



FOUNDATIONS *of* DEMOCRACY

AUTHORITY PRIVACY RESPONSIBILITY JUSTICE

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE

HOW SHOULD ONE CHOOSE AMONG COMPETING RESPONSIBILITIES, VALUES, AND INTERESTS?



© 1993, 2005 Center for Civic Education
11 10 09 12 13 14

COPY FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY
REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION

This lesson was excerpted from *Foundations of Democracy*, © 2005,
Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, CA, www.civiced.org

All rights reserved.

Except for use in a review, reproduction or transmittal
of this work in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means,
now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, and
use of this work in any form in any information storage and retrieval system
is forbidden without prior written permission of the publisher.

The first edition of this text was developed with the
support of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
This new and revised edition has been prepared under Grant #85-JS-CX-0009
from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice
Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this
document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the
official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Cover photograph
© 2000 Eyewire, Inc/
Visions of America, LLC

ISBN 10 0-89818-150-X
ISBN 13 978-0-89818-150-0

Responsibility

SAMPLE LESSON - MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

Teacher's Guide

How Should One Choose Among Competing Responsibilities, Values, and Interests?

Lesson Overview

Students are introduced to the concept of **responsibility** and its importance in daily life. Students learn that responsibility includes a duty or obligation to do something or not to do something. They learn that different consequences might result from fulfilling and not fulfilling responsibilities. During the critical thinking exercise students read and discuss situations that raise issues of responsibility. Analysis of those situations includes identifying the following:

- the responsibilities
- to whom they are owed
- their **sources**
- the rewards or penalties that might be associated with fulfilling or not fulfilling them

Students learn that responsibilities come from a number of common sources, such as promises, **assignments**, **occupation**, and law. Students also learn how and why people assume specific responsibilities. During the critical thinking exercise, students identify responsibilities from their experience. For each responsibility identified, they determine if the responsibility was chosen voluntarily, was imposed, or was assumed without conscious or deliberate thought.

This lesson also develops students' understanding of two kinds of conflicts that may arise in fulfilling responsibilities:

1. conflicts between competing responsibilities with no way of fulfilling them,, at least not at the same time
2. conflicts among responsibilities and other values and interests

First students learn to identify values and interests. Then they examine two situations that illustrate the two kinds of conflicts that may arise in fulfilling responsibilities.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students should be able to do the following:

- define the term **responsibility**
- identify examples of responsibilities
- identify and describe possible sources of these responsibilities
- identify and describe rewards commonly related to fulfillment of these responsibilities
- identify and describe penalties related to failure to fulfill these responsibilities
- identify and describe different sources of responsibility
- explain how people assume specific responsibilities
- explain two kinds of conflicts that may arise in fulfilling responsibilities
- explain the terms **values** and **interests**
- identify various competing responsibilities, values, and interests in particular situations
- develop and support positions in situations where they must make choices among competing responsibilities, values, and interests

Teacher Procedures

A. Introducing the Lesson

Ask students to list five of the most common responsibilities they have. Then have them identify the following:

- the **reward** they might receive for fulfilling the responsibilities
- the **penalties** they might receive for failing to fulfill those responsibilities
- the sources of each of the responsibilities

Ask students to explain the possible consequences to others of fulfilling or not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Ask students to list five responsibilities other people have towards them. Ask students to describe what might be the consequences to themselves if these responsibilities are not fulfilled.

Choose words from the “Terms to Know” to add on the word-wall or vocabulary list kept in/by the class. Have the class read “Purpose of Lesson” in the Student Lesson.

B. Reading and Discussion: What is responsibility?

Have the class read “What is responsibility?” in the student lesson. Help students understand the definition of responsibility as it is used in this curriculum. Ask students to cite examples from their experience of a duty or obligation to do something. Also ask them to cite examples of a duty or obligation not to do something. Ask them to identify some of the **rewards** or benefits that come from fulfilling responsibilities. Ask them to identify a **penalty** or punishment that may be imposed for failure to fulfill a responsibility.

C. Critical Thinking Exercise No. 1: Examining Responsibilities

Have students work individually or with a study partner to complete critical thinking exercise #1, “Examining Responsibilities.” With the class read the directions for completing the exercise and review the questions in the “What do you think?” section. After students have completed the exercise, ask them to share their responses with the class. Record their responses on the board.

D. Reading and Discussion: Why is responsibility important?

Have the class read “Why is responsibility important?” and ask them to reflect on this very important question. Students should share their thoughts aloud.

E. Reading and Discussion: Sources of Responsibility

Have the class read “Sources of Responsibility.” Post the following terms on the board:

- 1 promises
- 2 assignments
- 3 appointment
- 4 occupation
- 5 law
- 6 custom
- 7 citizenship
- 8 moral principles

Ask students to explain each of these common sources of responsibility and to offer examples from their reading that illustrate each source. Help students understand that promises create an **obligation** to keep the promise, that promises may take the form of **contracts** or legal agreements, and that when people make a promise they **consent** to fulfill the obligation.

Discuss with the class how people assume responsibilities. Help students understand that people might assume responsibilities voluntarily (promises). Others might be required of people (assignments and law). People assume responsibilities without much **conscious choice** (customs). People also assume responsibilities through some combination of consent, requirement, or without much conscious thought (appointment, occupation, citizenship, and moral principles).

**F. Critical Thinking Exercise No. 2:
Examining Responsibilities**

Have students work with a study partner to complete the critical thinking exercise no. 2, “Examining Responsibilities.” With the class read the instructions for completing the exercise and review the questions. After students have completed their work, ask them to share their responses.

G. Optional Activity

Have students draw a picture illustrating a responsibility another person has toward them. Ask students to explain the following:

- the source of that responsibility
- whether it was assumed voluntarily, required of the person, or assumed without much conscious thought
- what rewards and penalties might be associated with that responsibility

Have students display their illustrations for the class.

H. Transition Questions

Ask students to identify some situations in which they have had more responsibilities to fulfill than they could manage. Post some competing responsibilities that they describe on the board. Ask students to describe how they decided which responsibilities to fulfill and which not to fulfill. What other options might have been available in these situations?

**I. Reading and Discussion:
What kinds of conflicts may arise
in fulfilling responsibilities?**

Have the class read “What kinds of conflicts may arise in fulfilling responsibilities?” Ask students to identify the two common types of conflicts that may arise when people have to make choices about fulfilling responsibilities. Record their responses on the board.

Help students understand that in some situations two or more responsibilities may be in conflict because a person cannot fulfill them, at least not at the same time. Ask students to illustrate this kind of conflict by citing examples from their experience.

Also help students understand that in other situations there might be conflict among responsibilities and other values and interests.

Ask students to explain the terms **values** and **interests** and to suggest examples from the reading or their experience. Ask students to illustrate the conflict among responsibilities and other values and interests by citing examples from their experience.

Help students understand that sometimes in deciding which responsibility to fulfill, one may have to sacrifice a particular value or interest. Sometimes a person may decide not to fulfill a responsibility because some other value or interest is more important.

**J. Critical Thinking Exercise No. 3:
Examining Competing Responsibilities,
Values, and Interests**

Have students work with a study partner to complete the critical thinking exercise no. 3, “Examining Competing Responsibilities, Values, and Interests.” Read the instructions for completing the exercise with the class and review the questions in “Identifying Competing Responsibilities, Values, and Interests.” When responding to question number 1, encourage students to identify the following:

- the responsibilities
- the source or sources of the responsibilities
- the rewards for fulfilling them
- the penalties for not fulfilling them
- the benefits and costs of fulfilling the responsibilities

You may want to post these items on the board as an example of the procedures (intellectual tools) students are learning for deciding among competing responsibilities, values, and interests.

After students have completed the exercise, ask them to share their responses with the class.

K. Concluding the Lesson

Ask students to identify a historical or present day figure who may have had to choose between conflicting responsibilities.

Homework or additional activities: Look to the Using the Lesson section at the end of the student lesson.