

Unit 2: Democracy and the Rule of Law



Lesson 3: Unusual laws

This lesson relates to the Code of Hammurabi. It requires pupils to explore laws that were passed in ancient times and consider how appropriate they would be in today's society.

Planning

Prior Learning	Pupils should have gained prior knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• democracy;• the two main types of democracy – direct and representative;• the key features of democracy; and• individual and social responsibility.
Learning Outcomes	Pupils will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss the meaning of democracy; and• explain with justification why laws are important in a democratic society.
Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Focus	Pupils will have opportunities to develop the following: Working with Others <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect the views and opinions of others and reach agreements using negotiation and compromise• Listen actively and share ideas and opinions Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make and justify decisions• Offer solutions and weigh up options.
Attitudes and Dispositions	Pupils will be encouraged to develop the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrity/Moral Courage• Openness to new ideas.
Resources	Animation: <i>Democracy and the Rule of Law</i> Unit 2: Lesson 3 Resource A – Hammurabi law cards Unit 2: Lesson 3 Resource B – Unusual law cards

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Suggested teaching and learning strategies

Launch

Lead a class discussion, using prompt questions and effective questioning techniques:

1. **What is democracy?**
2. **Why are laws important in a democracy?**
3. **Are laws a recent invention?**

You may now wish to show the animation *Democracy and the Rule of Law*.

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. *Democracy is a system where a country is governed by the whole population, typically through elected representatives.*
2. *To maintain law and order; to keep people safe; to stop people from committing crimes*
3. *We have evidence of ancient laws, including the Code of Hammurabi dating from around 1754 BC.*

Activities

Activity 1: The Code of Hammurabi (around 1754 BC)

- Explain that the Code of Hammurabi is a Babylonian code of law from ancient Mesopotamia that dates back to about 1754 BC.
- Cut out and give a set of Hammurabi law cards from **Resource A** to each group of pupils.
- Ask your pupils to rate the punishments for breaking each law from 1 = fair to 5 = harsh. Encourage your pupils to justify their reasoning through discussion.
- Ask each group to nominate one person to share their group's response.
- Discuss the following:
 1. What do the laws tell you about their society?
 2. How do these laws compare with today's laws?
 3. Why have the laws changed over time?

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. *The society was very harsh; or
People were held accountable for their actions.*
2. *Today's laws are much fairer; or
People get off too easy.*
3. *Many of the Hammurabi laws are too harsh; or
As society's values and views change over time, laws are reformed to reflect this.*

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Activity 2: Unusual Laws

- Give out the unusual law cards from **Resource B**.
- Ask your pupils:
 1. Do you think each law is true or false?
 2. Can you guess which country passed each law?
 3. Why do you think these laws were passed?
 4. What do the examples tell you about laws in different countries?
- You may wish to set a time limit for this, to help the pupils focus on making a decision quickly.

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. All the laws are true.
2. (See the resource sheet for the answers.)
3. Some may have been passed to protect landowners. Others might be intended to stop people from making decisions that might cause harm or upset.
4. There are a number of laws that might not seem realistic. Some countries are very strict. Different countries have different priorities.

Debrief

Discuss the following:

1. **Was it easy to agree on ranking the punishments in Activity 1?**
2. **How did you reach agreement?**
3. **Has looking at ancient and unusual laws changed how you think about the laws we have in Northern Ireland?**

Encourage your pupils to provide reasons to back their personal views where possible.

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. (Pupils' own answers)
2. We voted in our group; everyone listened to each other's ideas.
3. They don't seem so harsh compared to some of the more unusual laws.

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Unit 2: Lesson 3 Resource A

Hammurabi law cards



Discuss the statements and rate the punishments from 1 = fair to 5 = harsh.

If someone accuses another of murder but cannot prove it, the accuser shall be put to death.

If anyone breaks into a house to steal, he will be put to death before that point of entry and be buried there (walled into the house).

If a doctor performs an operation and kills someone or cuts out his eye, the doctor's hands shall be cut off.

If anyone is caught committing a robbery, then they shall be put to death.

If a doctor performs an operation on the slave of a free man and kills him, the doctor shall replace the slave with another slave.



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Unit 2: Lesson 3 Resource A Hammurabi law cards



If a man takes a wife but she does not bear him children, he can take a second wife.

If a son strikes his father, his hands will be cut off.

If a man puts out the eye of another, he shall pay one gold mina.

If a man hits a man of higher rank, he will publically receive 60 lashes.

If a man hits a pregnant free woman and she loses her child, the man shall pay ten shekels.

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Unit 2: Lesson 3 Resource B Unusual Law Cards



Cyclists cannot lift their feet from the pedals.

Mexico

It is illegal to hold a salmon under suspicious circumstances.

UK

It is illegal for motorists to stop for pedestrians.

Beijing China

It is illegal to forget your wife's birthday.

Samoa

It is illegal to flush the toilet after 10 pm.

Switzerland

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Active Citizenship



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It is illegal to tell pupils that gay people exist.

Russia

It is illegal for adults not to visit their parents.

China

**It is illegal to have a sleeping donkey in your
bathtub after 7 pm.**

Oklahoma

It is illegal to chew gum, unless for medical reasons.

Singapore