

LESSON 4

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

Unit: Discovering the Rich History of the Michigan Supreme Court

Lesson: Faces of the Bench

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.3 Analyzing and Interpreting the Past. All students will reconstruct the past by comparing interpretations written by others from a variety of perspectives and creating narratives from evidence. Strand V. Inquiry. Standard V.2 Conducting Investigations. All students will conduct investigations by formulating a clear statement of a question, gathering and organizing information from a variety of sources, analyzing and interpreting information, formulating and testing hypotheses, reporting results both orally and in writing, and making use of appropriate technology.

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- Demonstrate their ability to find information in primary source historical documents
- Analyze primary source documents and relate the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of the author
- Identify and briefly describe 11 Michigan Supreme Court Justices

Rationale/Purpose for Lesson:

This lesson, like the one from the previous day, will put a personal touch on the history of the Court. Students will examine primary source documents today as they learn about Justice Person. They will read his diaries – an activity that allows them to do what historians do by reading documents prepared by someone who lived the history about which he/she is writing.

Resources/Materials required:

- *.tif files of Justice Person's diary
- Copies: Michigan Supreme Court Historical Reference Guide pages 116-117
- Lecture notes
- Computer with Large Screen/Television or with a projector for showing the *.tif files (If there is no way to display these pictures for students to observe, consider printing the necessary pictures and making overheads from them.)

Introduction:

Begin this class period by asking students what they remember about the "Big Four." Tell them that many of the Michigan Supreme Court justices came from humble beginnings and some came from not so humble ones. Point out that they came from different cities in the country and their educations varied. Stress that they were real people who eventually "got jobs" working for the Michigan Supreme Court. Let them know that today's lesson will concentrate on looking at the justices as people with hopes, dreams, families, concerns, etc., just like the rest of us.

Procedures:

1. Display pictures of Justice Rollin H. Person's diary
2. Instruct students to read these diary entries and allow ample time for them to complete this (If you find it more appropriate for your classroom, have someone read the entries aloud)
3. Tell students they should take notes while they read
4. Once students are finished, ask them the following (Make sure they defend their answers by grounding them in the text):
 - a. What do they think Justice Person was thinking on his first day?
 - b. What do they think about his first day on the job as a Michigan Supreme Court justice?
 - c. Did Justice Person take his position seriously?
 - d. What were Justice Person's thoughts when he lost the election in 1916?
 - e. Was there a distinguishable mood or tone to Person's diary entry on the day he saw his successor sworn in?
5. Deliver a brief lecture about the current Michigan Supreme Court Justices, as well as Eugene Black, Thomas Kavanagh, and Edward Cahill

Closure:

Tell students that Michigan Supreme Court justices are just as human as they are. Tell them that justices have families, that they make mistakes, and that they have worries just like normal people. Again, stress the importance of “getting to know” the justices. Tell students that by understanding the personalities of the justices, they can develop a stronger understanding of the Court at different points in its history.

Guided study/Homework:

Depending on Day 3’s assignment, complete Internet research paper about a Supreme Court Justice of your own choosing. If this was turned in today, the teacher should allow students to choose to do one of two things. Either they may write a reaction paper about Justice Person’s diary entries OR they may create their own diary entry about their day. For this “personal diary entry,” students should include significant world events that they personally find interesting, personal events that are significant in their own lives, and any other appropriate thoughts.

Assessment:

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

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1. Play a jeopardy game about the Big Four
2. Read from the diary of a Michigan Supreme Court justice
3. Participate in a discussion about those diary entries
4. **Homework:** Either write a reaction paper about Justice Person's diary entries OR create your own diary entry about your day. For this "personal diary entry" include significant world events that you personally find interesting, personal events that are significant in your own lives, and any other appropriate thoughts.

If you missed class, you should also:

1. Get a copy of the lecture notes
2. Get a copy of the handouts
3. Ask the teacher for copies of the diary entries of Justice Person. Write a 1-2 page paper summarizing Justice Person's experience on the bench and about his thoughts about serving on the Michigan Supreme Court.
4. For Homework: Create your own diary entry about your day. For this "personal diary entry," include significant world events that you personally find interesting, personal events that are significant in your own life, and any other appropriate thoughts.