MODELING DEMOCRACY

SAY WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND

ED U. GATOR AND THE UNDERDOG
SHE HELPED OTHERS TO FREEDOM

LEVEL II
Americans, we are all entitled to a long list of rights and freedoms that are denied to many people in other countries. Our government is a democracy, which means all United States citizens have the same set of rights and freedoms, no matter what color, size or shape we are. It says so, right in the Constitution of the United States of America, which is our system of rules and laws. This great and powerful document was written by the people of America, for the people of America. Sometimes rules and laws need to be changed, or updated. This has happened many times in our country. When one of the laws or rules gets changed in the Constitution, it’s called an amendment.

The very first amendment to the Constitution deals with our freedom of speech. It gives each of us the right to say what’s on our mind. So if you disagree with the way something is being done, you can say something about it. But when you don’t like something, or when you think something can be done better, it’s especially helpful to give your own suggestions for improving things.

There are men and women in Washington, D.C. who represent our ideas and interests in the government. These senators and congressmen tell the president and the rest of the country what’s on our minds. So, if you have an idea, you need to tell your senator or congressman. You can call on the phone, write a letter, send a fax or an e-mail. You can tell them what you think is wrong, or what you think is right! There’s one more very important way to speak your mind. When you turn 18 years old, you will have the right to vote. With that vote, you will be able to help make decisions about new laws and rules. You will be able to help choose your senator, your congressman, or the next president of the United States!

**VOCABULARY:**
- **Entitled:** having the right to do something.
- **Denied:** not to be allowed to do something.
- **Citizen:** a person who is a member of a country or state.
- **Document:** a printed or written letter or record.
- **Represent:** to stand for, or act in place of.
- **Fax:** a way to send a letter by phone.
- **E-mail:** electronic mail, or a message sent by computer.

**ACTIVITY:**

Have an adult help you find out who your senators and congressmen are. Senators and congressmen spend most of their time in Washington, D.C., but they have local offices too. Look up their phone numbers and addresses. If possible, visit the local office and introduce yourself. Your vote will be very important to them one day!
**A VOTE FOR THE UNDERDOG**

Hello, Ed here. Starting my new school has had its ups and downs. I’ve met some good buddies, but our school is big, and I’ve gotten lost a few times. My teacher is Mr. Salim Andes. His favorite subject is U.S. History. This month we’ve been learning about the Constitution and about our right to vote. In fact, our class is having an election to decide who will be class president!

There are two crocs running for president, Perry and Lucy. Perry is very popular with all the gators and crocs. He tells great jokes and wears cool clothes. Lucy is very quiet and keeps to herself most of the time, but she’s very smart. I know because she’s helped me with my English homework many times! At the end of class last Thursday, Perry got up in front of the room and gave a speech. He didn’t really say very much about the school, but he said some very funny things. When his speech was over he got a standing ovation! On Friday Lucy gave her speech. It was hard to hear her because she spoke so softly, and everyone in the room was laughing and talking to each other. She had some really good ideas though about the school and our class. She made some great suggestions about field trips and after school programs. But I think only a few of us were really listening.

We had our election this morning. Mr. Andes counted all the votes. I guess I wasn’t very surprised when he announced that Perry had 18 votes, and Lucy only had 3. I was disappointed, because I knew Lucy would do a better job. Then something really surprising happened. Perry stood up and said he didn’t want to be president, that it was just a big joke. Suddenly the room was completely quiet. Nobody laughed. Mr. Andes asked Perry to sit down. Then he asked Lucy if she was still interested in being our class president. Luckily for all of us, she said she was. I think she’ll make a great one!

**QUESTIONS**

1) How was Ed feeling about his new school?

2) How was the class using what they had learned about the Constitution?

3) What was different about the two crocs running for class president?

4) Why wasn’t Ed surprised about who won? Why was he disappointed?

5) Why did Lucy become president after all?

6) In your opinion, who would make the best president? Why?
MAKE THE EAGLE PROUD

Directions: The eagle is one of America’s greatest symbols of pride. It stands for freedom, strength and courage. Color in this picture of an eagle, and on the spaces underneath it, list some of the things about America that make you proud.

IF I WERE PRESIDENT . . .

Directions: What kinds of things would you do if you were president of your class? What would you do if you were president of the United States? Write a short paragraph about each, or just make a list below.
**IN THE NEWSPAPER**

**Directions:** The newspaper is filled with articles about the president of the United States, senators and congressmen. Look through the paper with an adult and see how many stories you can find. What kinds of issues are being discussed?

**YOU ARE THE SOLUTION, PART 2**

**Directions:** Are you up for this week’s PSP (Project: Solution Puzzle)? All of the answers are important things about your country.

**ACROSS**
1. Another word for liberty
2. Making a choice by ballot
3. Another name for the 4th of July
4. The name of our country
5. Equal rights for all

**DOWN**
1. What is just and honest
2. The condition of being fair or just
3. Being loyal to one’s country
4. America’s system of laws and rules
5. To declare

**Crossword Clues:**
1. Freedom
2. United States
3. Justice
4. Constitution
5. Democracy
6. Independence Day
7. Fair
8. Voting
9. Pledge

**Solutions:**
- F: Freedom
- D: Democracy
- M: Constitution
- E: Equal
- N: Nation
- V: Voting
- I: Independence
- O: Oath
- A: America
- L: Liberty
- C: Constitution
- Y: United States
- E: Equal
- S: Sovereignty
- M: Military
- C: Constitution
here was once a man named Kurt Frank, who was extremely unfriendly. It seemed as though he hated everybody and everything. He would walk through town saying rude things and doing rude things such as pushing people out of his way. Whenever someone told him he shouldn't say rude things, he would reply, "It's a free country. I can say whatever I want." Whenever someone told him he shouldn't do rude things, he would reply, "It's a free country. I can do whatever I want." And he would go on his angry, unfriendly way.

Unfortunately, Kurt wasn't the type to stay home by himself, grumbling and groaning. He would go to places where the most people gathered, such as parks and markets and the meeting hall at the center of town, and say and do rude things. At one town meeting he stood up and told everyone to "shut up!" Betty Simons stood up and faced Kurt. She said, "Kurt, my mother used to tell me that if you don't have something nice to say, then don't say anything at all." To which Kurt replied, "It's a free country. I can say whatever I want. And what's more, your mother was a fool!" Suddenly a hush fell over the crowd. Betty Simons said, "He had just about enough!" and she stormed out of the hall. Then Ed Rogers left, and Selma Richards. Then Trudy McMichael and the entire Larson family. Soon Kurt was in the big meeting hall, all alone.

Kurt said, "They're all fools!" And he mumbled and grumbled all the way home. The next day when he woke up, he was in a particularly foul mood. He got dressed and walked into town, thinking about all the rude things he could do and say to people. First he went to the park, but no one was there. Then he went to the market, but it was closed. So he walked over to the meeting hall, but the large room was empty. He wondered where everyone had gone.

Two more days passed. Each morning Kurt got up and went to town, but no one else showed up. Finally, he realized that everyone in town had moved away. He suddenly felt very lonely. He sadly understood that it was a free country, and that he could say or do anything he wanted. But he would have to say it, and do it, by himself.

— By Ned Andrew Solomon
Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in the South in 1820. Slaves were mostly African-Americans who were owned by white people. Many slaves were treated cruelly. They were often beaten and sometimes sold to other people, which separated the slaves from their families.

Many whites and blacks in the North believed no man should be allowed to "own" another man. They worked to end, or abolish slavery, so they became known as "abolitionists." Some of these people started the Underground Railroad, which wasn't a railroad, but a secret system for helping slaves escape from the South to freedom in the North. These abolitionists took care of the blacks and hid them in their homes. When Harriet Tubman grew up, she also escaped to the North. But instead of just hiding out, she showed incredible courage by making 19 dangerous trips back south to help other slaves become free.

In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution officially ended slavery. In 1870, African-American men were granted the right to vote. Harriet Tubman continued to work hard for the rights of blacks and women. Unfortunately, women didn't get the right to vote until 1920, seven years after Tubman's death. But because of her hard work, blacks and women can vote today!
TIPS

1. In families, there are daily, sometimes hourly opportunities to practice democratic ideals and demonstrate fairness. One of the most common expressions we hear from young people is “that’s not fair!” Sometimes it’s very difficult to play mediator and decide what truly is fair, and to settle a disagreement so all parties are satisfied. However, working these matters out will promote positive behaviors, such as sharing, turn-taking and problem solving.

2. Our right to freedom of speech sometimes yields negative consequences. Even though we have the “right” to say whatever we want, it’s important to teach our children how some things we say can be hurtful to other people. We do not have the “right” to make others feel uncomfortable. Explain to them how saying hurtful things interferes with the other person’s “rights” and freedom.

3. How democratic is your household? Obviously, it’s impossible for your children to take part in all family decisions. But if there are times when they realistically can, let them get involved, and encourage and respect their input into family issues. This will encourage self-esteem and a sense of independence.

4. Teach your child the importance of our right to vote. At election times, explain the process and whenever possible, take your child with you to the poll. Most polling places have kid-sized voting booths, so they can get in practice for the real thing.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Some children are hesitant to give their opinions, because they believe their statements will be met with criticism or ridicule. Here’s an easy way to give each member of the family “a voice.” Turn a simple cardboard box into a SUGGESTION BOX. Put it in a place in the house where everyone can get to it easily. Encourage family members to write down comments, criticisms, complaints or ideas about any aspect of the household. Let them know that their suggestions can be made “anonymously.” Pick a time when you read through everyone’s suggestions and discuss possible solutions to the problems or points raised.

RESOURCES


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