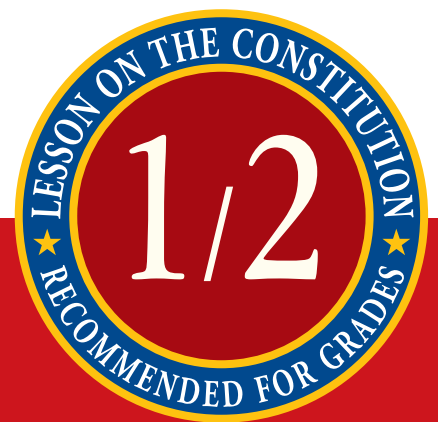


We the People

# Constitution Day

ACROSS THE COUNTRY \*\*\*\*\* SEPTEMBER 17



## About Constitution Day

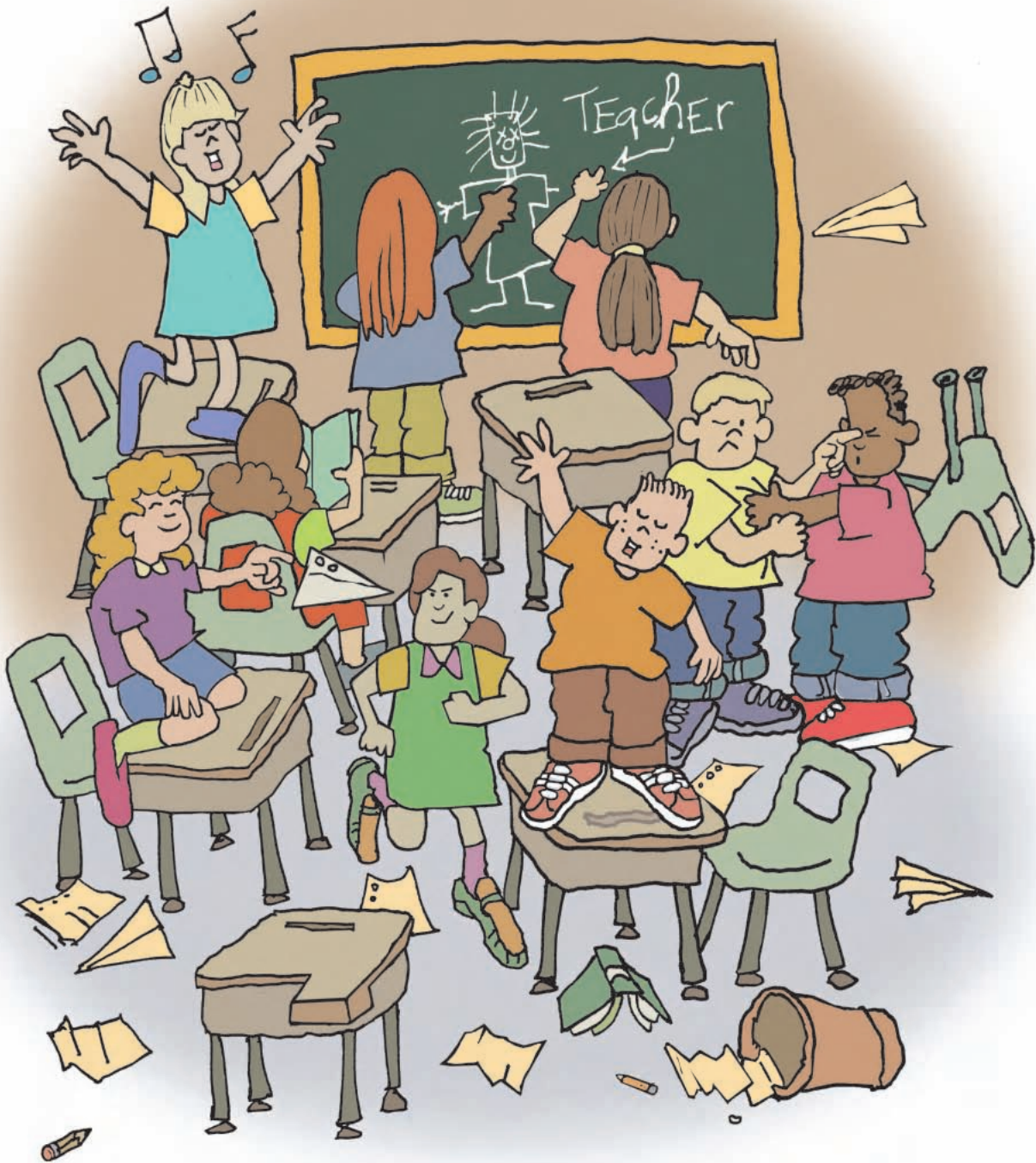


In 1952, President Harry S. Truman signed a bill that moved “I Am an American Day” from the third Sunday in May to September 17 so that this holiday would coincide with the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. Congress renamed the holiday “Citizenship Day.” A joint resolution passed in 1956 requested the President to proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 each year as “Constitution Week.”

Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) entered an amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 that changed the name of the September 17 holiday to “Constitution Day and Citizenship Day.” The purpose of “Constitution Day and Citizenship Day” is to honor and celebrate the privileges and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship for both native-born and naturalized citizens, while commemorating the creation and signing of the supreme law of our land.

The addition of the amendment, known as Public Law 108-477, requires all schools that receive federal funds hold an educational program for their students on September 17 of each year. This lesson, which is adapted from curricular materials on the Constitution produced by the [Center for Civic Education](#), is designed to assist schools and federal agencies to meet the requirements of this law.

# What is authority ?



# What you will learn in this lesson

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In this lesson you will learn about authority. You will learn where it comes from and who uses it. The lesson activities will help you understand why we need authority, how it helps to solve problems and how we choose people to be leaders. We give our leaders a position of authority. There are things that a person in a position of authority may do. There are some things that they may not do. We must decide what the person in the position may do and what they may not do. Our Constitution tells our leaders in the government what they must do and what they may not do.

# Words to learn

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authority

benefits

Constitution

costs

duties

government

laws

limits

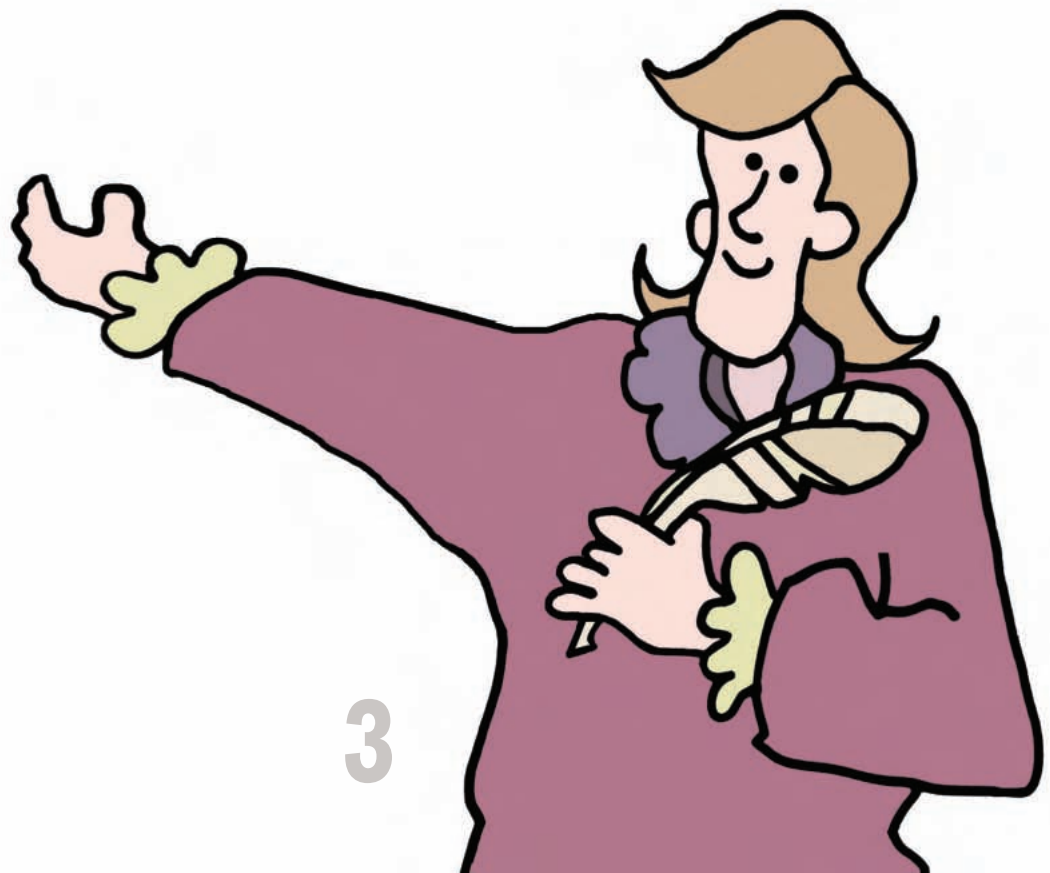
local government

position of authority

power

rules

solutions



# What is authority



Many times you decide what you want to do. No one tells you to do it.

- Ruth said, “I am going to feed my cat.”
- David said, “I am going to go play at Jim’s house.”

Ruth and David acted on their own. No one told them what to do.





Many times you do what others say you should do.

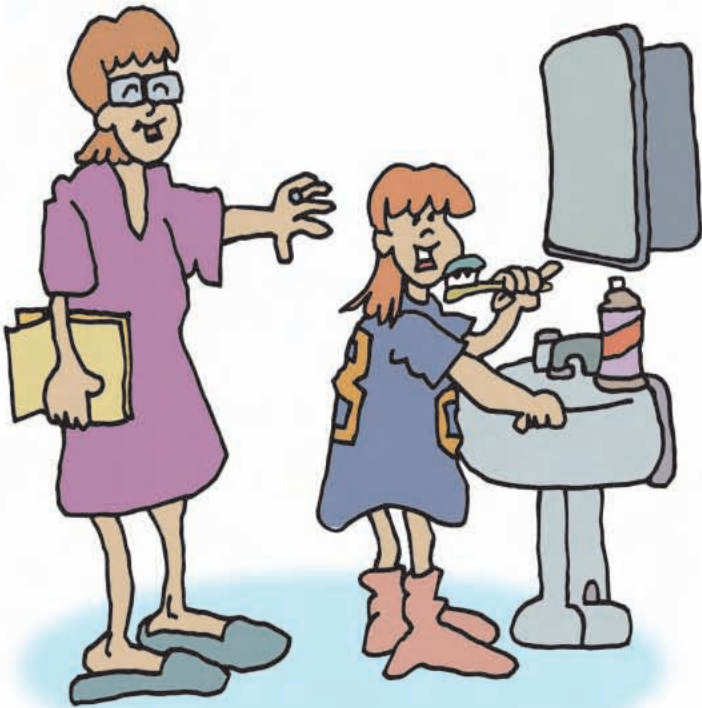
- “Luke, give me your lunch money or I will hit you,” said Al.
- “Amy, please brush your teeth,” said Amy’s mother.



Amy’s mother and Al each told someone what to do. Both used power.

Someone has **power** when they tell people what to do and they do it.

Read again what Amy’s mother said and what Al said.



## What is different about what they said?

Does Al have the right to make Luke give him money? Why?

Does Amy's mother have the right to tell Amy to brush her teeth? Why?

Amy's mother had authority.

**Authority** means to have the right to use power. It is the right to tell others what to do. Al has power but does not have the authority to use it.

A **job** can give you authority, or the right, to tell others what to do. Your teacher tells you to study your lessons. That is part of a teacher's job.





The **law** can give you the right, or authority, to tell others what to do. A law is a rule made by people in the **government**. A police officer tells you to wear a helmet when riding your bike. The law gives the officer the right to do this.

Your **parents** tell you what to do. It is their right as parents. The law also says they have the right to use power. They have authority.

Sometimes people use power but they do not have the right to do so. A school bully might tell you to leave the school yard. Robbers might tell you to give them money. They do not have the right to make you do these things. They use **power without authority**. This means using power without having the right to do so.

When have you seen someone use power without authority




When have you seen someone use authority




Why do you want to know if someone is using authority or power without authority




# Problems to solve

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Look at each of these problems. Say if the person is using authority.

Say if the person is using power without authority.

1. Luis said, "Let me cut in line, now!"
2. Rita's father said, "Please, take the dog for a walk."
3. The crossing guard said, "You may cross the street."
4. Peter said, "If you don't give me your homework, I will get you after school."
5. Coach Paul said, "The game is over. Everybody please leave."
6. The police officer said, "You must wear a seat belt when you ride in a car."

# What are the benefits of authority

When we use authority, good things can happen. We call them **benefits**. A benefit is something good. For example, we can use authority to solve a problem.



# Authority can help to keep us safe

A rule at the swimming pool is “No Running Near Pool.” This rule helps to keep you from falling and getting hurt. The lifeguard is a person at the pool who also keeps you safe.



## Authority can help us share things in a fair way



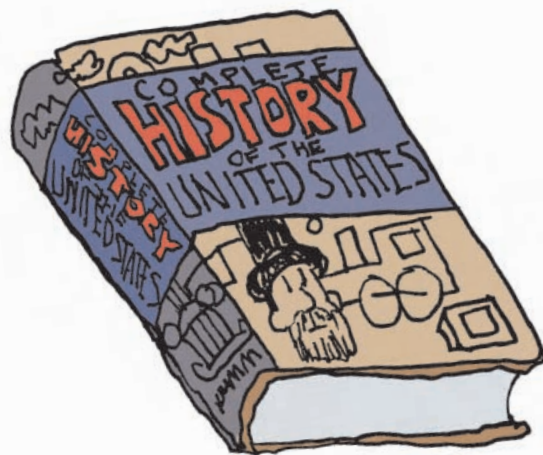
Your teacher might say, “You may have one box of crayons at a time.” Other boys and girls need to use the crayons, too.



## Authority can help us protect property



Your parents might say, “Do not write in this book.” This is to protect the book from damage. Others may want to use the book after you do.

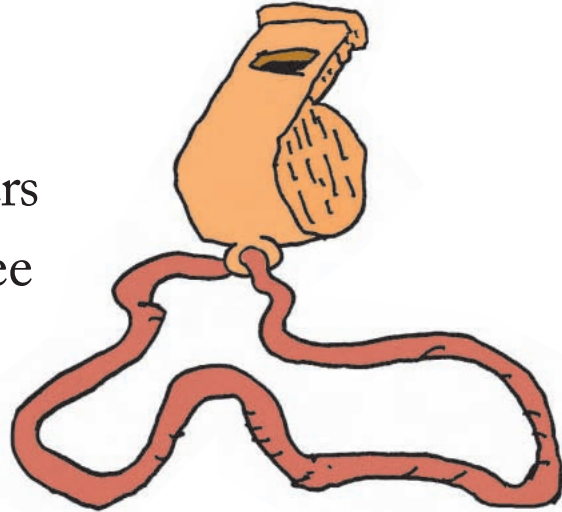




# Authority can help us settle arguments



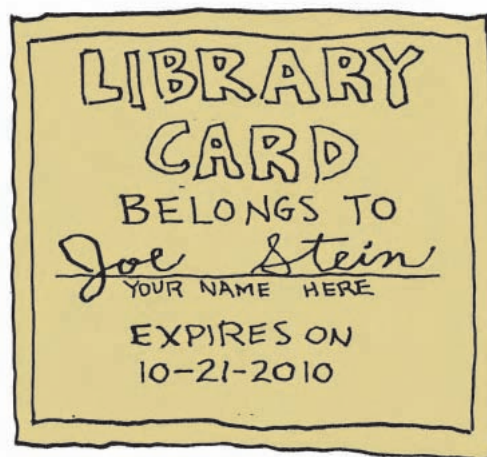
When you play a game, you might have a referee. He or she sees that the players follow the rules. The referee decides what to do if a player breaks the rules.



# Authority can help us keep order



Your library has rules about using books. The rules help keep order in the library. Without these rules you would not be able to find the book you want.



# What are the costs of authority



Authority can also cause problems. We call these **costs**. A cost is what we give up. These are some costs of using authority:

- We will not be free to do what we want.
- We might have to pay someone to take the position of authority.
- We have to make sure that the person in authority does not have to do all the work.
- We must watch those in authority so they do not use their power unfairly.

Each time we use authority, there are both benefits and costs. Think about these things. They will help you to figure out the benefits and costs. Which are more important? Now, you can decide if you want to use authority to solve a problem.

# Problem to solve

Read the story about the lunchroom.  
Answer the questions on your Benefits  
and Costs chart. Then decide what to do.  
Use the ideas you learned. Tell the class  
what you decided to do and why.

## A Problem in the Lunchroom

All the children in second grade go to  
lunch at the same time. Some children



cut in front of others in line. Some will not even stand in line. It takes a long time for anyone to get their food. Some children do not have time to eat.

When the second graders leave, the lunchroom is a mess. There is trash on the floor. Food trays are left everywhere.

The principal of the school spoke to some children. He said, “I might hire an aide to work in the lunchroom. He or she can help solve the problems. What do you think?”

Maria said, “We won’t be free to do what we want during our lunch time.”

Leroy said, “But we can get our lunch faster and everyone will have time to eat. It is not fair when people cut in line.”

“It will cost money,” Maria said.  
“You will have to pay the aide.”

“We will be safer in the  
lunchroom. It will be  
cleaner, too. There will  
be more order,”  
Leroy said.

Maria said, “The  
aide might be  
mean to us.”

“You both have  
good ideas,” the  
principal said. “I  
have to decide  
what to do.”





# Benefits and Costs

What is the solution?

What might happen  
because of the solution?

Benefit?

Cost?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What would you do?

Why?

# Why should we know how to choose people to be leaders?

When Beth and her friends play, they choose leaders. All the children picked Sam to be the owner of the pretend store.

“OK,” Sam said. “I will tell you what to do.”

“All of you can help me make rules,” he said. “If someone breaks the rules, I will decide what to do.”

Many times we choose a leader for our group. We put her or him in a position of authority. This means we give the person the right to tell others what to do.

# How much authority should a leader have?

The children had picked Sam to be the pretend store owner. He was in charge of running the store.

Ronnie said, “Sam can count the money, too.”

“But you can’t make us carry heavy things, Sam,” Judy said.



“You can’t keep the money for yourself, either.” said Beth.

Beth and her friends gave Sam authority. They told Sam what duties he would have. A duty is something that he must do if he wants to do a good job.

They told Sam what powers he would have. Powers are things he may do because he was chosen to run the store.

They also told Sam the things that he may not do. These things are called **limits**.

**When have you picked someone to be a leader?**

**What did you say the leader may do? Why?**

**What did you say the leader may not do? Why?**

# Problem to solve

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All people with authority have limits on what they can do. Can you describe a limit for each of the following:

1. parent
2. babysitter
3. school principal
4. the president

**Can you name another person with authority?**

**What can that person do?**

**What limits does he/she have?**



# How can you decide what a person in authority may or may not do?

Sometimes we need to have a new position of authority. Sometimes we want to make a position of authority better. In both cases, we must decide the duties and powers of the position.

We have to say what the person in the position may do.

We have to decide the duties and powers of the position.

We do not want the person to have too many duties. The person might not be able to do everything.

We want the person to have enough power. If not, the person may not be able to do the job well.

We have to say what the person may not do. We want to limit the power of a person in a position of authority.

We want to be sure the person in the position cannot misuse his or her power.

We want to be sure the person cannot take away our rights.

Here are some questions that can help you plan a position of authority.

**What is the position?**

**Why is it needed?**

**What duties should the person have?**

**What powers does the person need?**

**What limits should the person have?**

**What are the strengths and weaknesses of the position?**

**Are there ways to know if the person is doing a good job?**

**Are people able to tell the person what they want or need?**

**Are the rules about what the person can and cannot do clear?**

**Are there too many duties?**

**Does the position have enough power?**

# Problem to solve

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Pretend you are a hall monitor in your school. What job do you want a hall monitor to do? What duties and powers would you give the person? What things would you not allow him or her to do? Use the ideas you learned. The Authority for Leaders chart will help you. Be ready to share your ideas with the class.



# Authority for Leaders

What is the position?

Why is it needed?

What duties does the person have?

What powers does the person have?

What is the person not allowed to do?



**What are the strengths and weaknesses of the position?**

Does it have enough power?

Are there proper limits?

Are there too many duties?

Are there ways to know if the person is doing a good job?

Are people able to tell the person what they need or want?

**How can we make the position better?**

## INTRODUCTION

Authority touches the lives of everyone in society. It affects parents, teachers, students, judges, legislators, and presidents. Some people might view authority as unnecessary, even antithetical to freedom and human dignity. Most people, however, see authority as essential to civilization and valuable to social existence. Americans have always displayed a distrust of authority while looking to authority for resolution of conflict and maintenance of order. Our Constitution clearly reflects this fundamental ambivalence. The Constitution provides for authority, but also limits its practice.

Since government is defined as people and groups with authority to perform certain functions in a society, it is important to understand the concept of authority and the related concept of power. An understanding of the difference between power and authority is essential for understanding whether people with power have the right to exercise it. An understanding of the necessity of authority and its usefulness in promoting agreed upon goals that benefit the individual and society is essential for the development of informed, competent and responsible citizens.

In the United States, the powers of government are limited to ensure that people in position of authority fulfill the responsibilities they have been assigned, serve the major purposes of government, and do not misuse or abuse the power they have been given. Limits on authority are seen as essential to the protection of the rights of individuals.

An understanding of the reasons for the necessity of placing limits on authority is essential if citizens are to control their government and make sure it fulfill its purpose.

NOTES  
FOR THE  
TEACHER

## LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces the study of authority. Students learn two very important concepts: authority, which is the legitimate use of power, and limited government, which is a cornerstone of our democracy. A series of short readings, questions, and problem solving activities help students analyze and apply these concepts. The students also learn that every time someone exercises authority there are consequences. Some consequences are benefits (advantages) and others are cost (disadvantages). Students learn some of the most common costs and benefits of authority. In the problem solving exercises students use the ideas of benefits and costs to decide whether to use authority to solve a particular problem. Students also learn the importance of examining and choosing people for positions of leadership.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this lesson, students should be able to

- explain the difference between authority and power without authority
- identify some problems that might arise from a lack of effective authority
- identify some important uses of authority in society.

- identify some benefits (advantages) and costs (disadvantages of using authority
- apply ideas of benefits and costs to decide whether to use authority in a certain situation.
- explain the need to limit the power given to a person in a position of authority

### MATERIALS NEEDED

The student lesson  
 Drawing paper and crayons  
 Benefits and Costs chart  
 Authority for Leaders chart

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Have students look at the illustration on page 1 of the lesson. To open a discussion ask them the following questions:

- *What, if any problem(s) do they see in the picture?*
- *What might happen as a result of this scene?*
- *What might have led to this scenario?*
- *How might they solve this?*

#### “What you will learn in this lesson”

Have students read the section and discuss the objectives of the lesson

### BUILDING VOCABULARY

#### “Words to learn”

Post the words to learn on the board or the vocabulary wall or have students copy them into an appropriate section of their notebooks.

### UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS

#### “What is authority?”

Have students read pp. 4-7 in their lesson. This section helps students understand that sometimes we do things because we make a personal decision to do them. Sometimes we do things because others tell us to do them.

The main thing for students to learn in this section is how to distinguish between power and authority. Power is telling others what to do and they do it. Authority is the right to use power. The right to use power can be derived from custom, law, moral principle, or consent. These are some of the sources of authority.

Sometimes people use power and do not have the right to do so. We call this using power without authority. It is important to know whether someone is exercising authority or using power without authority so that we can determine the legitimacy of a direction or order that the person is issuing. We can then decide whether to do what the person is telling us to do. It is important to protect our rights. In this lesson students learn about the usefulness

of having authority and that we have to limit a person's authority to prevent the abuse of power and to protect our rights.

After you check that students understand the definitions, ask them to respond to the questions at the end of the section on page 8. These questions help students relate the concepts to their own experiences.

- *When have you seen someone use power without authority?*
- *When have you seen someone use authority?*
- *Why do you want to know if someone is using authority or power without authority?*

## THINKING CRITICALLY

### “Problems to Solve”

In this exercise students apply what they learned about authority, power without authority and the sources of authority.

Have students work with a partner to solve problems 1–6. Review the instructions and then have the students begin their work.

After students have finished, ask them to share their responses with the class.

## APPLYING AND PRESENTING SKILLS FOR ASSESSMENT

### “Show what you know” (Optional Activity)

It can be used if time allows or can be assigned as a homework activity)

This is an assessment activity. Distribute drawing paper and crayons to each student. Ask students to draw two pictures. The first picture should show someone using power without authority. The other should show someone exercising authority. Review the instructions with the class. Ask students to share their work with the class.

## IDEAS TO LEARN

### “What are the benefits of authority?” “What are the costs of authority?”

This section helps students understand how authority is useful to society. Authority has several functions: it helps keep us safe; helps us share things in a fair way; helps us protect property; helps us settle arguments peaceably and fairly; helps us maintain order. Knowing these functions of authority helps students understand why we have rules and laws, and why we have people in positions of authority.

Students learn that while authority is useful, it can also bring problems, such as the abuse of power. Everytime someone uses authority there are consequences. Some of the consequences may be benefits. Benefits are good things (advantages) that happen, such as the problem gets resolved. Some are costs (disadvantages). A cost might be something we have to give up, such as time, money or freedom.

Read each function of authority and the example with the class. Then ask students to state something from their own experience,

for example: a rule about early or consistent bedtime helps to keep children healthy, the law against speeding for cars helps to keep us safe.

### PROBLEM TO SOLVE

In this exercise students apply what they learned about the benefits and costs of using authority to resolve a problem. Read the story “A Problem in the Lunchroom” with the class. The principal of a hypothetical school is contemplating hiring a person to supervise the lunchroom. The principal solicits the opinions of students before making a decision.

Use copies of the “Benefits and Costs” chart (found on page 17). Review the instructions for completing the exercise. You might want to have students work with a partner to answer the questions on the chart. After the students complete the exercise, have them share their responses with the class. Ask them to give reasons for their decision about hiring a person to supervise the lunchroom.

### IDEAS TO LEARN

**Why should we know how to choose people to be leaders?**

**How much authority should a leader have?**

Have students read these sections. The discussion should help students understand that when we create a position of authority we assign to the position certain duties and powers. We say what the person in that

position is allowed to do; we also want and need to protect our rights from abuse by people in positions of authority. To do so we place limits on the powers of the position. We say that the person occupying the position is not allowed to do certain things. Use the three questions at the end of this section to help clarify the concepts.

### PROBLEM TO SOLVE

To reinforce the concept of limitations on authority ask students to describe the limits for each of the positions of authority listed.

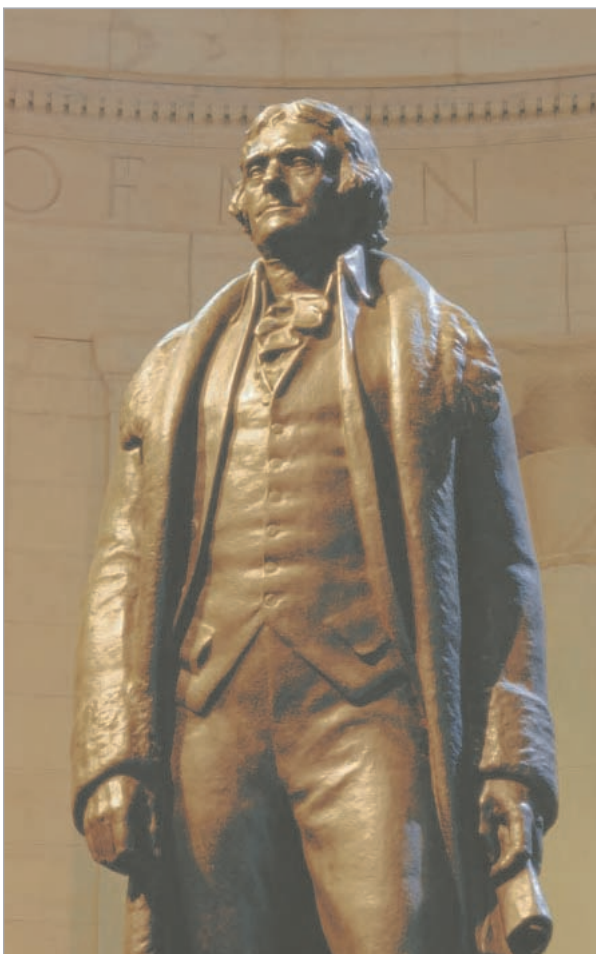
### IDEAS FOR YOU TO LEARN

**How can you decide what a person in authority may or may not do?**

Have students read the section. The discussion involves the importance of designing a position of authority. It also presents a set of questions useful in analyzing a position of authority.

### PROBLEM TO SOLVE

In this assessment exercise students apply what they learned in the lesson. They are asked to design a position of authority. Read the instructions for completing the exercise with the class. Use the “Authority for Leaders” chart on pages 26-27 to complete the problem.



This supplemental lesson celebrating the Constitution is adapted from *Foundations of Democracy* Series, Primary Level, Authority Lesson 1 and 2. This 1999 text was published by the [Center for Civic Education](#).

This Constitution and citizenship lesson is cosponsored by The American Association of School Administrators. AASA, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for over 14,000 educational leaders across America and in many other countries. AASA's mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. AASA's major focus is standing up for public education.

The [Center for Civic Education](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational corporation dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to the values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy.

The Center specializes in civic/citizenship education, and international education exchange programs for developing democracies. For additional information on the Center's programs and curricula, contact the [Center for Civic Education](#).

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5145 Douglas Fir Road  
Calabasas, CA 91302  
800.350.4223  
818.591.9330 FAX  
cce@civiced.org  
[www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org)