

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

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| 1A.1 | After viewing a variety of images, students discuss their current perceptions about law. |
| 1A.2 | Students begin to explore their knowledge of the U.S. legal system by responding to fact-or-fiction statements. |
| 1A.3 | Students read and discuss the framing questions for the course through a Wall Talk. |
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Materials Needed

- **Teacher Resource 1 (1A): Images of Law**, posted around the room
- Framing questions for course written on chart paper
- **Handout 1: Fact or Fiction?**
- Optional: Equipment to display Handout 1

Activity 1A: It's the Law

1. Conduct a Gallery Walk in which students view and respond to images of the law.

Ask students to view all the posted images, choose 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, ask them questions such as:

- In general, is this image a positive one? Negative? Neutral? Accurate?
- On what do you think your perception is based? The media? Personal experience? Friends and community?
- What do you think was the intention of the person who created this image?

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

2. Ask students to determine whether statements about the U.S. legal system are fact or fiction.

Once students return to their seats, distribute **Handout 1: Fact or Fiction?** and 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 a discussion:

- Were there any statements about which many of you were uncertain? Why?
- 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 professionals who work in law or law enforcement, which may change the way they think about these facts and fictions, or transform their opinions or beliefs.



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?

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

3. Conduct a Wall Talk on the unit's framing questions.

Explain that students will be participating in a Wall Talk, in which they will read, reflect on, and write responses to the framing questions for the unit.

Teacher's Notes: Wall Talk

A **Wall Talk** (also referred to as *Chalk 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. Naturally, there will be lulls in activity as students take time to reflect, so allow plenty of wait time before deciding to end the Wall Talk. Students can comment on other people's ideas simply by drawing a connecting line to the comment. Because it is done completely in silence, it 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 and take five minutes to 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, and 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 their opinion or thoughts may be based on emotion, knowledge, research, or experience.
- In this unit and future units, they 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 law and law enforcement.