



A Lesson on My New President by Kasey Worthington

Grade Level: Grade 8

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: More than 3 hours

Lesson Keywords: Executive branch, Legislative branch, Judicial branch, voting

Lesson Description: This lesson is to give you an in depth thought on the importance of voting and getting involved with history!

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.5: Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4a: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

My New President

by

Content: I never liked learning U.S. history because I thought it was boring--lots of facts, lots of dates, lots of names, lots of maps. I liked the pictures, but the rest of it was uninteresting, I did not comprehend the reason to read about the past. I admit I was fairly uninformed about government.

We had to take a Constitution test, which requires knowledge about the structure of American government, and I failed it. I didn't know the responsibilities of the branches of government. I mixed up the executive branch and the legislative branch, the executive branch is the part that makes decisions and at the state level it's the governor who is responsible, at the national level it's the President. I figured out a way to recall what the judicial branch did because the root word has judge in it, it's about the courts. It took me three times to pass that exam.

Then this year I paid attention because I was involved in the election. I was proud that an individual who was like me was campaigning for the Presidency. I didn't expect that he would be elected, though, because I couldn't imagine that I could be President. There never was an African-American President in the more than 200 centuries of American history. I knew that much history. It was unprecedented.

My mother said, Don't be too sure that it is impossible, it could happen. We once elected an African-American mayor of Chicago.

I thought about that, but I was not optimistic, I didn't expect Barack Obama would win, he had only recently gained national recognition when elected as a Senator. I did hope that he would overcome the obstacles and reach that office, the highest in the land. Suddenly the Constitution was more important to me.

My mother said, Nothing happens if you do nothing. Why don't you help with the election? I said, How can I help? I am only 13.

You can help get people registered to vote. You can help his campaign office. Go and ask.

So I did. I went to downtown Chicago that Saturday. The only other time I had been there was to go to museums on a field trip or to Niketown when we shopped for new shoes. This time I went to a building with many offices, and on the first floor there was the most exciting place I have been, even more exciting than Niketown. It was the campaign headquarters. There were many people working at desks, most of them were talking on the phone or inputting information into computers. I said, Can I help? I want to volunteer.

A young man at the front desk said, Definitely, we need volunteers, can you start immediately? I said, certainly, and right away I had an assignment, I would assist with the preparation of a mailing. I put letters into envelopes, and I must have stuffed at least one thousand envelopes by the end of that first volunteer day.

I traveled downtown every Saturday after that, and my tasks varied from contacting voters by phone to remind them to vote to using the Internet to log emails and create a database. The database I set up was a list of eligible voters and their responses to the phone calls.

I was so engaged in the election that instead of movies I watched the news and I actually read the newspaper to learn about the election. I read what Barack Obama said, and I made a speech about him to my class. My mother and I attended a speech he gave in Chicago, it was so inspiring. I figured out that the Executive Branch does a lot, they are in charge of the army and much more, the election of a President is the most important choice any citizen can make.

I gained hope as I talked with people on the phone and watched the news reports. I kept saying, Yes we can to myself. And we did. Now the head of the Executive Branch is my President. I am part of U.S. history.

Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: "We had to take a Constitution test, which requires knowledge about the structure of American government\" **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: What does the word structure mean in this passage?

- A: People involved
- B: Organization
- C: The way around
- D: The president

Question: Which sentence below uses the word \"structure\" correctly?

- A: The structure of my school is hard
- B: The structure of the game is that, there is only one winner
- C: The structure of my house is pink
- D: I like to structure my homework

Q: 2 WordPhrase: I didn't know the responsibilities of the branches of government. **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: what does the word responsibilities mean, in the sentence?

- A: Duties they are assigned to
- B: Careless
- C: Authority
- D: Information

Question: Which sentence below uses the word "Responsibility" in the correct format?

- A: My room is filled with my moms responsibility
- B: I watch my responsibility on the computer
- C: The responsibility is red
- D: My responsibility in school is to get good grades

Q: 3 WordPhrase: I figured out a way to recall what the judicial branch did because the root word has judge in it.

WordPhraseTier: 3

Question: What does the word "judicial" mean in this sentence?

- A: Pertaining to the courts
- B: Schools
- C: Sheriffs
- D: The USA

Question: Which sentence uses the word "judicial" correctly

- A: The judicial system includes our president
- B: The judicial system pulled me over and wrote me a ticket
- C: I have to go to court, and face the judicial system
- D: The judicial system issued my license

Q: 4 WordPhrase: I mixed up the executive branch and the legislative branch **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: What does the word "executive" pertain to in the sentence?

- A: Protects the president
- B: Branch that enforces laws, makes decisions
- C: Rules the school
- D: Head of household

Question: Which sentence uses the word "executive" correctly?

- A: The executive branch enforced the no texting while driving law
- B: The executive branch wrote me a referral at school
- C: The executive branch took me to the grocery store because I did not have a ride
- D: The executive branch works at my school

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Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - We had to take a Constitution test, which requires knowledge about the structure of American government, and I failed it.

From context clues, why do you think he failed this test on the Constitution?

2 - Then this year I paid attention because I was involved in the election.

What does the author mean by I was involved in the election? We know Obama was running for president, not the author.

3 - Now the head of the Executive Branch is my President. I am part of U.S. history.

How is this 13 year old boy, part of history? How could you be part of history one day?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: What do you think the author is trying to persuade young people to do when it comes to our country and voting?

Make sure to provide specific examples and back up your reasoning with facts from the story.

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