

LESSON 7

Grade Level & Subject: High School Social Studies (History or Government)

Unit: Discovering the Rich History of the Michigan Supreme Court

Lesson: How Michigan Law Affects You

State Standards and Benchmarks:

Social Studies. Strand I. Historical Perspective. Standard I.2 Comprehending the Past. All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting, and sequencing the events. Standard I.4 Judging Decisions from the Past. All students will evaluate key decisions made at critical turning points in history by assessing their implications and long-term consequences. Strand III. Civic Perspective. Standard III.3 Democracy in Action. All students will describe the political and legal processes created to make decisions, seek consensus, and resolve conflicts in a free society. Strand VII. Citizen Involvement. Standard VII.1 Responsible Personal Conduct. All students will consider the effects of an individual's actions on other people, how one acts in accordance with the rule of law, and how one acts in a virtuous and ethically responsible way as a member of society.

Unit Outcome:

When this unit is finished, students will be able to: (1) conduct historical research/investigation using both primary and secondary sources, (2) describe the importance of the Michigan Supreme Court, (3) present, verbally and in written form, informed opinions about Court decisions and procedures, and (4) recognize how the Michigan Supreme Court affects their lives.

Lesson Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate, in their own words, how Michigan law, can and does affect their lives
- Analyze primary source documents
- Critique early 20th century Michigan laws pertaining to women

Rational/Purpose for Lesson:

Up to this point, students have learned about the history of the Court and how it works. This lesson serves to show students that knowing about Michigan law is also important. Using the State Bar of Michigan's *You and the Law* will allow the teacher to expose students to information about state laws that affect various aspects of their lives, making the law relevant to them. The hope is that students, armed with this knowledge of the law, will more readily understand

the importance of the Michigan Supreme Court and its role as an interpreter of the law.

Resources/Materials required:

- *You and the Law*
- Copy of the pamphlet *Michigan Laws Relating to Women and Girls*
- Notes/Information about the Supreme Court's 2001 decision to limit the use of mental capacity as an excuse by criminals seeking to avoid or reduce responsibility

Introduction:

Begin reading select laws from the *Michigan Laws Relating to Women and Girls* pamphlet. Watch students for reactions. If they are not already volunteering their reactions and opinions, ask them how they feel or what they think about these laws. Be sure to ask both females and males for their reactions. Tell students that the day's lesson will deal with issues of Michigan Law and how the law affects their lives

Procedures:

1. Ask students if they can recall any of the responses a defendant in a criminal case answers a judge's question, "How do you plead?." Tell them to draw on their knowledge of courtroom proceedings as seen on television.
2. If none of them come up with something like, "Not guilty by reason of insanity," then prompt them to do so (or eventually give them the answer if necessary).
3. Read aloud the information about the "insanity defense" ruling from June 12, 2001.
4. Encourage students to discuss this issue
5. Ask students what they know about laws that affect them. Prompt them by pointing out areas where the law does affect them like curfews, driving laws, locker searches, etc.
6. After this brief discussion, present information from *You and the Law*. The teacher should probably only choose to discuss three to five of the sections from the book, depending how much time is remaining in the class hour. Three suggestions are: "Becoming an adult, or Turning 18"; "Alcohol"; and "School."
7. Encourage students to discuss these issues too. (This discussion will allow students to talk about issues they find interesting. It will ideally get them excited about issue of law.)
8. Assign homework and allow students to begin working on the project.

Closure:

Ask students if they can give you one reason as to why law exists. Tell them to try to keep their answers to one simple sentence, or one word if possible. Whatever their answers, stress for them the importance of the citizenry or any individual from a group of people adhering to the laws of those people. Highlight the need for them to be aware of and respectful of laws.

Guided study/Homework:

Have students work alone or in pairs on a "High-School Student's Handbook to Michigan Law." They should use their notes about the information from the *You and the Law* book. They may also wish to incorporate anything they find important, amusing, or relevant about the "insanity defense" as well as the laws about Women from the early 1900s. ***[Some teachers may choose to make copies ahead of time and tell students to read the eight pages from the book *A Case in Court* (Supreme Court's decision in the case of William W. Ferguson v. Edward G. Gies) so that they are prepared for the next day: Lesson #8]

Assessment:

1. Student participation in discussion will be assessed
2. Student "handbooks" will be graded based on thoroughness, relevance and age-appropriateness, and creativity.

Evaluation and Reflection: (To be completed by teacher after lesson has been implemented)

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Lesson: How the Court Affects Us

1. Listen to information about laws affecting high school age young adults.
2. Participate actively in discussion.
3. **Homework:** work alone or in pairs on a “High-School Student’s Handbook to Michigan Law.” Use your notes from class today. You may also wish to incorporate anything you find important, amusing, or relevant about the “insanity defense” as well as the laws about Women from the early 1900s.

If you missed class, you should also:

1. Get a copy of the lecture notes
2. Get a copy of the handouts
3. For Homework: Ask the teacher for a copy of *You and the Law* and read about five of the topics. Write a 2-3 sentence summary of each and then make a 1-sentence statement of your opinion, concern, or question about the laws associated with each section