Activity 1A: It’s the Law

Students view images of the law and choose one that best represents their own perceptions, then participate in a reflection on the framing questions for the unit.

Sequence

1A.1 After viewing a variety of images, students discuss their current perceptions of the law.

1A.2 Students begin to explore their knowledge of the U.S. legal system by responding to factual or fictional statements.

1A.3 Students read and discuss the framing questions for the course through a “Chalk Talk.”

Materials Needed

- Teacher Resource 1 (1A): Images of Law, displayed around the room
- Handout 1: Fact or Fiction?
- Framing questions for course written on chart paper
Activity 1A: It’s the Law

Ask students to look at all the displayed images, choose the one that best represents their own image of the law, and stand by it.

Ask students why they chose the image they are standing by. As students explain their thinking, prompt some discussion by posing questions such as the following:

- In general, is this image a positive one? Negative? Neutral? Accurate?
- What is your perception based on—the media? Personal experience? Your friends’ opinions, or those of your community?
- What do you think was the intention of the person who created this image?

Explain to students that while their perceptions of law are important, it is equally important to consider what may have informed or influenced their perceptions.

2. Ask students if statements about the U.S. legal system are fact or fiction.
Distribute Handout 1: Fact or Fiction? Read aloud the first statement in the handout: "The law protects everybody equally."

Ask students to vote by raising their hands. Do they think the statement is a fact, do they think it’s fiction, or are they unsure?

After all the statements have been read and students have voted, use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- Were there any statements that many of you seemed uncertain about? Which ones? If you voted “unsure,” why weren’t you sure?
- Why do you think we did this activity?

Explain to students that this activity represents their understanding and opinions about law and law enforcement at the very beginning of the course. Throughout the year, students will build their knowledge of the U.S. legal system and the work of legal professionals, which may change the way they think about these facts and fictional statements, or transform their opinions or beliefs.

3. Conduct a “Chalk Talk” on the unit’s framing questions.
Explain that students will participate in a Chalk Talk, in which they read, reflect on, and write responses to the framing questions for the unit.
Teacher’s Note: Chalk Talk

A Chalk Talk (also referred to as a Wall Talk) is a silent way to reflect, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects, or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group—students, educators, and administrators. Students respond to a question, prompt, or problem by writing on a large sheet of paper posted on the wall, writing as they feel moved. They may also comment on other people’s ideas by drawing a connecting line to the comment. Naturally, there will be lulls in the activity as students take time to reflect, so allow plenty of wait time before deciding to end the Chalk Talk. Because it is done completely in silence, this activity gives students a change of pace and encourages thoughtful contemplation and creative responses.

Post the framing questions around the room. Divide the class into five equal groups. Ask each group to gather around one of the framing questions, think about the question, and write their comments.

Have groups move to another framing question. This time, they should read the question and the comments, then respond in writing with comments of their own. Repeat the process until all groups have reflected on all questions.

Ask each group to remain standing near their last question. Use the following questions to engage the class in a discussion:

- What are some of the main ideas on the paper in front of you? Do you see any common responses? If so, what?
- Is there a great diversity of ideas? Why do you think that is? What might inform people’s thinking?
- On what sources do you think people are basing their responses?

Share the following information with the class:

- Similar to the essential questions of the course, the framing questions in each unit may have more than one right answer.
- What informs one’s opinions or thoughts may be based on emotion, knowledge, research, or experience.
- In this unit and future units, students will build their skills in citing evidence to support their opinions or back up their reasoning.
- The framing questions in each unit will enable them to explore big questions and topics that are important for any career in the legal system.

Note: Save the paper from the Chalk Talk—you will return to it in Activity 4B.
### Handout 1: Fact or Fiction?

Here are some statements about the legal system in the United States. Which ones are facts? Which ones are fiction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The law protects everybody equally.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Students like me don’t have any influence on the law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The main job of police officers is to arrest people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Judges are allowed to change laws.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Citizens have the right to free speech no matter what.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Prisons help keep the streets safe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The only reason to sue somebody for money is greed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Constitution protects the same people today as it did when it was first written.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>People in every country are entitled to protection of their human rights, no matter where they live.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The media gives us an accurate picture of crime and law enforcement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The U.S. legal system promotes justice.</td>
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