



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## Sources of Law: Related Cases for the Language-Minority Student

Guide for Curriculum Unit 82.03.05  
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This is a six to ten week unit designed to introduce the middle school student to various sources of United States law and several important concepts of United States government! The students will become familiar with the concepts of “checks and balances,” executive, legislative, and judicial; constitutional law; statutes; regulations and federal agencies; dual system of courts, state courts and federal courts; equal protection of the law and due process. The students will discuss, participate in role-playing activities, and study several court cases designed to generate student enthusiasm. A major objective of the unit will be to improve students’ communication skills. This social studies unit is designed to be used with middle to low ability middle school students. It is hoped that sufficient curriculum materials can be developed in Spanish so that this unit may be used in a bilingual social studies classroom. The selection of cases to be studied has been especially tailored for the language-minority student. It is hoped that similar units can be developed relevant to the needs of other interest groups. Because many middle school students are reading well below grade level, with writing skills lagging even further behind, many reading and writing activities will have to be teacher designed, based on individual need. Specifically, dictations will be given to improve native and second language skills. Copying, directed drill, letter writing, and note taking will be used as tools to improve writing skills. Interviews will be conducted and the interview technique will be utilized to integrate all communication skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The unit can be divided in three general parts. The first part, United States government, provides the student with background information about the specific powers of Congress, the States, the Supreme Court, and the President. It defines certain terms and introduces concepts that will serve as a base for parts two and three. Part two will attempt to illustrate various sources of law through the study of specific documents. An introductory discussion on where laws come from, including the question of divine command as the source of all law, will involve the students in examining why there is a need for laws, the difference between laws and rules and regulations, and will require the students to participate in the making of class rules. Part three is the case materials section, which can provide two to five weeks of lessons depending on the class, the teacher, and the materials available.

(Recommended for 6th through 8th grades United States History/Social Studies)

### **Key Words**

*Social Studies Bilingualism Spanish English American Government Law American Instruction United States Study*

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