

Canadian/American Judicial System

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Description:

This activity introduces social science students to the differences in the Canadian and US judicial system, specifically the court system. They will read articles on the differences in the systems found in the bibliography in McLean's magazine and on the Internet. Then they will create a Canadian trial and an American trial with a judge, jury, and a verdict. They will create a trial in each system based upon a trial for youthful offenders. The law on this is available in the article on youthful offenders and the law. They will conduct a Mock Trial and they will be able to experience the differences as the trial evolves.

Grade Levels:

Grades 10-12

Subjects:

History, Government, Civics, Law

Duration:

At least one week of 50-minute classes, or 3 block schedule classes

Goal:

The goal is to acquaint students with the differences between Canadian and American court systems and to become familiar with each unique system. This project also integrates public speaking and debate in a school with integrated thematic instruction.

Objectives:

The student will:

1. Study and compare US and Canadian court systems.
2. Create a court trial in each country complete with a judge, jury, and attorneys.
3. Do a Mock Trial and explain afterwards why the outcomes may/may not have been different and what about the court system caused the different outcomes.

Standards:

This activity meets Washington State Standards EALR Social Studies 2.1: Compare and contrast ideas between different cultures and the interrelationships between the ideas and conflict.

This lesson meets Quinault District requirements because it integrates Social Studies curriculum and EALRs with English public speaking EALRs, thus using Integrated Thematic Instruction.

Background Information:

Before this activity, students will have examined the MacLeans article, "North versus South" on the differences between court trials in each country. They will also have read all of the Internet articles on the differences between the Supreme Court in the United States and Canada.

Materials:

"North Versus South," *Macleans*, May 29, 1995.
The classroom will be transformed into a courtroom.
Drama/acting students from English classes can be used as jurors.

Procedures:

1. Students will be divided into groups of two. They will go over the MacLeans and the Internet articles and make lists of differences in the two court systems.
2. Students will review the youthful offender statutes in the United States and the law in Canada. Each group will determine which statute or law has been violated. They will interview drama or English students for jurors. They will choose two attorneys for each group and begin to plan their case.
3. The Mock Trial will be presented over the course of one week or so.
4. The verdict will be reached and each side will then discuss orally or in writing the differences which have affected the outcome.

Possible Extension:

Each group is then free to decide whether they will appeal and another week can be used to do the appeal.

Assessment:

Teachers should establish a rubric for evaluation of roles to provide to students in advance of the trials. In addition to assessing the trial itself, the teacher will have students discuss the verdict and then discuss the differences in outcomes based on the unique systems. This will be done orally or in writing.

Internet Sources:

- www.scc-csc.gc.ca, "Supreme Court of Canada," Jan. 1, 2004
- <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/jus>, "Canadian Justice System," June 23, 2003
- <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en>, "The Law in Action," April 24, 2003
- <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en>, "Youth Criminal Justice Act in Canada," June 20, 2003
- www.crf-usa.org/bria, "The US Supreme Court," Fall 1994.