

# CMSD High School Social Studies

## The 3Rs: Rights • Responsibilities • Realities

The 3R's Unit addresses the following crosscutting statements (standards) in high school social studies.

### Skills based content statements for HS Social Studies:

- **Content Statement 1:** The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.
- **Content Statement 2:** Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.
- **Content Statement 3:** Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long-and short-term causal relations.

### This 3Rs 5 week unit provides:

- Enrichment of social studies concepts using real world relevant scenarios.
- Provides a review of middle school social studies content.
- Bridges the content/knowledge gap from middle school to HS US History and US Government.
- Integrates reading and writing literacy standards.

# LESSON ONE



# 3Rs LESSON ONE STUDENT WORKSHEET

## No Vehicles in the Park (Judicial Branch)

### LESSON FACTS/TERMS/CONCEPTS

Judicial branch (courts); legislative branch (e.g. city council, congress); executive branch (e.g. mayor, president); letter of the law; intent; common law; precedent; passing or enacting laws

### INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

Today you'll be the judge and determine whether some newly-written laws are constitutional. To start, can you name the three branches of government?<sup>1</sup>

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### CASE HYPOTHETICALS: You Decide

Now, let's turn our attention to the third branch of government – the judicial branch – and the important role it plays in our society. Laws often involve the interplay of different governments and its citizens. Making, enforcing, and interpreting laws are powers divided between different branches of government, each of which can check the power of the other.

### No Vehicles in the Park

The city of Pleasantville spent millions of dollars to update its public park, including the addition of more playgrounds for young children. The upgraded park retained the two-lane road that cuts through the middle of it, despite concerns expressed by many citizens that it should have been converted to green space and represented a threat to visitors who may be hit crossing it.

The city council could not afford to convert the road to green space but decided the best compromise was to post signs banning vehicular traffic on the road. Signs announcing the ban were posted at either end of the road and police were assigned to patrol the road to uphold the law. Each sign said "No Vehicles in the Park."

The city council thought the law seemed clear — so clear they did not see the need to define "vehicles" or provide any official explanation for passing the law. Disputes have arisen over the interpretation of the law as a result of challenges to it from citizens who have received tickets for violating it.

#### *Fill in the blank*

1. In No Vehicles in the Park, which branch of government passed the law?<sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which branch carried out the law in Pleasantville by posting the signs at the park entrance and arresting violators?<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Executive (e.g. president, governor, mayor); Legislative (e.g. congress or city council); Judicial (e.g. Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Municipal Courts)

<sup>2</sup> The city council, the legislative branch of local government.

<sup>3</sup> The executive branch, which is led by the mayor who oversees the town's service department that posted the signs and the police departments that enforced the law.

3. When a town's law is challenged by a citizen, which branch interprets the law and determines whether the town or the citizen is correct?<sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

Laws are like the rules of a basketball game, and our courts act like the referees of the game, determining whether there have been violations of the rules and if so, the penalty.

For the next section of the worksheet, you will act as the lawyers and judge court to determine whether there have been violations of Pleasantville's "No Vehicles in the Park" law.

## You Decide/Mini Trial

For each case, consider how you would present your side if you were the prosecutor (representing Pleasantville), the defense attorney (representing the accused), and the judge who will rule on each case. As the prosecutor, you will argue that the law was violated; as the defense attorney you will argue it was not; and as the judge you will ultimately decide which side has the stronger argument and should win the case, and explain your reasoning.

The judge should interpret the law, in the context of each of the cases before them, keeping in mind the **letter of the law** as well as the likely **intent** of it. The judge should also consider the implications of their ruling, not only on each person appealing their ticket but also on future use of the park by others. Knowing this, the prosecuting and defense attorneys should focus on the factors the judge is to consider.

How the judge interprets the law will give it new meaning, which is called **common law**. Other branches of Pleasantville city government will follow that common law, such as the police who will then issue tickets in accord with it. And courts in future cases may consider your rulings as law they want to follow, which is called following **precedent**.

## Cases

*For each scenario, write 2-3 reasons supporting your argument each as prosecutor and defense attorney. Then write your ruling as judge, including your reasoning.*

1. Jack and Jill were riding their bikes to work and cut through the park to save time. They saw the "No Vehicles in the Park" signs that were posted at the entrance to the park but they did not believe the law applied to bicycles, which they note have no motors and have never been a problem in the park. With cars and trucks banned from the park road, they contend, biking through it has never been safer and should be encouraged, not discouraged.

Prosecutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>4</sup> The third branch of government: the judicial branch, better known as the courts.

Judge's ruling: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Leon is an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) vehicle driver who cut through the park responding to an emergency. A man on the other side of the park had a heart attack and the police called the EMS to take him to the nearest hospital. The EMS dispatcher called Leon to respond since he was closest to the park. The EMS driver cut through the park's street with his vehicle's emergency flashers and siren on. Leon said every second counts in that situation and had he taken the extra time to go around the park to get to the man, he would have died. Leon said he was a public official responding to an official emergency call by the police. He contends the ordinance was not meant to apply to him and what he did.

Prosecutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Judge's ruling: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Elissa is in the park with her children. Her son Josh, age 5, is riding his battery-powered toy car down the park's street, and his sister Tammy, age 3, is his passenger. The toy car's maximum speed is 4 MPH. Elissa is given a ticket for letting her son operate and daughter ride the toy car in the park. She says the park was created for families to come and have fun, which is what she was doing with her family. And she says the toy car is not a vehicle and could not possibly hurt anyone even if it hit someone.

Prosecutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Judge's ruling: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. A community group called "Citizens to Recall the Mayor of Pleasantville" held a protest, which began on the steps of city hall then preceded through the park's street. Several protesters were in wheelchairs — one of which was motorized — and several others were riding on a four-wheeled flatbed pulled by two donkeys. The two donkeys wore signs saying "The Mayor Is a Jackass, Just Like Us." Those in wheelchairs and those riding on

the flatbed were ticketed for violating the “No Vehicles in the Park” law, as were the organizers of the protest. They contend that the wheelchairs and flatbed were not “vehicles.”

Prosecutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Judge’s ruling: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. A local veterans group wants to be sure that the citizens of Pleasantville don’t forget the sacrifices made by those from the town who served in the military, so they raised money and purchased a WWII tank to be put on permanent display in the park. Still operational, it was driven into the park by a veteran to its display site. The veteran who drove the tank was issued a ticket, which he says is an “unpatriotic” thing for the police to have done.

Prosecutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Judge’s ruling: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Alysha is late for work and she still needs to drop her son off at the local elementary school on the opposite side of the park from her home. So, she cuts through the park in her minivan at 6:45 a.m. The park is not officially open “for use” until 7 a.m. So, the park was empty when she drove through it. She thought the “No Vehicles in the Park” signs and law only applied to when the park was actually open. She was not — she also points out — ticketed for improper use of the park (before hours), so that issue is not one you need to consider in your assessment of her case.

Prosecutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



