

Lesson-5: Mediator, Arbiter, Judge and Jury

How to prepare:

Provide print or digital newspapers and have students collect news and information from the newspapers and other sources on controversial subjects.

If this is a first attempt at having students discuss controversial subjects, you may choose an issue that can be discussed with a single story, a comic strip or a series of stories that can be collected over a short period of time. As students become more independent, they may choose a more complicated issue that is reported over several weeks, or each small group may choose to study a different controversy and conduct research to gather information about it on their own.

Have students review terms, critical to completing this activity. They should look at the root words, come up with similar words and focus on action on whether the term and/or other form of the term is a noun and/or verb. Key words include mediator (mediate), arbiter (arbitrate), judge and jury. One or more students may want to interview lawyers, judges and others involved in legal proceedings, negotiations and/or settlements to obtain definitions of the terms and their legal applications.

What to do:

Organize students into assigned roles. Different persons should assume the roles of mediator, arbiter and judge. You may also choose a group (jury) to review news and information presented in support of the positions.

Other students should take opposing positions and choose someone to speak for their side. Have the spokesperson for each side debate the facts gathered and collected from newspapers and/or other sources before the judge and/or jury. Have the judge and/or jury decide which side prevails. After the debate, students should change sides and go through the process again.

Or have two students debate before the class after having worked together to gather facts. The class should say whether the students provided enough news and information and which side seemed stronger. Discuss the difficulty any student has when/if he/she presents the side of a controversy that he/she does not support. Talk about the fairness of having someone argue a side that he/she opposes.

After hearing all sides, have the mediator or arbiter propose a solution, which is often a compromise. Have the class vote. Does the vote support any proposed compromise? Do students come up with other ideas?

Follow-Up: The student guide and teacher's guide, **Citizens Together**, provide lessons on the Bill of Rights, which includes "YOUR RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL."

Click for the STUDENT GUIDE. Review the teacher's guide by scrolling down to the Civics section on this site: <http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/youth-news-literacy/resources/news-literacy-curriculum/>.