

Bringing Government Terms to Life: Seventh Grade Lesson Plan

Objective: To identify significant terms used to describe the process and responsibilities of government.

TEKS: 7.13.A; 7.22.A; 7.22.C

Materials: List of terms and definitions, checklist for creating skits, definition matrix for notes, markers, and rubric for presentations.

Overview of Activity: In this Social Studies Skill Builder, students carefully read information from the Texas history textbook describing the duties of the three branches of state government. Students will analyze 24 cards describing various powers of the three branches of state government and then categorize the information according to the branch.

Preview: Preview: Have the students copy and answer the following question: How does government affect your life on a daily basis? Explain.

Activity:

1. Before class, divide your students into heterogeneous groups of three based on gender, multiple intelligences, readiness, interest and learning style.

Tell students that they will create and present skits to learn nine different government terms: limited government, separation of powers, federalism, popular sovereignty, checks and balances, individual rights, executive branch, legislative branch and judicial branch. Explain that these terms will allow them to better understand the process and responsibilities of the government.

2. Give each group one of the nine terms and definitions. Tell students they must not reveal their term to any other group. Explain that each group has one main responsibility: to create a 1 to 3 minute skit that demonstrates the meaning of their term.

3. Allow students to choose from the following roles:
 - Facilitator:** Helps brainstorm ideas for skit. Makes sure the skit is completed on time. Coordinates the efforts of the group. Is responsible for updating the checklist with the teacher. Performs in skit.
 - Writer:** Solicits input for skit from all group members. Writes script for the skit. Performs in skit.
 - Designer:** Helps brainstorm ideas for skit. Solicits input for props from all group members. Creates props for the skit. Performs in skit.
4. Make sure that each group has the checklist handout.
5. Tell students that they may not use the term in their skit, but rather must act out the term's meaning in a short drama, charade, pantomime, or dramatic reading. For example, for "prohibition" students might act out a scene in a family where the parent forbids the child from getting a tattoo.
6. Once students understand how to create skits for their terms, have them begin working. Remind students not to share their terms with other groups. Allow time for groups to complete the task. Circulate around the room to check progress, but do not hover or interfere with the group's progress. Have students come to you for your initials for each step on the checklist handout.
7. Presentations: Ask the first group to come to the front of the room and present their skit. After the presentation, have students in the audience review their government terms and discuss which definition they think was portrayed in the skit. Have students justify their answers, and discuss the key parts of the skit that illustrated the term's meaning. Once the class has identified the correct definition, have the presenting group reveal their term. Continue this process until all groups have presented their skits.
8. Debrief: After all students have presented their skits, discuss the following questions with the students.
 - a. How do these skits accurately reflect the definition of the government terms?

- b. How could the skits be changed to more accurately reflect the government terms?
 - c. How do these terms apply to your life?
9. Graphically organized notes: Have students take notes during the presentations of the skits on the handout provided.

Processing: Look at the Texas Constitution (either online at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/txconst/toc.html> or in your Texas History Book). Identify where 4 of the terms appear in the Texas Constitution. Create a short version of an ABC book by listing the term, giving its definition, identifying where it is in the Constitution and drawing a picture to represent it.