

FUN, GAMES, & OTHER LEARNING

Examine a game

START
HERE



1. **Have your students bring to class the rules of different board games.** How long are the rules? How complicated? Would you eliminate any rules? What rule changes might make the game better? Or worse? The balance between rules and play needs to be carefully tuned to keep the game both fun and fair.

2. **Ask if your students have local neighborhood games.** What are the rules of those games? (Note: With formal AYSO and Little Leagues, students have less opportunity to make up and change the rules.) Your students may have word, guessing, or empty lot games that have unusual rules.

3. **Use a deck of cards.** Have your class make up a game with only five rules. Then a game with 10 rules.

For all of the above, the object is to look at how rules and play interact. Most sports define playing fields, rules of behavior, and ways to score. This leaves the game to the players within defined limits. Democracy is much the same.

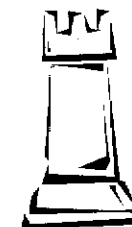
Have your students discuss: How many rules are too many? Do any of the rules get in the way of the play or fun? Who blows the whistle? Can the rules be changed? If so, by whom? How? When?

This is the process by which a democracy governs itself. Rules (limits) are needed for security, safety, transport, commerce, and the common good, so that people are free in a democracy.

Have a "used anything" drive

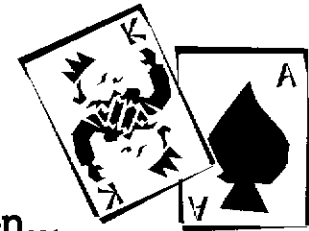
START
HERE

Books? Computer stuff? CDs/tapes? Have a common collection point? If left unattended, what happens to the material? Is it for charity? Is it for the school? Is it for profit? Do perceptions change about what happens to the material collected? Who contributes and who doesn't? Should everyone have to pitch in? Is conformity part of freedom in some weird way? How is the collected material protected? What happens to the collected material if it's not protected?



Play concentration... in a new way

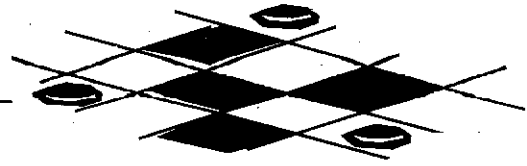
START
HERE



A deck of cards is dealt out facedown. The object is to find pairs, by turning over just two cards on each turn. Players need to remember which cards have been identified so that they can find a pair and remove it from the game. Your students can do this collectively or in small teams.

If one person (team) gets an advance peek at where some cards are, obviously it makes it easier to win. What if someone comes along and scrambles the cards or takes some away? Welcome to the lobster game.

"Lobstermen" (some of your chosen players) look at the cards (say, 13 cards) and put back some of the pairs they identify so they can find them later; they want to harvest their winnings at a proper time. Now, "draggermen" (some other chosen players) come along and sweep handfuls of the cards off the table, claim the random lot as theirs, and get some pairs in the process. This, however, makes matching pairs from the remaining cards impossible in some cases. While the draggermen may have scored some pairs in the process, they've damaged the "fishing" grounds. Who has a right to do what with the cards? Are the cards simply there for the taking? What's fair? This is the dilemma that faces those in charge of Maine's fishing grounds.



Track freedoms

START
HERE

Freedoms are never stolen, they're gradually eroded. Make a list of the freedoms that seem smaller (or less free) than they used to be. For example, freedom of speech is not as free as it once was on the Internet or in public where politically correct pressures are present.

What other freedoms might make the extinction list? Post your students' list of disappearing freedoms (like a list of animals that are becoming extinct). See if anyone is inspired to take up the cause and fight for a freedom before it disappears all together.

1. What you can't say in public or on the Internet, you may, ironically, be able to print (say) on a T-shirt.
2. What you can put on your front lawn.
3. What is in your textbooks.
4. Where you can skateboard, meet, or smoke.
5. What is an invasion of your privacy.

There are often clashes between safety concerns and freedoms. Recognizing how a freedom has been eroded is important, because often a freedom isn't noticed until it's gone.

Find second chances

START
HERE

If freedom to fail matters, where is there evidence of this in our country? Bankruptcy court? Divorce court? Parole boards? Community college remedial courses? Ask your class to list the second and third chances that are available in this country.

NOTES: In a democracy, freedom is more than parchment, speeches, or a voting booth—it's also an outlook. If people are free to take chances and fail, they're free to try again. This gives people the freedom and opportunity to succeed. A democracy is an unmapped course—wrong turns are necessary so that we, as a society, can chart our way toward progress.

EXAMPLES

1. Discuss what would happen if you gave no failing grades and no A's. Instead, everyone would simply get middling C+'s. Would that satisfy the good students? Please the poor students? Or would everyone prefer to be free to take their chances?

2. Discuss learning to do something, anything, new. How many stumbles and goofs does it take to learn a new play in a sport or to learn a new piece on a musical instrument? Now, imagine what happens after each new regulation or new piece of legislation.

3. Dictators are the only ones who are always "right." In a pluralistic, diverse democracy, someone is always wrong. The trick is to get it right more of the time for more of the people. This takes time, and failure is intrinsic to the learning process. Trial and error describes democracy as well as science does.

Earn freedom

START
HERE

Unfortunately, freedom seems free until it's missing—then it's worth everything. If you're confined without freedom, it's like being confined without air—you gasp for breath. Ask students what it would be like to have their freedom taken away (for example, if they were confined to a room for an extended period of time). Watch how fast freedom becomes an issue. What would students give up to be free? What "give-ins" or "give-ups" come to mind? What compromises will any of us make for freedom? (How would Patrick Henry answer this question?)

*"None who have
always been free
can understand
the terrible power
of the hope of
freedom to those
who are not free."*

—Pearl S. Buck