

COMMON CORE LESSON

Subject: Social Studies

Topic: The George Zimmerman Trial: Was Justice Served?

Grade: 10

Time: Two 55-minute periods



In this lesson, students will get a basic overview of some key processes and terms in the U.S. criminal justice system. After, they will read and analyze articles with varying perspectives on the George Zimmerman trial and then construct their own arguments as to whether or not the outcome was just.

LESSON ELEMENT	STUDENT-FRIENDLY TRANSLATION
1. Common Core Learning Standard(s) Addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1a: Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.	
2. Learning Target(s): What will students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson? <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore some key complexities of the concept of justice and the criminal justice systemKnow the definitions of 10 key terms associated with the criminal justice system (e.g., rule of law, probable cause)Understand arguments on both the pro and con side of a current controversial issue	<p>You will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Be able to explain why justice is a complex concept in theory and practice.✓ Learn what key criminal justice words mean and be able to use them correctly (probable cause, prosecute, etc.).✓ Explain at least one claim that justice was served in the George Zimmerman Trial and at least one claim that it wasn't.✓ State your own stance clearly and back it up with

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate their own arguments about a current controversial issue and be able to support their arguments with strong evidence 	evidence.
<p>3. Relevance/Rationale: Why are the outcomes of this lesson important in the real world? Why are these outcomes essential for future learning?</p> <p>This lesson addresses the concept of justice, a bedrock principle in the U.S. government, and applies it to a high-profile case in the criminal justice system. The case connects to other longstanding critical issues in U.S. society: rule of law, civil rights, and race relations.</p>	<p>It is important to know this information and have these skills because, as members of U.S. society, we or our communities may be affected by or affect these issues: rule of law, civil rights, race relations.</p>
<p>4. Formative Assessment Criteria for Success: How will you and your students know if they have successfully met the outcomes? What specific criteria will be met in a successful product/process? What does success on this lesson's outcomes look like?</p> <p>A student who has successfully met the outcomes will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have effectively completed the "Pro/Con Sheet - Zimmerman Trial" Have effectively completed the "Where I Stand" homework assignment. Completely and correctly answered all the questions in the end of the lesson journal write 	<p>You have to do three things to show you've gained the main skills and knowledge of this lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Effectively complete the "Pro/Con Sheet - Zimmerman Trial" ✓ Effectively completed the "Where I Stand" homework assignment ✓ Completely and correctly answer all of the questions in the end of the lesson journal write
<p>5. Activities/Tasks: What learning experiences will students engage in? How will you use these learning experiences or their student products as formative assessment opportunities?</p> <p><u>Day 1:</u></p> <p>10 mins. 1. Have students do the following five-minute journal write: "a. What is justice? Give a definition. b. Can you think of an example in your life, our society, or in history when you thought something was or was not just? Explain." After 5 minutes, have students share out some of their ideas from their journal writes, first in pairs or small groups and then with whole class.</p> <p>1 min. 2. Transition with something like this: "For the next two days, we are going to focus on this concept, justice. Why? Justice, along with liberty and equality, is a concept fundamental to the United States government, which affects all our lives. For example, the preamble to the <i>U.S. Constitution</i> reads, 'We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish <u>Justice</u>, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.' So one major stated purpose of our government is to 'establish justice'. The government has set up many departments, policies, laws, and systems to try to establish justice, one of which is called the criminal <i>justice</i> system."</p>	

9 mins. 3. Review with students the handout “Some Key Criminal Justice System Terms/Criminal Justice Flow Chart.”

2 mins. 4. Introduce the Trayvon Martin-George Zimmerman case, and the George Zimmerman trial with this excerpt from a Boston.com article:

“Martin, a 17-year-old high school student from Miami, was spending time in Sanford, Fla., with his father. He had gone to a convenience store and was walking back to the townhouse of his father's girlfriend, carrying Skittles and iced tea. That's when he encountered George Zimmerman, a 28-year-old man of white and Hispanic heritage. During a 911 call, Zimmerman said that the teen wearing a dark hoodie looked "real suspicious . . . like he's up to no good or something." Then, as an audiotape would later attest, someone screamed and a shot rang out.” (Boston.com “TRAYVON MARTIN: ‘HE’S JUST LIKE US’”, Akilah Johnson, March 30, 2012) <http://bo.st/HqQxdB>

Continue with: “Trayvon Martin was killed by that shot fired by George Zimmerman. George Zimmerman was later arrested, charged with second-degree murder, and put on trial. At the end of the trial, the jury pronounced George Zimmerman ‘not guilty.’”

(Note: If you feel that students have already heard about the case and may have a lot of questions or misinformation, you may choose to do a “KWL” – *What I Know, What I Would Like to Know, and What I Learned* – with the whole class. Next to each K you might want to help students add “F” for fact, “O” for opinion, and “U” for unsure whether it’s a fact or an opinion. For example, “Trayvon Martin had Skittles” would be a fact. “George Zimmerman had a gun” would be a fact. “George Zimmerman targeted Trayvon Martin because he was black” would be an opinion.)

5. Let students know that tomorrow they will be debating whether they think justice was served in the George Zimmerman trial. You might add something like this: “You may or may not already have an opinion about that. Whatever the case, in making your claim you must support it from evidence from readings you will be given. Your job as a scholar is first to understand arguments on both sides of the debate. After, you will devise your own argument supported with evidence and analysis.”

10 mins. 6. Hand out the Pro/Con Debate sheet and then do a whole class reading of the Boston.com article, “Zimmerman jury was initially split on guilt, juror says” <http://b.globe.com/13giBKk>. As they read, students should underline and annotate for: 1) key information; and 2) evidence on both the pro and con sides of the question, “Was Justice Served in the George Zimmerman Trial?”.

To practice for the independent reading they will do next, after each paragraph, stop to ask what key information they found and if there is any evidence on the pro or con side of the issue. If there is, have them add it to their Pro/Con Debate sheets.

20 mins. 7. After you are done with the whole class reading, have students individually read and annotate two more articles connected to the case, one pro and one con, looking specifically for claims and evidence that address both sides of the issue. As the students read, have them continue filling out the Pro/Con Debate Sheet.” When everyone is done, ask students to briefly share out the pro and con evidence they found in the articles.

8. Let students know that tomorrow they will be debating the question, “Was Justice Served in the George Zimmerman Trial?” Take a quick count of which side students are planning to argue and then explain the homework. (Note: If you find there are a lot more students on one side than the other, and you want the sides to be more even, you may consider assigning students a specific side.)

3 mins. Homework: To prepare for tomorrow’s debate, complete the “Where I Stand” assignment.

Day 2:

20 mins. 1. Design Team Argument: Have students on the pro side sit together and students on the con side sit together. These will be the two teams. Have each team discuss its claims and evidence from their “Where I Stand” homework assignment and fill out the “Debate Team Argument” sheet and review the “Debate Scoring” sheet.

25 mins. 2. Debate: Review debate procedures and scoring with class. Do a coin toss or “rock, paper, scissors” to decide which team goes first. Moderate debate according to the debate procedures.

10 mins. 3. Debrief and Share: Have students do the following journal write, “If you think, in this case, the criminal justice system produced an outcome that was just, what do you think was the most important aspect of the criminal justice system that helped make it just? Explain, making sure to include a definition of justice in your response.” OR: “If you think, in this case, the criminal justice system produced an outcome that was not just, what changes would you make in order to make it more just? Explain, making sure to include a definition of justice in your response.

4. Collect their journal writes for assessment.

Extra Learning: Students who would like to deepen their learning could do either of the following activities:

- a. Review yesterday’s journal write about justice. Based on this lesson, how has your understanding of justice been deepened, changed, or complicated?
- b. Create a Venn diagram comparing/contrasting the Florida and Massachusetts self-defense statutes.

6. Resources/Materials: What texts, digital resources, and materials will be used in this lesson?

Day 1

- Key Criminal Justice System Terms/Criminal Justice Flow Chart
- Pro/Con Debate Sheet
- Boston.com article, “Zimmerman jury was initially split on guilt, juror says” <http://b.globe.com/13giBKk>

- Zimmerman Trial Pro/Con Articles
- “Where I Stand” homework assignment

Day 2

- “Debate Procedures and Scoring” sheet
- For each student, a piece of paper on which to do a journal write and pass in

7. Access for All: How will you ensure that all students have access to and are able to engage appropriately in this lesson? Consider all aspects of student diversity.

ELL Vocabulary: initial (adj.), deliberate (verb), clarify, choked up

8. Modifications/Accommodations: What curriculum modifications and/or classroom accommodations will you make for Students with Disabilities in your class? Be as specific as possible.

Possible Accommodations: You could have the articles read to the student by a text-reading software or you could give the student more time to read the articles, by assigning one in class and one for homework.

Possible Modifications: Depending on the extent of a student’s reading skills challenges, you may reduce the amount of reading (e.g. give her/him only one article to read, or only a portion of an article to read), or you could underline key evidence for the student and have her/him figure out whether it relates to pro or con.