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Delaware Day 4th Grade Competition

Lesson Five

The Rule of Law

Some activities for this lesson were borrowed and adapted from the Michigan Citizenship Collaborative Curriculum, 4th Grade United States Studies, Unit 5: Our Federal Government, Lesson 2: What Kind of Government Do We Have?
www.micitizenshipcurriculum.org

Students will be able to:

Explain what it means to be a country that is ruled by laws. (Panel 1:7)

This lesson contains information, resources and ideas to help students understand the meaning of "Rule of Law." Teachers will determine best practices and methods to instruct the students.

1. Introductory Activity

Project or distribute Document 1: *Rule of Law*. Ask students to explain how these two quotes are different. (They might need to first review *The Government of Egbonia* which they read about in the last lesson. A copy is included in this lesson as Document 4).

2. Background Information

- a. In order for them to have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a nation of laws, they are going to look at some ideas (democratic values) that were very important to the founders. Distribute or Project Document 2: *Democratic Values*. The definition for “Rule of Law” is not included because the students will add it later in the lesson.
- b. Remind students that the Constitution describes how our laws are made, enforced and interpreted. The framers knew that a document alone would not be enough to guarantee that the leaders would follow the laws.
- c. Emphasize the role that people play in a republic. The framers were accustomed to a world where rulers were born into power. Power was hereditary. This new government was to be governed by “We the People.”
- d. As you discuss the vocabulary from Document 2, reinforce the idea that popular sovereignty, republic and constitutional government are all highly dependent upon a system of laws.

3. Activities: Why Do We Need Laws?

- a. Ask students to brainstorm a list of reasons why we need laws. Record their reasons.
- b. Project or distribute Document 3: *Functions of Laws*. Have students compare the list that they brainstormed with the list in Document 3.
- c. Discuss how laws support a republic and a constitutional government. Help students to understand that the rule of law refers to **the idea that everyone must follow the laws including the people who run the government**. Add this definition to Document 2.
- d. This final activity asks students to apply their understanding of democratic values, including the rule of law. Distribute Document 4: *Analyzing the Government of Egbonia* (unless they have a copy of it from the previous lesson) and Document 5: *Analysis Questions*. Students will need to refer to the vocabulary from Document 2 for this activity.

Rule of Law

**John Adams said the United States is
“a nation of laws, not men.”**

**He would say that Egbonia is
“a nation of men, not laws.”**

What is the difference?

Democratic Values

Popular Sovereignty - The power and authority of the government comes from the people.

Limited Government -The national government does not have absolute authority. It can only do what the people have given it the power to do. The government must also obey its own laws. Officers of the government are not above the law.

Republic – A form of government where people (not kings) hold the power. The people choose representatives to make decisions for them – which is more efficient than having everybody in the country meet to make all the decisions. If the representatives do not work to protect the common good, the people can vote for new representatives.

Constitution – A plan that explains how a government is organized and how it works.

Constitutional Government – A government whose powers are limited by a constitution.

Rule of Law -

Functions of Laws

- To protect our rights
- To limit government
- To promote the common good
- To set guidelines for resolving conflicts
- To control crime
- To set guidelines for law enforcement
- To punish those who break laws
- To promote security and order
- To describe our responsibilities as citizens

Analyzing the Government of Egbonia

The small country of Egbonia is governed by a President and a Council. According to the Egbonian Constitution, the Council is made up of the ten richest people in Egbonia. The President is chosen by the Council. The Constitution allows the President to make and enforce all the laws. The main duties of the Council are to choose the President and give him ideas for new laws.

According to the Constitution, a huge birthday party is held for the President each year. This year the President wanted it to be bigger than ever. Therefore, he wrote a new law requiring every citizen of Egbonia to donate five hundred dollars for the party plus a birthday cake.

Many citizens were unhappy with the law and said it was unfair. The President responded that the Constitution gave him the power to make any law he wanted. To make sure citizens gave the money and birthday cake he wrote a second law. This law stated that anyone who did not pay the money and donate cake would be forced to leave the country and find another place to live.

The Council members told the President they didn't want to give money or cake. He told them not to worry. The law was not for them. The Council were all welcome to come to the birthday party and didn't need to donate a thing!

Some citizens decided to protest these two new laws. They met outside the President's mansion holding signs that said "The New Laws are Unfair!" The President had the protesters arrested and put into jail. He told newspaper reporters covering the story that this was completely within his power. He read them a section from the Egbonian Constitution that stated that the President could arrest and jail any citizen who complained about him.

The birthday party was held at the President's mansion and attended by the Council and twenty of the President's closest friends. There were thousands of balloons, a huge feast, and hundreds of presents the President had bought for himself using the money given by citizens. The protesting citizens remained in jail for over three months. Fifty citizens were sent out of the country for failing to give money and birthday cake.

The President had such a good time at his birthday party that he amended the Constitution to allow him to have three birthday parties each year.

Analysis Questions

1. Was Egbonia a republic? Give evidence for your answer.
2. Did Egbonia have a Constitution? Give evidence for your answer.
3. Did Egbonia have a constitutional government? Give evidence for your answer.
4. Did the President of Egbonia look out for the common good? Give evidence for your answer.
5. Was the Egbonian government based on the principle of popular sovereignty? Give evidence for your answer.
6. Were people's individual rights protected in Egbonia? Give evidence for your answer.
7. Was the rule of law followed in Egbonia? Give evidence for your answer.