<td>Letter is typed, clean, not wrinkled, and is easy to read with no distracting error corrections. It was done with pride.</td>
<td>Letter is neatly handwritten, clean, not wrinkled, and is easy to read with no distracting error corrections. It was done with care.</td>
<td>Letter is typed and is crumpled or slightly stained. It may have 1-2 distracting error corrections. It was done with some care.</td>
<td>Letter is typed and looks like it had been shoved in a pocket or locker. It may have several distracting error corrections. It looks like it was done in a hurry or stored improperly.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Why Do We Need Laws?
Lesson Four

Grade Level: 4th grade
Time: 45-55 minutes

Objective: Students will describe the three branches of the U.S. government established by the constitution their primary functions, and their relationship.

Sub-Question: How are laws made?

Materials: “I’m only a bill” movie, Poster of the 3 branches, board to write bills

Introduction: Ask the students if they know what bills are and how they are passed. I will then tell them that there are three branches to the government. Judicial (Supreme Court), Legislative (congress), executive (president). Show the poster of what each branch is responsible for. We will be focusing on congress and how bills are passed to make laws. Congress is broken into two houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate. I will explain to them that bills start out as an idea or thought. They write down the thought to make a bill. The bill can start in either house. After the bill says exactly what they want it to say they vote on it. Then it goes to the other house (which ever one didn’t come up with it). They can vote yes on the bill, make changes to the bill, or kill the bill which means that it won’t become a law. If both houses voted yes on the bill then the bill goes to the president. The presidents can say yes to the bill and it will become a law but if he veto (says no) the bill then it goes back to the houses. The only way that it will pass then would be if 2/3 of the houses vote in favor of the bill.

Procedure: The students will watch “I’m only a bill.” The class then will role play and experience what it takes to pass a bill. The class will come up with at least two bills. Then I will take four students to be a part of the senate and 6 students to be a part of the House of Representatives. I will then give one group of students one of the bills. As a group they will discuss why they think the bill should pass, why it shouldn’t (have a sheet helping them to spark ideas of how to discuss). Then they will take a vote. If they are in favor of it they will send it to the other house and they will do the same thing. If they vote yes it will go to me (the president). I will say yes to one of them and veto the other so that they understand how it works. It will be good for the students to disagree so that they can get the real feeling how it feels to be a part of the process.

Assessment: Students will write a little journal entry about what they thought about the process, how it made them feel, how the students felt that weren’t apart of the committee (not having a say about what was being decided). They could also write about the path that a bill takes to become a law.

Summary: Talk through the process of how the bill is passed to become a law.
Why Do We Need Laws?
Lesson Five

Grade Level: 4th grade

Time: Two sessions of 45 minutes

Objective: Students will recognize and define the rationale for the existence of governments by examining the following: Who makes laws in the United States, What might happen in the absence of government and laws.

Sub-Question: How can we be supportive of laws?

Materials: poster paper, markers

Introduction: What kinds of laws are important to have in a community? Laws should be good for everyone. What kind of things need to be considered when laws are made? Why do we need laws?

Procedure: Day one: I will put the students into groups of 4. Together they will come up with their own town. Together they will make up laws and consequences to the laws. They will come up with a name for their town. Each person can come up with their role in their community. They will put their laws and consequences on poster (they will write them on a piece of paper first). They will also draw a picture of their town on the poster. Each student will also have a job. When they get into their groups they will count off to 4.
1. Make sure that everyone is staying on task
2. Control noise level
3. Writer
4. Material getter
5. Time keeper
Day two: I will give them some more time to finish their posters. Then they will share their community with the class.

Assessment: see rubric

Summary: The students will present their towns to the class. They will tell about their laws, consequences and why they have them (why they are important). What their roles are in their community. Answering the big question
### Oral Presentation Rubric: Presenting my Community

**Teacher Name:** Ms. Trafton  
**Student Name:** ________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>Student is able to understand and answer the big question. They are able to back up their answer with many examples. (they explain why they are important and what would happen if we didn't have laws.)</td>
<td>Student answers the question with few examples to back up their reasoning.</td>
<td>Student answers the question but doesn't use any example to explain their answer.</td>
<td>Student doesn't really understand the big question but is able to explain their reasoning to their answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Student uses at least 7 laws (rules), 7 consequences, and has reasoning why they are important.</td>
<td>Student uses at least 5 laws, 5 consequences, and has reasoning for why it is important.</td>
<td>Student have some laws with consequences, doesn't really explain why they have them.</td>
<td>Student has a few laws and consequences but has trouble explaining why they have them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stays on Topic</strong></td>
<td>Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.</td>
<td>Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.</td>
<td>Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.</td>
<td>It was hard to tell what the topic was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration with Peers</strong></td>
<td>Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Tries to keep people working well together.</td>
<td>Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Does not cause &quot;waves&quot; in the group.</td>
<td>Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group but sometimes is not a good team member.</td>
<td>Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Often is not a good team member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poster</strong></td>
<td>All students worked on poster, worked well with others, everyone explains something about poster.</td>
<td>Some students worked on poster, some students talked about the poster, worked well with others.</td>
<td>Some students worked on poster, few students talked about the poster, had problems working as a group.</td>
<td>Not everyone worked on the poster, one person talked about the poster, had problems working as a group.</td>
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</table>
How a Bill Becomes a Law.

Congress has two houses the Senate and House of Representatives. Fill in the boxes and ovals in with the correct words to see the process of making a law.

A Bill starts out with an Idea.

Vote Yes

Vote No

Vote No

Vote Yes

Yes

Veto Bill

Says Yes
### Why Do We Need Laws?

**Check List**

**Childs Name:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>On Target</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Works cooperatively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stays on task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses time wisely</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses all available resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understands directions/Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finishes tasks on time</td>
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