

Lesson 3: Persuasive Essay: Should cities have natural or green spaces within ½ mile of every resident?

Grade 7 Social Studies

LESSON DESCRIPTION: Students practice taking a stand on an issue and then write a timed persuasive essay on a policy related to Nature Deficit

FOCUS QUESTIONS: How do you support your stand on a public policy issue?

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- take a stand in writing on a public policy issue.
- consider opposing viewpoints on a public policy issue.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

- **READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6–12**
 - * **CCSS.6-8.RH.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
 - * **CCSS.6-8.RH.7** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- **WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS 6–12**
 - * **CCSS.6-8.WHST.1** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
 - * **CCSS.6-8.WHST.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

LENGTH OF LESSON: one class period

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Piece of string or adding machine tape to create a line across the classroom, with a Yes sign at one end and a No sign at the opposite end
- Weighing both sides of an issue graphic organizer
- Essay prompt, one per student
- Answer sheets, one set per student
- Core Democratic Values sheet, one per student
- 9th grade Constructed Response Social Studies rubric, one for the teacher
- Supporting a Different Point of View Quick Write prompt, one per student

VOCABULARY:

persuasive

PROCEDURES

Activity 1: Students Will Practice Taking a Stand

1. Choose a public problem to which middle school students can relate. Consider something that has happened in the community that could be solved through a public policy. Pose a “should” question and write it on the chalk board. Examples include:
 - Should there be a city ordinance banning the use of cell phones by drivers?
 - Should there be a required rating system for video games that controls sale to minors?
 - Should there be a state law mandating one hour of physical education per day?
2. Designate a yes/no line in the classroom. Explain that this is a continuum of opinion and that for this activity, students will not be allowed to be in the middle.
3. **Say to students:**
 - What is your opinion and what is an argument to support it? For this activity, you must take a yes/no stand.
 - Go to the yes/no line and stand by your opinion.
 - What are some arguments for? Against? (Take alternating viewpoints.)
4. Give students the Weighing Both Sides of an Issue graphic organizer with the should question written in the middle. Making groups of four from both ends of the line, have the students write three arguments on the Yes side and three on the No side. Then, individually, have them write their conclusion and give a reason.

Activity 2: Students will consider data and take a stand in writing

1. Tell the students they are going to take a stand on a public policy issue about cities providing natural and green spaces for residents. For Michigan students, writing this essay simulates writing a persuasive essay on the Michigan Merit Exam and the 9th grade Social Studies MEAP.

Hand out a Core Democratic Value sheet (or have them refer to a poster in the classroom), the data section, the prompt, and answer sheets. Make sure each student has a pencil.

Set a time limit for writing the essay. A state test limit is approximately 12 minutes.

Activity 3: Close

1. **Say to students:**
 - Go to a spot on the yes/no line that indicates your stand on the issue. Be toward one end or the other.
 - What happens if the teacher does this (teacher switches the yes and no markers)?
 - Support your new stand (which is opposite of what you really think) with data, prior knowledge, or a Core Democratic Value. (Teacher: Listen to several reasons, alternating Yes and No stands.)

Students do a quick write using the Supporting a Different Point of View prompt.

YES

NO

WEIGHING BOTH SIDES OF AN ISSUE

Public Policy Question

YES, because

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Should

_____ ?

NO, because

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

My conclusion is: _____

TIMED PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Directions: Read the following information about a public policy issue. Use it with what You already know to complete the tasks that follow. You should take about 10 minutes to write the answer.

DATA SECTION

PART A

A study in Greenville, South Carolina, compared the selling prices of homes near a park to selling prices of homes not near a park. The study used similar homes. The study also considered different types of parks.

TYPE OF PARK	NEARNESS TO PARK	IMPACT ON SELLING PRICES
Unattractive small park - playground equipment, weeds and dirt	0 – 300 feet	Sold for 14% less than houses not near a park.
	300 – 500 feet	Sold for 15% more than houses not near a park.
	500 – 1500 feet	Sold for 6.5 % more than houses not near a park.
Attractive small park - playground equipment, grass, trees	0 – 600 feet	Sold for 11% more than houses not near a park.
Medium parks - playground equipment, playing field or basketball court	0 – 200 feet	Sold for same as houses not near a park.
	200 – 1500 feet	Sold for 6% more than houses not near a park.
Large parks - playground equipment, playing fields and courts, picnic areas	0 – 600 feet	Sold for 50% less than houses not near a park.

PART B

An organization in Chicago, Illinois, called Neighborspace promotes small parks, gardens, and natural areas that are run and managed by groups of people in the neighborhood. They say that when neighborhood residents work together on a nearby natural space, there are many benefits. These included:

1. Stress reduction - the work of maintaining gardens and green spaces is a stress reducer.
2. Educating children and teens about gardening - when residents of all ages work together, people learn from each other. Children and teens are more in touch with nature as they work and learn.
3. Good food - when the natural space is a garden, residents benefit from the healthy food that is grown.
4. Building community - residents get to know each other better and everyone begins to care more about the neighborhood.
5. Reducing isolation – residents feel less alone when they get to know each other through spending time in the natural area.

TAKING A STAND

You will now take a stand on the following public policy issue.

Should cities be required to ensure that every resident live within ½ mile of a natural or green space?

You may either support or oppose the proposal. Write a letter to the governor. Use information from the Data Section to provide reasons that support your position.

You will be scored on the following criteria. Your letter must include:

- a clear and supported statement of your position;
- supporting information using a core democratic value of American constitutional democracy; and
- supporting information from the Data Section.

Remember to:

Use complete sentences.

Explain your reasons in detail.

Explain how the core democratic value you use connects to your position.

Write or print neatly on the lines provided on the answer sheet.

No additional sheets may be used.

9th Grade
Scoring of Constructed Response
MEAP Social Studies Rubric

Points	Description
4	<p>The supporting core democratic value, data, and prior knowledge component used by students must be explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken in order to receive credit.</p> <p>In order to receive a 4-point score, the response must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a clearly stated position on the issue and support their position. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept those who do not take a stand, who say someone else (parents, school, or government) should decide. 2. Provide at least one supporting point that is based on core democratic values of American constitutional democracy that is explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept if this support contradicts stated position. 3. Provide one (or more) piece(s) of accurate, valid, and relevant supporting information from the Data Section that is explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept if this support contradicts stated position. 4. Provide one (or more) piece(s) of accurate, valid, and relevant supporting social studies information that comes from the student’s prior knowledge (information other than that supplied by the Data Section or a Core Democratic Value) that is explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept feelings or opinions. Support must be factual. - Do not accept if this support contradicts stated position.
3	<p>In order to receive a 3-point score, the response must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a clearly stated position on the issue with support for their position. 2. Contain at least 2 of the remaining 3 elements listed above.

Core Values of American Constitutional Democracy

Core democratic values are the fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles of American society which unite all Americans. These values are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and other significant documents, speeches, and writings of the nation. Below are definitions of some core democratic values.

Source: CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education, a collaborative project of the Center for Civic Education and the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship, National Council for the Social Studies Bulletin No 86, 1991.

Fundamental Beliefs

Life The individual's right to life should be considered inviolable except in certain highly restricted and extreme circumstances, such as the use of deadly force to protect one's own or others' lives.

Liberty The right to liberty is considered an unalterable aspect of the human condition. Central to this idea of liberty is the understanding that the political or personal obligations of parents or ancestors cannot be legitimately forced on people. The right to liberty includes: **Personal Freedom** - The private realm in which the individual is free to act, to think, and to believe, and which the government cannot legitimately invade. **Political Freedom** -The right to participate freely in the political process, choose and remove public officials, to be governed under a rule of law, the right to a free flow of information and ideas, open debate, and right of assembly. **Economic Freedom** - The right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of private property without unreasonable governmental interference, the right to seek employment wherever one pleases, to change employment at will, and to engage in any lawful economic activity.

The Pursuit of Happiness It is the right of citizens in the American constitutional democracy to attempt to attain (pursue) happiness in their own way, so long as they do not infringe upon rights of others.

Common Good The public or common good requires that individual citizens have the commitment and motivation (that they accept their obligation) to promote the welfare of the community and to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all.

Justice People should be treated fairly in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of society, the correction of wrongs and injuries, and in the gathering of information and making of decisions.

Equality All citizens have **political equality** and are not denied these rights unless by due process of law; **legal equality** and should be treated as equals before the law; **social equality** so as there should be no class hierarchy sanctioned by law; and **economic equality** which tends to strengthen political and social equality for extreme economic inequality tends to undermine all other forms of equality and should therefore to avoided.

Diversity Variety in culture and ethnic background, race, lifestyle, and beliefs is not only permissible but desirable and beneficial in a pluralist society.

Truth Citizens can legitimately demand that truth-telling as refraining from lying and full disclosure by government be the rule, since trust in the veracity of government constitutes an essential element of the bond between governors and governed.

Popular Sovereignty The citizenry is collectively the sovereign of the state and holds ultimate authority over public officials and their policies.

Patriotism Virtuous citizens display a devotion to their country, including devotion to the fundamental values and principles upon which it depends.

Constitutional Principles

Rule of Law Both government and the governed should be subject to the law.

Separation of Powers Legislative, executive, and judicial powers should be exercised by different institutions in order to maintain the limitations placed upon them.

Representative Government The republican form of government established under the Constitution is one in which citizens elect others to represent their interests.

Checks and Balances The powers given to the different branches of government should be balanced, that is roughly equal, so that no branch can completely dominate the others. Branches of government are also given powers to check the power of other branches.

Individual Rights Fundamental to American constitutional democracy is the belief that individuals have certain basic rights that are not created by government but which government should protect. These are the right to life, liberty, economic freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. It is the purpose of government to protect these rights, and it may not place unfair or unreasonable restraints on their exercise. Many of these rights are enumerated in the Bill of Rights.

Freedom of Religion There shall be full freedom of conscience for people of all faiths or none. Religious liberty is considered to be a natural inalienable right that must always be beyond the power of the state to confer or remove. Religious liberty includes the right to freely practice any religion or no religion without government coercion or control.

Federalism Power is shared between two sets of governmental institutions, those of the states and those of the central or federal authorities, as stipulated by the Constitution.

Civilian Control of the Military Civilian authority should control the military in order to preserve constitutional government.

SUPPORTING A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

Quick Write

What value is there in thinking about and understanding a point of view that is different than your own? Explain how the Core Democratic Value of Common Good connects to this.