



FOUNDATIONS IN LAW COURSE

TEACHER GUIDE

EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW: MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND LEGAL EQUALITY

LAW AND JUSTICE

UNIT **5**

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the James Irvine foundation



Unit Overview

The quest for civil rights in this country has taken place on many fronts—in courtrooms, in schools, in the streets, on television, and in living rooms. In this unit, students continue to explore what equal justice means and examine how people took principled stands against injustice, often at the risk of their own lives or livelihoods. Students consider how advocacy and grassroots movements interact with other branches of government to make social, political, and legal change. Through exploration of the civil rights movement in the United States, students investigate the wide variety of methods that ordinary people and professionals have used to bring about systemic change, including lawsuits, civic action, political organizing, civil disobedience, and more subversive activities. Building on the history of how U.S. democracy has evolved, as well as individual stories of and by change-makers, students apply their learning to current civil rights issues and educate the public through storytelling.

Unit Length

24 50-minute sessions

Unit Project Description

After exploring how *civil rights* has been defined in the past and how its definition has evolved over time, students identify and research one current civil rights issue. They play dual roles—a legal journalist reporting on a current civil rights issue and a citizen journalist telling the story of a person who is currently taking action to achieve equality and justice on that same issue. As the legal journalist, students write a news article on their chosen issue. As the citizen journalist, students create a story in a particular medium or genre (short story, comic book, film short, poetry, or other medium of their choice). They choose one of their stories to post online. For both roles, students consider and apply principles of journalism to ensure that their stories are accurate and reliable.

Framing Questions



- How does the U.S. Constitution protect civil rights?
- How do individual actions and advocacy influence the legal system to change discriminatory laws and policies?
- In what ways have past civil rights movements informed current efforts to advance equal protection under the law?
- What challenges and responsibilities do ordinary people and professionals have when facing civil rights issues today?

Understandings



- The U.S. Constitution guarantees equality under the law, but our understanding of what this means changes over time as a result of court cases, legislation, and social movements.
- Combined actions from individuals, the state, and the court system are necessary to reform unjust laws.
- Historic protests, litigation, and legislation continue to inform 21st century civil rights movements and the strengthening of democratic principles.
- Ordinary people and professionals must balance the need to promote public safety, protect civil rights, and ensure justice for all in a democratic society.

Law and Justice Content

- Federal and state court system
- Judicial review
- Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments
- Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964
- Role of law enforcement in desegregation
- Legal precedent
- Landmark court cases and decisions related to the advancement of civil rights

Skills

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources
- Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources
- Draw information from literary and informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research
- Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to different tasks and audiences

Assessment



Unit activities can serve as formative assessment tools. Monitor students as they work in order to identify concepts or skills that need extra reinforcement and to determine whether to implement instructional strategies to support student growth. The following activities are particularly useful for formative assessment:

- Journal entries (Activities 1E, 2C, 3G, and 4A)
- Document analysis
- Written reflection questions
- Class discussions

As they carry out the unit project, students learn and demonstrate their understanding of key concepts. The unit exam also asks students to apply their understanding of these concepts through short answers and essays. The following activities are particularly for useful for summative assessment:

- Legal journalist article
- Citizen journalist story
- Unit exam

Handout 4: Unit 5 Assessment Checklist lists the requirements for successfully completing the unit. If you wish to use a rubric, you can develop a tool that is consistent with your school's assessment system. For more on assessment, see the *Law and Justice Teacher Toolkit*.

The curriculum provides student skill self-assessments for six key skills:

- Reading
- Writing
- Teamwork
- Research
- Critical thinking
- Speaking and presenting

The self-assessments also include subsets of the key skills, such as analysis and reasoning, negotiating, listening, questioning, and interviewing. If students have not done so already, give them time to consider these skills. They may reflect on their growth in these skills mid-year and at the end of the course. Students can include their self-assessments and reflections in their Career Portfolio.

Where the Unit Fits In

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
<i>Human Nature, Rules, and Power</i>	<i>The Legal System in Action</i>	<i>Criminal Law and the Pursuit of Justice</i>	<i>Lawsuits and Liability: The Civil Justice System</i>	<i>Equal Justice Under the Law: Social, Political, and Legal Equality</i>	<i>International Law and Human Rights</i>

In Units 1 and 2, students considered what it means to have rights and how the Constitution has been used to protect the rights of individuals. In Unit 3, they examined the rights of those accused of crimes and identified recommendations for improving the criminal justice system. In this unit, they write an advocacy story and a news article to educate the public about a current civil rights issue. Students apply their understanding of the legal landscape by conducting an independent analysis of the ways that all the branches interact to change a law. Students practice the research skills of selecting and applying relevant, credible information, and writing for different audiences and purposes.

Opportunities for Integration

Integrated units, taught in the other academic disciplines, help students incorporate what they are learning in *Foundations in Law* into their core academic classes. Throughout the course, Opportunities for Integration identifies how the activities and content in the units connect with other academic subjects. For Unit 5, you may want to work with other teachers on the following activities:

- In Activity 1C, work with a social studies teacher to have students develop their civil rights timeline in more depth, choosing events in different decades that have influenced the evolution of race relations in different regions of the United States. Have students compare how political, economic, and social factors have led to discriminatory acts and polarized public sentiment, and compare past events with issues in the headlines today. Help students explore the tensions between federal and state governments in the passage and enforcement of civil rights legislation.
- In Activity 1E, work with an art teacher to have students create a class “mosaic” or mural depicting the advancement of civil rights. Have students build on the facts and events they identify in this activity to



find and/or create visual images representing important or influential people and events in civil rights movements in different times and places. Have students compile all visuals into a “mosaic,” representing the legal landscape in which Colvin’s actions, the bus boycott, and other actions have taken place. This activity also provides an opportunity for students to analyze how their choice of specific images representing facts and events can influence the way a story is perceived.

- In Activity 2A, work with visual arts and English language arts teachers to focus on voice and storytelling, and how different media or genres can convey a story. Many individuals and activists have used art and literature as a way of making change. Two examples are Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a means of influencing public opinion about slavery, and Lorraine Hansberry, whose play *A Raisin in the Sun* explores race and acceptance in the 1950s.
- In Activity 2C, work with an English language arts teacher to compare James Baldwin’s nonfiction essays about the civil rights movement with his novels, poems, and short stories about the black experience in 20th century America. Web sites such as *Reporting Civil Rights* provide perspectives from other reporters who covered the civil rights movement and the role they believe that journalism has played in driving legal and social change. See *Media Resources* for more information.
- Before beginning Part 3, consider asking teachers in other subject areas, such as English language arts, art, video, and music, to help students with the legal and citizen journalist stories they will create in this part of the unit.

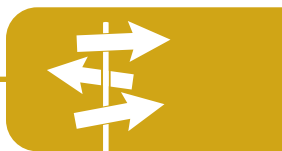
ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career has developed integrated lessons in English language arts, math, and science that link to *Foundations in Law*. See *Media Resources* to locate these lessons.

Career Connections

Career Connections is central to the *Foundations in Law* course. Throughout the course, students gain knowledge and skills that are relevant to a range of careers in the legal and criminal justice systems and in public advocacy. They learn about the roles, responsibilities, and career paths of specific professions through unit activities and People and Careers Profiles. Career Connections also includes ideas for involvement with professionals working in the field.

People and Careers

People and Careers Profiles feature individuals in a variety of professions. The profile format can also be used by students when they research careers based on their own interests. In Activity 4B, students complete People and Careers Reflection Questions. See *Media Resources*.



Ideas for Involvement with Professionals

- In Activity 1D, invite a legal historian to help students decide what kinds of information are important as they analyze their primary source documents, as well as talk with students about why understanding the past is part of understanding how and why unjust laws are changed.
- In Activity 1E, invite a civil rights litigator to describe cases in which he or she has been involved, share the reasons those cases were important for the advancement of civil rights, and give examples of how each sector of the legal landscape influenced the outcome of these cases.
- In Activity 2F, invite law enforcement officers to discuss how they have been trained to keep the peace during peaceful protests, and how they make individual decisions in the field when keeping the peace. You might also ask them to discuss any times they have had to enforce a law they perceived as unjust, and how they chose to respond.
- In Activity 2G, invite civil rights activists to participate in a roundtable discussion on methods for protest, how and when they choose different approaches, and which audience they choose to target. A roundtable like this provides students with a rich opportunity for constructing primary source research, as well as a chance to see both adults and young people who have chosen to take action to promote justice.

Career Portfolio

The Career Portfolio enables students to gather information about a range of careers, collect examples of their work that demonstrates their knowledge and skills relevant to careers, and reflect on their learning and career interests. See *Teaching the Law and Justice Curriculum*.

