

Literacy and the Law

Lesson Title: Lesson 6: Town Hall Meeting



Context of the lesson within the project: (Podcast (C) precedes this lesson)

Students help to educate the settlers in San Francisco with an understanding of the governance structure by presenting posters and tableaux performances at a town hall meeting. In addition, within each performance, they give an example of a social, economic or political problem during the Gold Rush and suggest how the structures within the government could help solve the problem.

Standards Addressed

California History Social Science Content Standards

4.5 Students understand the structures, functions, and powers of the local, state, and federal governments as described in the U.S. Constitution.

1. Discuss what the U.S. Constitution is and why it is important (i.e., a written document that defines the structure and purpose of the U.S. government and describes the shared powers of federal, state, and local governments).
2. Understand the purpose of the California Constitution, its key principles, and its relationship to the U.S. Constitution.
3. Describe the similarities (e.g., written documents, rule of law, consent of the governed, three separate branches) and differences (e.g., scope of jurisdiction, limits on government powers, use of the military) among federal, state, and local governments.
4. Explain the structures and functions of state governments, including the roles and responsibilities of their elected officials.
5. Describe the components of California's governance structure (e.g., cities and towns, Indian rancherias and reservations, counties, school districts).

CA HSS Analysis Skills (K–5): Historical Interpretation

California English Language Development Standards:

Part 1: Interacting in Meaningful Ways

A. Collaborative

P1.4.1 Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions on a range of social and academic topics

11. Supporting opinions

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a. Support opinions by expressing appropriate/accurate reasons using textual evidence (e.g., referring to text) or relevant background knowledge about content, with substantial support.

12. Selecting language resources

a. Use a select number of general academic and domain-specific words to create precision while speaking and writing.

Essential Questions:

Is the Rule of Law necessary for peaceful coexistence? Explain.

How has the growth of the area affected the economic, social and political life of the citizenry?

Do rules protect freedoms? If so, in what ways?

Does a democracy require the participation of the people? Explain.

In what ways are people challenged to work together?

Does the structure of the government help to solve issues?

Objective(s):

Students present their analysis of the structure, function, and power of the California government in the days of the Gold Rush .

Students effectively apply ways in which the government might address “current” day problems of the Gold Rush.

Students will work together effectively using their previously learned roles, and civil discourse within small and larger groups.

Assessment: These objectives will be assessed through teacher observation of tableaux and the content of groups “choice” creation of posters or leaflets defining structures, function and power of the state governments and their roles.

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student who has not already had an audience assignment. Quickly share the roles on the “assignment cards”:

Hecklers: (one or two students, each may “heckle” one time only) Hecklers might say, “Oh, sure” ...”What about...”, “You’re crazy, I ain’t gonna let”, etc.

Agree’in Folk: (one or two students, each may “agree” one time only) Agree’in Folks might say, “That’s right, I’m tired of people ..” “You’re darn tootin’, cain’t even drink the water...”, etc.

Peacemakin’ Folk: (one or two students, each may try to make peace one time only) Peacemakers will might say, “Let um finish”, “Quiet down”, “You ain’t runnin’ this here meetin’”

Slide 30 Use High Level Thinking Questions (10 minutes)

Pass out the Question Stems Handout. In addition, let them know that they will need to write a “thinking question” for each presentation. Each student will turn in their questions to the teacher, even if they do not get to ask the question. Let them know you will review “thinking” questions .

If you have not had students use high level thinking questions before you will need to spend some time giving examples and letting them practice. After asking them to tell you what an example of each of the leveled questions are, it’s time to practice. This is a skill that takes time, and this is a good time to begin! You may use the following examples to practice if necessary:

Collect scissors, stapler, scotch tape, paperclips, stickies and other office supplies. Tell students you will give an example of an **Analysis** question, such as:

How does this stapler relate to this entire group of things? It is an office supply, just as the others are.

Example of an **Evaluation** question, such as:

What is the most important office item? Explain why. Prioritize these items according to the ones you use the most.

Example of a **Synthesis** question, such as:

What solutions would you suggest for stickies that are always falling off?

Ask students to come up with a question at each of the higher levels to give as another example related to the office supplies. Turn to a partner and establish a question together.

Students are asked to create at least one question at a higher level for each presentation. They must write it down, even if they are not called upon to ask their

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question. Students should use different levels for the questions they write for the different group presentations. The presenting group will take three to four questions from the group. You may want to consider having students partner to create their questions.

Presenters Practice (15 minutes)

Groups gather and decide which poster they will share. They practice their presentation, deciding which part each student in the group will say. They also practice their tableau one more time! They should practice timing their presentation so that with the tableau it is not longer than five minutes. Question and answers from the group will be an additional two to three minutes with students in the group answering three to four questions depending on the time.

Presentation Time at the Town Hall Meeting (Extra Session 40 minutes)

Students groups are called upon to present their understanding of the structure of the California Government. They are to share at least one of the social, economic, or political problems of the time and in what ways the branch or branches of government could help to solve the problem. They are to present their tableau of the three branches of the California Government as established by the California Constitution (all within 5 minutes). The audience will play their roles and then give their role card to another person who has not played a role yet. They are all to create questions and three or four will be called upon. All questions will be collected at the end so that the teacher can see to what level everyone has been engaged, understands questioning, etc.

Closure: Podcast C

Podcast C closes this lesson. Synopsis:

On the way home from the Town Hall Meeting, the children learn from Louise Clapp that Cut Eye Higgins has kidnapped their family friends. Praiseworthy seeks out their help to find some legal answers through studying the recent laws of the Executive Branch. The children investigate: in what ways can the Legislative, Executive Branch and Judicial Branch help to solve the problem ~ their friends are free slaves and they have been kidnapped!

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