

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #11 – The United States Census



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about THE UNITED STATES CENSUS. One thing I love to do is count all my toys and bones. Counting helps me to keep track of everything and keeps me organized. Did you know the U.S. Constitution requires a **Census** to count all the

people that live in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and the five (5) U.S. territories – American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands? A census involves the recording of various details about individuals to obtain an official count or survey of the population. The U.S. conducts such a **Census** every 10 years to learn more about the demographics of its people. Every house in the U.S. and its territories receives an invitation to participate in the Census, which they may do so by responding to a short questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.

ABOUT THE U.S. CENSUS: Article I, Section 2 of the *U.S. Constitution* states: “Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States... according to their respective Numbers... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States and within every subsequent Term of ten Years.”

Section 2 of the **14th Amendment** to the Constitution states that “respective Numbers” of the “several States” shall be determined by counting the whole number of persons in each state and territory. The first United States Census was taken in 1790 shortly after the American Revolution and has continued every 10 years since then. The last U.S. Census was conducted in 2020.

Filling out the Census is fast and easy. The questions are simple. For example, the Census asks how many people live in your home, whether you rent or own the home in which you live, and the names, sex, birth dates, and relations of everyone who lives in the home.

The U.S. Census serves an important role in helping the government operate. The information obtained through the Census every 10 years helps the government in two major ways:

1. Enables legislators to determine how they will allocate billions of dollars in federal funding to things like hospitals, fire departments, schools, and roads in states and communities throughout the U.S. and its territories. (This federal funding comes from taxes paid by U.S. citizens.)
2. Provides information needed to determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as to draw congressional and legislative districts.

Continued

Because the ***U.S. Census*** is so important to the functioning of our government, it is critical for the government to have a complete and accurate count of all people living within our borders. And it is required by law that all households respond to the U.S. Census.

Activity: Let's do a U.S. Census check! Talk to your family about what you have learned about the U.S. Census and the different functions it serves. Make sure to explain the two major ways that an accurate Census helps the government to operate. Ask your family if someone from your household filled out the 2020 U.S. Census. If they didn't participate in the last Census, be sure to get them to participate in 2030 when the count is done again.

Civics Resources: The 2020 Census was the 24th census in U.S. history and represented the first time that all households were invited to respond to the census online. Click on the following link to see the 2020 [U.S. Census](#) results and examine/analyze the data to learn more about the plans for the 2030 U.S. Census.

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #12 – Equal Rights (Women's Rights)



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN. As a female dog, I am particularly interested in making sure that all dogs are treated equally, both males and females. I know this is a human concern as well.

Sticky Situation: One of my favorite times of the school day is recess time. I love to sit and watch the children play. I do like to join in and play ball; I particularly like tennis balls! Sometimes, however, I see things that upset me. Let me tell you about one of those times.

It was during recess at the school near my house. A group of kids was getting ready to choose teams for a softball game that they were going to play. One of the boys I had not seen before was chosen to be the captain of his team. As the group got ready, the boy who was chosen to be captain of his team declared that his team would have NO GIRLS on it. I think I know what I would have done. What would you do and why?

Activity: Make a list of all the characteristics of a good leader. Then consider the following: Starting with George Washington, 45 unique men have been sworn in as President of the United States, including President Biden. To date, U.S. voters have not elected a woman to serve as President.

Now, think back to that list of characteristics of a good leader that you developed earlier. Do you think it makes a difference if the president is a man or a woman? Be prepared to support your answer.

Civics Resources: Check out this article about **Presidential Leadership** by the renowned presidential scholar – Doris Kearns Goodwin – in which she addresses the traits a president needs.

[Doris Kearns Goodwin – 6 Essential Traits a President Needs](#)

You might want to have your parents read it with you, so you can discuss it together when you are finished.

Bonus Activity: With your parent's permission, take a tennis ball and see if you can turn it into the face of your favorite leader. Draw on eyes, put on cotton to be a wig and you would have George Washington!

Maggie's Civics Corner



Lesson #13 – Law Day 2020 Special Lesson *Your Vote...Your Voice...Our Democracy*

Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's special lesson is about LAW DAY. Every year throughout the U.S. we celebrate the **rule of law** on May 1st - Law Day. This observance was established in 1958 by President

highlight how the law and the legal process contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share. My mom, Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, is a Federal Judge. She shared information with me about the theme for Law Day 2020 – ***Your Vote...Your Voice...Our Democracy***. She said that it centers on **Women's Rights** and the **19th Amendment**. The 19th Amendment guarantees a woman's right to vote. As a female pup, this is an important theme I would like to share with you.

Sticky Situation: Before you think about this Sticky Situation, read or listen to this read-aloud of the book, [The Ballot Box Battle](#) by Emily Arnold McCully.

The story takes place in 1880, a time when women were not allowed to vote. The main character is a girl named Cordelia, whose brother has captured the feeling of the times when he shouts, "No votes for pea-brained females." Luckily for Cordelia, her next-door neighbor is Elizabeth Cady Stanton - a leader in the struggle to achieve women's rights. Elizabeth helps Cordelia to learn about the need and fight for women's rights.

Now...think about this *sticky situation* - one any of us might face...

It is recess time. A group of boys in your class take a kickball outside and start to choose teams. Two girls in the class stand with the boys so they can play kickball, too. One of the boys takes a piece of chalk and walks over to where the girls are standing to write **BOYS RULE!** Another boy turns to the girls and yells, "**Girls are no good at kickball!**" Rather than walk away or start yelling at the boys, the girls stay, explaining they want to tell the boys why they should let them play and to suggest the group vote about whether girls should be allowed to play or not.

If you were one of the girls, what would you say to the boys to convince them to let you play? If you were one of the boys, how would you vote and why? Be prepared to share your ideas.

Continued

Activity: Writing a rule or enacting a law are not easy tasks to accomplish. A rule must be clear, concise, easy to follow, and one that does not contradict a rule that already exists.

Think about the experience everyone had on the playground. The girls chose not to use a *“fight or flight”* response to make their point. They wanted to play, so they tried to convince the boys that letting them play was a good idea. When the Principal of the school heard what happened on the playground, she decided to have the class develop a rule about who should be allowed to play kickball at recess. If you were asked to write this rule, what would it state?

Now, imagine that the Principal asks every student in the school to vote on whether they think your rule is a good one or not. Think of three (3) reasons to support your rule and write them down. Be prepared to share.

Civics Resources: Each year the [American Bar Association](#) (“ABA”) selects a new theme for Law Day and provides information, sets activities, and makes resources for teachers available about the topic. Click the ABA link above to get information about this year’s theme.

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #14 – Separation of Powers



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about the SEPARATION OF POWERS in our government. Did you know that the U.S. government is separated into 3 different branches? This works like my family! Each parent has certain jobs, and at other times they work together to get to the right answer. For example, it's my Mom's job to cut my hair, so my Dad isn't allowed to do it. But if I want a doggy treat, both of my parents must agree to let me have one. The U.S. government works the same way. The three branches – Legislative, Executive, and Judicial – each have a job only it can do, but sometimes the other branches must check and balance each other to make decisions together.

Sticky Situation: Imagine you are putting together a soccer team at recess. You can either have one team captain who makes all the decisions for the entire team, or three team captains who share the responsibility. Which would you choose? What are the benefits of giving each team captain specific jobs that they are responsible for?

Activity: Let's learn the different powers of America's three branches of Government. On the left are the three branches. On the right are their responsibilities, shuffled out of order. Draw a line from the branch connecting it to the correct responsibilities. Good luck!

Legislative

Includes the President and is responsible for enforcing the laws that Congress makes.

Executive

Determines when laws are unconstitutional through court cases.

Judicial

Made up of representatives from every state.
This branch makes laws.

Civics Resources: Visit the [USA.gov](https://www.usa.gov) website to learn more about the 3 branches of the U.S. government. Or, check out the iCivics interactive game – [Branches of Power](https://www.icivics.com/branches-of-power) – to act as each branch of government to create new laws.

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #15 – Executive Branch



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Constitution Close-Up: The Constitution says the United States Government must have three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Each branch has its own responsibilities, but sometimes they work together to check each other's work. Let's take a look at each one!

Today's lesson is about the EXECUTIVE BRANCH. Article II of the Constitution establishes the executive branch, which includes the President, Vice President, and Cabinet.

The PRESIDENT: The President is both the Leader of our Government and Commander of our military. He or she has several jobs: enforce federal law; choose certain Government leaders and judges; sign treaties with other countries; and either sign or veto laws from Congress. To become President, you must be 35 years old, born in the U.S., and have lived here for at least 14 years. Presidents can serve for a maximum of 8 years.

The CABINET: The President's Cabinet includes the Vice President and 15 department leaders. The executive departments oversee things like agriculture, education, housing, labor, transportation, and many other things important to citizens of the United States.

Sticky Situation: Imagine you're on a team with one Captain at a time. Your team has two options – either choose one person to serve as Captain for the entire year or choose a different person each month to be the captain so everyone on the team can get a turn. Which options would you choose, and why? Now, thinking about the President of the United States, what do you think are the pros and cons of limiting the person in that role to serve only 8 years in office?

Activity: The President gets to live in the White House in Washington, D.C., and works in their own office, which is called the Oval Office. If you became President, how would you decorate the Oval Office? I would have pictures of dog bones on the walls! What special pictures would you include? Draw a picture of what your Oval Office would look like.

Civics Resources: For more information about the Executive Branch, visit [The White House website](#)

Or check out this video from [The History Channel about the Executive Branch](#)

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #16 – Judicial Branch



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Constitution Close-Up: The Constitution says the United States Government must have three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Each branch has its own responsibilities, but sometimes they work together to check each other's work. Let's take a look at each one!

Today's lesson is about the JUDICIAL BRANCH. Article III of the Constitution establishes the judicial branch, also called the federal court system. Courts help resolve issues between people, establish which laws are constitutional, and determine when people are guilty or innocent of crimes.

COURT SYSTEM: There are three levels of courts: District Courts, Appellate Courts, and the Supreme Court. Cases start in District Courts, where the people involved share their side of the story and present evidence. Either a jury or the court will decide which side wins. Whoever loses can appeal the case and ask for the Appellate Court to change the outcome. Whoever loses in the Appellate Court can appeal it to the Supreme Court for the final decision.

The Supreme Court is made up of 9 members who serve for their whole life, unlike the President who serves for 4-year terms. The Supreme Court gets to decide which cases it will consider each year. Around 7,000 requests are sent to the Supreme Court each year, and they usually choose about 150 cases to consider.

Sticky Situation: Judges make some pretty hard decisions, and so do kids! Imagine you're at recess and two of your friends come up. They ask you who should get to play with the jump rope. One friend says they found the jump rope first, but the other friend hasn't gotten to play with it all week and says it should be her turn. How would you decide which friend gets to play with it? What kinds of questions would you ask them to help make the decision?

Activity: Lawyers go to Court and try to convince judges why their side should win. The best lawyers know how to use facts and reasons to support their side. For example, if I was trying to convince my mom that I should get a dog treat, I shouldn't just say, "Give me a dog treat." Instead, I could say, "I should get a dog treat because I followed all the rules today, like not barking at the mailman."

Pretend you're a lawyer and try to convince your friends or family members why you should get a treat today. Use facts and reasons to support your argument. Good luck!

Civics Resources: For more information about the Judicial Branch, check out this [History.com video](#)

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #17 – Legislative Branch



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Constitution Close-Up: The Constitution says the United States Government must have three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Each branch has its own responsibilities, but sometimes they work together to check each other's work. Let's take a look at each one!

Today's lesson is about the LEGISLATIVE BRANCH. Article I of the Constitution establishes the Legislative Branch of our government. It is also called Congress. Congress is made up of two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives has 435 members, and each state gets a certain number of Representatives depending on how many people live there. The Senate, on the other hand, has 100 members – two from each state.

MAKING A LAW: Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have a role in creating laws. Potential laws (called "bills") are first studied by a Committee. The Committee can choose to edit, throw away, or accept the bill. If the Committee accepts it, the bill goes to the full House of Representatives for a vote. If it receives a majority of votes (218 out of 435 members), then the bill moves over to the Senate where a similar procedure occurs – a Committee studies the bill and if it accepts it, the bill moves to the full Senate for a vote, where a majority vote is 51 out of 100 senators. For the bill to become law, the President must sign it. But the President also has the power to veto the bill, which means to reject it. If that happens, the bill returns to the House of Representatives and the Senate, where he must get 2/3 its membership to vote to override the veto and pass the bill into law. In the House, that means 290 members must vote for it, while in the Senate 67 senators must be in favor of it.

Pretty complicated, huh? The point is to make sure all our country's laws have been studied and debated thoroughly before being passed. The most important thing to remember is that Congress AND the President each have important roles in forging the laws of our country.

OTHER POWERS: Congress handles our federal budget. It decides how much to tax citizens and how to spend the tax money collected. In 2019, Congress approved the spending of \$4.45 trillion. Congress also has the power to declare war, approve treaties, and more!

Activity: Imagine you're a member of the House of Representatives – because you could be one day! What is a law you think you would propose? For example, I would propose a bill establishing every June 1st as National Pet-a-Dog Day! Draft a bill about anything – education, healthcare, or anything else you care about – then see how many of your friends and family would vote for it.

Civics Resources: For more information about the Legislative Branch, check out this [History.com video](https://www.history.com/video).

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #18 – Understanding National Symbols



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about UNDERSTANDING NATIONAL SYMBOLS. National symbols are things that nations use to represent their national values, history, goals, and people.

The United States of America has many national symbols such as our flag, our nation's seal, and our national anthem, the Star-Spangled Banner. Monuments and statues can also be national symbols. The Statue of Liberty is an American national symbol that is located on Liberty Island in New York City's harbor.

STATUE OF LIBERTY – The Statue of Liberty was given as a gift in 1886 to the people of the United States from the people of France and depicts Libertas, the Roman goddess of liberty. She holds a torch above her head in her right hand and carries a stone tablet in her left hand inscribed with July 4, 1776, in roman numerals to commemorate the date on which the U.S. declared its **Independence**. She has a broken chain and shackles around her feet to signify the abolition of



slavery. The statue is made of copper and stands 151 feet high from its base to the top of its torch. The statue was originally a dull brown copper color, but because of oxidation over time, the copper has turned into the green color it is today.

The Statue of Liberty is an American national symbol that is recognized all over the world. Between 1892 and 1954, 12 million immigrants coming to the United States were greeted by the Statue of Liberty when they arrived at the immigration station on the neighboring Ellis Island. Since then, the statue has become a symbol of hope and opportunity for those seeking a better life in America.

As a national symbol, the Statue of Liberty represents many of our values as Americans such as liberty, freedom, and democracy. These are values that all Americans care about. National symbols such as the Statue of Liberty help us to demonstrate these principles and the pride we share in them.

Activity: Practice your artistic abilities! Look at a photo of the [Statue of Liberty](#) online. Find one that you really like. Now take a blank piece of paper and try to draw the Statue of Liberty on your own while looking at that photo. When you finish drawing, color your Statue of Liberty. You can color it green as it is today, or choose to color it a copper color to show how the statue looked back in 1886.

Civics Resources: Employees of the National Park Service have been caring for the Statue of Liberty since 1933. Visit the [NPS website](#) to learn more about this national treasure.

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #19 – Judges



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about the role of JUDGES. *when puppies in the community have a disagreement, I tell them to take the disagreement to an independent, impartial judge like my mom.*

My mom - The Honorable Marjorie O. Rendell - is a Senior Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. After seeing her and her colleagues in action, I have full faith and confidence in the impartiality and competence of judges. I know that they will do their best to render a final judgment where the law is faithfully applied.

This lesson is about JUDGES. Judges play a **central role in interpreting our nation's laws and ensuring fair and impartial resolution of disputes** between individuals, corporations, and state entities. In criminal cases, if the defendant(s) cannot afford a lawyer, the judge appoints a lawyer for them. Judges are also responsible for signing warrants for arrests and searches.

According to Article III of the Constitution, judges who sit on the federal courts are appointed by the President of the United States and approved by the Senate. Federal judges have life tenure and salary protection, a structure designed to safeguard the independence of the federal judiciary. On the other hand, state court judges are selected differently across states, with some using direct elections and others having a gubernatorial appointment and retention elections.

Judges are like umpires in baseball or referees in football or basketball. Their **role is to ensure that the procedural rules of the courts are followed by both sides.** In the adversarial process of litigation, judges preside over the proceedings and maintain order. During a trial, the judge rules on whether the evidence the parties want to use is illegal or improper. If the trial is before a jury, the judge gives instructions about the relevant law to be applied to the case. Like the umpire, **judges decide cases before them based on relevant facts and law—without regard to which side is more popular, who is more “favored” or whether the judges themselves agree with the law.** Read each of the scenarios below and decide if the Judge acted independently in each case.

Scenarios

Once upon a time, there was a wonderful village in a beautiful green valley. The community was ruled by a wise queen and her husband, the king. Because of the Queen's wisdom, disputes were resolved fairly, and everyone quickly returned to their everyday lives. One spring the Queen decides to go and visit her sister in a faraway town and leaves the village for several months.

Continued

Very quickly there is a dispute between Farmer Taki and Farmer Snuggy over who owns the strawberry patch that runs along the border of their properties. Without the Queen to resolve the dispute the two former friends grow angrier and angrier at one another. The poor King just doesn't know what to do and frets and frets. After many days of thinking hard, the King appoints Tam to be the judge of the village and gives him the authority to make final decisions in all disputes.

Tam establishes a courtroom and sets it up. On the first day of court, Farmer Taki and Farmer Snuggy enter to resolve their dispute. Judge Tam looks up from his bench to see Farmer Taki wearing a shirt that features the Grasshopper Baseball Team. (That's Judge Tam's favorite sports team of all time.) Farmer Snuggy just has on his farmer overalls. Judge Tam decrees immediately that the strawberry patch belongs to Farmer Taki and says, "Farmer Taki you have great taste in sports teams so I think that you must be telling the truth about the strawberry patch. I rule that the strawberry patch belongs to you forever and ever." Farmer Snuggy begins speaking, "But, judge, you didn't even listen to my side." Judge Tam cuts off Farmer Snuggy and scolds him, "My decision is final!" Farmer Snuggy is very upset. Farmer Taki is happy about his win but somehow doesn't feel like he won because his story was heard.

Do you think this was the correct way for Judge Tam to decide this case? Why or why not? Be prepared to support your answer.

The next day, Marri accuses Jam of stealing her chicken. Jam says that Marri is confused and the chicken belongs to him. Marri and Jam go to Judge Tam's court to resolve their dispute. When they enter the courtroom, Judge Tam is very happy to see Marri because he has a crush on her. Before the case begins, Judge Tam speaks with Marri and asks her to go to dinner with him later that night; she accepts. Judge Tam then tries to listen to all the evidence, but he can't help to sneak looks at Marri, and he smiles at her every chance he gets. In his ruling, Judge Tam says, "I know Marri is a wonderful person and we have spent many special times together. I don't really know Jam, but I know Marri would never lie so I rule that the chicken belongs to Marri." Marri beams with happiness; Jam is very distraught. The chicken doesn't react at all to the news.

Do you think this was the correct way for Judge Tam to decide this case? Why or why not? Be prepared to support your answer.

On the third day of court, a very complicated case comes before Judge Tam. The case involves a 300-page contract between Purple Dragon and Bingo. This time, Judge Tam listens to witness after witness and looks at many pages of documents. At the end of the day, he still can't make up his mind, so Judge Tam tells Purple Dragon and Bingo that he is going to think about the case overnight.

That night while Judge Tam is reading the contract again, the King calls him and says, "Judge Tam, Purple Dragon is pretty scary and if he loses the case, he'll breathe purple goo all over the village and purple goo is very hard to clean up - and it smells really, really bad. I think that you should rule in Purple Dragon's favor." Judge Tam says, "Well that's a relief because this case is really hard. I'll just rule in Purple Dragon's favor tomorrow and now I can go to bed instead of staying up reading all this stuff!"

The next day, Judge Tam goes to court and says, "I rule in Purple Dragon's favor." When Bingo asks why, Judge Tam says, "That's my final decision; Court is adjourned. Go away!"

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Continued

Do you think this was the correct way for Judge Tam to decide this case? Why or why not? Be prepared to support your answer.

Civics Resources: Visit the American Bar Association website to learn more about [How Courts Work and the Role of Judges](#)

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #20 – Jury



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about the role of a JURY. The U.S. Constitution provides all citizens the right to a trial by jury. Even though a judge presides over most activities in the courtroom and rules on issues of law, the decisions about facts are made by

ordinary citizens, i.e., our peers in the community. The jury system is not an American invention. Trial by jury and the grand jury existed elsewhere before our states were even colonies.

If I were to serve on a jury trial, I would sit with 5 or 11 other members of the public in a special section called the "Jury Box," which is off to the side of where the judge sits. (A jury is either 6 or 12 jurors, in total.) One of us is selected as the foreman of the jury by the entire jury team to act as our informal leader before the case starts. That person's role also then includes: asking questions (usually to the judge) on behalf of all jurors; helping to get the jury discussion about the case started and to stay on course; and, announcing the verdict of the jury to the Court.

A jury is a group of people summoned and sworn to decide on the facts in issue at a trial. The jury is composed of people who represent a cross-section of the community. The jury listens to the evidence during a trial, decides what kinds of facts the evidence has established, and draws conclusions from those facts to form their decision. The jury decides whether a defendant is "guilty" or "not guilty" in criminal cases, and "liable" or "not liable" in civil cases. Jurors in some states are selected through voter registration and driver's license records.

When cases are tried before a jury, the judge still has a major role in determining which evidence may be considered by the jury. The jury is the so-called factfinder, but it is left to "find" facts only from the evidence that is deemed legally admissible by the judge. The judge instructs the jury on the legal principles or rules that must be followed in weighing the facts. If the jury finds the accused guilty or liable, it is up to the judge to sentence the defendant.

Civic Activity: To find out more about the role of a jury ask your parents or older brothers or sisters the following questions:

- Have you ever served jury duty?
- What was it like to serve on the jury? What type of case did you have?
- Were you questioned by the attorneys who were selecting jurors? If so, what were some of the questions you were asked?
- Do you think the jury system is important to the judicial process in America? Why or why not?

Civics Resources: Visit the Judicial Learning Center site to learn about the role of [The Judge and The Jury](#)