



LESSON PLAN

Our laws, our Constitution

Learning outcome 3.5

Discuss strengths and weaknesses of the democratic process

Learning outcome 3.7

Explain how laws are made, enforced and evolve over time

Students will learn

- ▶ About the need for rules and laws
- ▶ About the link between rights and laws
- ▶ About Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Constitution of Ireland

Materials

- ▶ Slide show
- ▶ Worksheet 1: The needs for rules and laws – one for each student
- ▶ Worksheet 2: Evaluating Bunreacht na hÉireann – one or two for each group
- ▶ Extracts from Bunreacht na hÉireann – one or two for each group

Assessment for learning/Key skills

- ▶ Group work
- ▶ Blue sky thinking
- ▶ Communicating
- ▶ Being creative



1 Recap

SLIDE 3

Recap the terms **Bill** and **Law** and refer to some Bills which are before the Oireachtas at present.

Look at some of the Bills that are before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

SLIDE 4

Recap the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Brainstorm rights which students may remember from previous lessons. Ask students to consider the link between rights and laws and establish the fact that laws are in place to protect people's rights.

2 The need for rules and laws

SLIDE 5

Show the video **The need for rules and laws**. The video ends with the question, "What would Ireland be like without rules and laws?"

Give each student a copy of **Worksheet 1: The need for rules and laws** (see page 5) and ask each student to complete it.

3 Think-Pair-Share

SLIDE 6

Invite students to share their thoughts in pairs and then share with the whole class in a discussion.

Summarise the students' ideas under the four headings on the slide.

4 Rights and laws

SLIDES 7-10

Draw links between the need for rules and laws and the rights included in the UDHR.

5 Introduction to Bunreacht na hÉireann

SLIDE 11

Show the video and/or Powtoon animation to introduce the basic facts about the Constitution of Ireland.

- ▶ Ratified by the people of Ireland in **1937**
- ▶ Comprises **50** Articles
- ▶ The Oireachtas may not enact a law that is **repugnant** to the Constitution
- ▶ Can be changed only with consent of the people of Ireland by a **referendum**

SLIDE 12

Discuss some of the amendments of the Constitution.

SLIDE 13

Show the extract from Article 12 of the Constitution and explain that the Constitution specifies the role of the President of Ireland.

6 Group work

SLIDE 14

Divide the class into five groups and give each group one or two copies of **Worksheet 2: Evaluating Bunreacht na hÉireann** (see page 6) and **Extracts from Bunreacht na hÉireann** (see pages 7-10).

Ask the groups to evaluate the extract(s) from the Constitution and summarise the outcome on the worksheet(s).

Note: Ten extracts from Bunreacht na hÉireann are provided. The first five relate to how Ireland is governed while the last five relate to citizens' lives.

7 Conclusion

Hold a concluding discussion using the following questions:

- ▶ How important is our Constitution?
- ▶ Why do you think Ireland being in a democracy is important?

Note: Alternatively you could assign the questions as homework.

→ Extension activities – explore the Constitution

Constitution of Ireland www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons.html

Constitution keywords

- ▶ Invite students to read the Constitution of Ireland and ask them to search by keyword for issues of interest to them, e.g. “children”, “family”, “education”.
- ▶ Discuss what the Constitution says about these issues.

Two truths and a lie

- ▶ Ask students to identify two Articles or amendments of the Constitution which they find surprising and make up one which is untrue.
- ▶ Ask them to present all three to the class and see if they can tell which one is a lie.

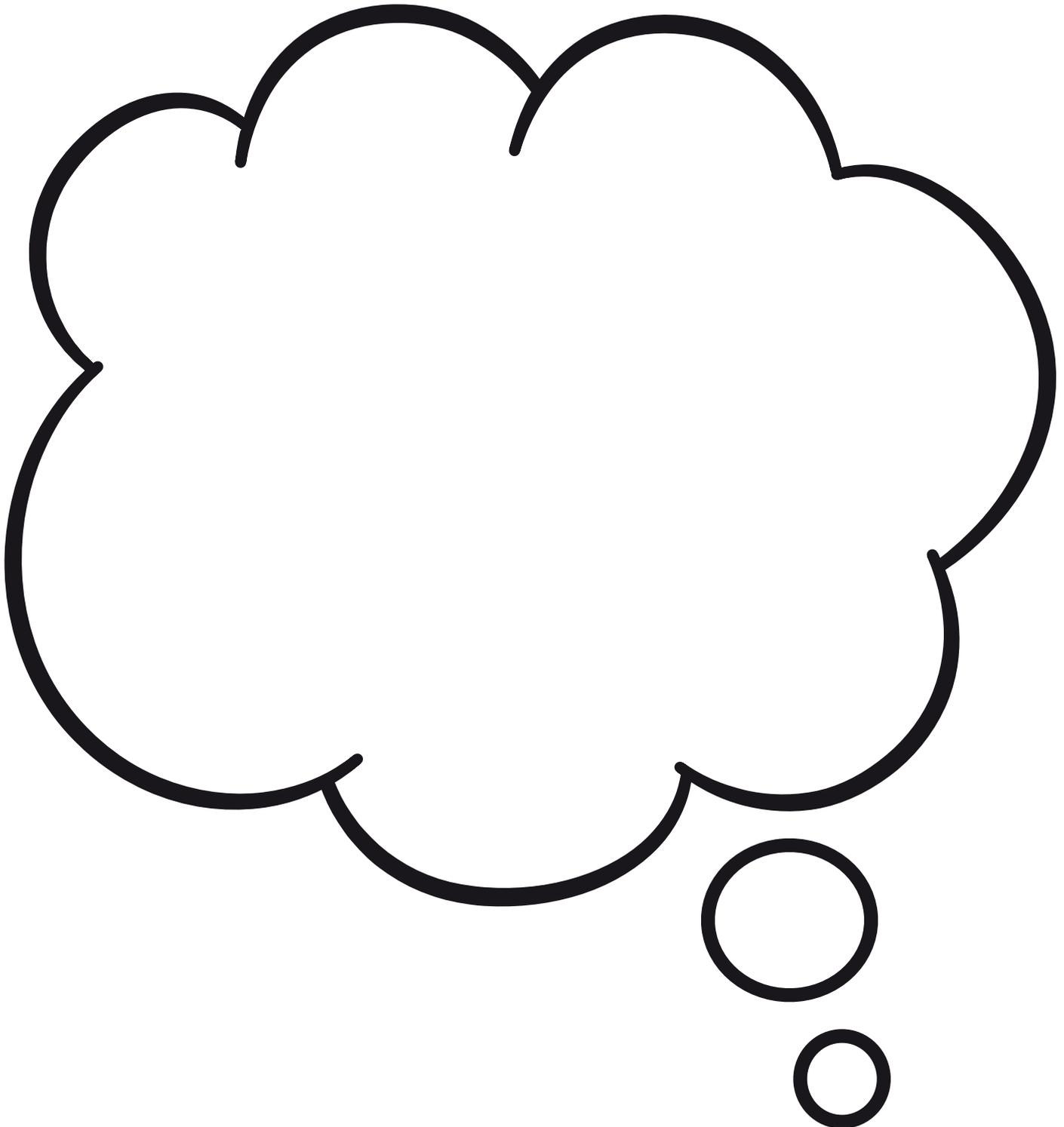
Example:

Article 7	The national flag is the tricolour of green, white and orange.	Truth
Article 28 3 1°	The President of Ireland may declare war.	Lie
Article 42 2	Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes.	Truth



Work sheet 1: The need for rules and laws

What would Ireland be like without rules and laws?





Work sheet 2: Evaluating Bunreacht na hÉireann

Article	
Subject	
What we agree with	
What we would change	

Article	
Subject	
What we agree with	
What we would change	

Extracts from Bunreacht na hÉireann

THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT - CONSTITUTION AND POWERS

Article 15

- 11°** The National Parliament shall be called and known, and is in this Constitution generally referred to, as the Oireachtas.
- 2°** The Oireachtas shall consist of the President and two Houses, viz.: a House of Representatives to be called Dáil Éireann and a Senate to be called Seanad Éireann.
- 3°** The Houses of the Oireachtas shall sit in or near the City of Dublin or in such other place as they may from time to time determine.
- 21°** The sole and exclusive power of making laws for the State is hereby vested in the Oireachtas: no other legislative authority has power to make laws for the State.
- 2°** Provision may however be made by law for the creation or recognition of subordinate legislatures and for the powers and functions of these legislatures.

GLOSSARY

Legislative authority/Legislature - organisation with the power to make laws

Subordinate - lesser

THE PRESIDENT

Article 12

- 1** There shall be a President of Ireland (Uachtarán na hÉireann), hereinafter called the President, who shall take precedence over all other persons in the State and who shall exercise and perform the powers and functions conferred on the President by this Constitution and by law.
- 21°** The President shall be elected by direct vote of the people.
- 2°** Every citizen who has the right to vote at an election for members of Dáil Éireann shall have the right to vote at an election for President.
- 61°** The President shall not be a member of either House of the Oireachtas.

GLOSSARY

Precedence - of more importance

Conferred on - given to

Extracts from Bunreacht na hÉireann [continued]

THE NATION

Article 1

The Irish nation hereby affirms its inalienable, indefeasible, and sovereign right to choose its own form of Government, to determine its relations with other nations, and to develop its life, political, economic and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions.

Article 2

It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.

GLOSSARY

Affirm – state publicly

Inalienable – not to be given away

Indefeasible – not to be lost

Sovereign – supreme

Entitlement – right

Affinity – natural understanding

THE GOVERNMENT

Article 28

- 51°** The head of the Government, or Prime Minister, shall be called, and is in this Constitution referred to as, the Taoiseach.
- 2°** The Taoiseach shall keep the President generally informed on matters of domestic and international policy.
- 61°** The Taoiseach shall nominate a member of the Government to be the Tánaiste.
- 2°** The Tánaiste shall act for all purposes in the place of the Taoiseach if the Taoiseach should die, or become permanently incapacitated, until a new Taoiseach shall have been appointed.
- 3°** The Tánaiste shall also act for or in the place of the Taoiseach during the temporary absence of the Taoiseach.
- 71°** The Taoiseach, the Tánaiste and the member of the Government who is in charge of the Department of Finance must be members of Dáil Éireann.

GLOSSARY

Domestic – relating to home

Nominate – choose

Incapacitated – disabled

THE REFERENDUM

Article 47

- 1 Every proposal for an amendment of this Constitution which is submitted by Referendum to the decision of the people shall, for the purpose of Article 46 of this Constitution, be held to have been approved by the people, if, upon having been so submitted, a majority of the votes cast at such Referendum shall have been cast in favour of its enactment into law.

GLOSSARY

Amendment – change

Enactment – process of passing a law

THE FAMILY

Article 41

- 11° The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.
- 2° The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State.

GLOSSARY

Fundamental – basic

Inalienable – not to be given away

Imprescriptible – not to be taken away

Antecedent – something which existed before

Superior – of greater importance

Indispensable – cannot be done without

PERSONAL RIGHTS

Article 40

- 1 All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law.
- This shall not be held to mean that the State shall not in its enactments have due regard to differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function.
- 21° Titles of nobility shall not be conferred by the State.
- 2° No title of nobility or of honour may be accepted by any citizen except with the prior approval of the Government.

GLOSSARY

Enactments – laws passed

Capacity – ability

Titles of nobility – e.g. Baron, Earl, Duke

Extracts from Bunreacht na hÉireann [continued]

RELIGION

Article 44

- 1 The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion.
- 21° Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen.
- 2° The State guarantees not to endow any religion.
- 3° The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status.

GLOSSARY

Homage - respect or reverence

Reverence - deep respect

Morality - right conduct

Endow - give

EDUCATION

Article 42

- 1 The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.
- 2 Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognised or established by the State.

GLOSSARY

Acknowledges - admits

Inalienable - not to be given away

LANGUAGE

Article 8

- 1 The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.
- 2 The English language is recognised as a second official language.
- 3 Provision may, however, be made by law for the exclusive use of either of the said languages for any one or more official purposes, either throughout the State or in any part thereof.

GLOSSARY

Provision - providing something

Exclusive - restricted to one group only
