

# Unit 1

## Learning to Choose

### LESSON 1

#### Freedom and Responsibility

**Objective:** To introduce students to the concepts of freedom and responsibility. To give students the opportunity to express opinions freely but courteously.

**Materials:** A copy of "Jimmy and Janie Like to Read" (attached), chart paper, markers, computers, access to the internet.

**Procedure:**

- Read the story *Jimmy and Janie Like to Read* to the class.
- Discuss the likes and dislikes of each reader.
- Work in cooperative learning groups to reread the story.
- Discuss and chart things that Jimmy likes/dislikes; the things that Janie likes/dislikes and the things the students may like/dislike.
- Have each group role play their own choices in front of their classmates.
- While students are role playing, graph the likes/dislikes of each group.
- E-mail another class and compare their likes and dislikes with your class.
- After all the graphing has been compared and e-mails exchanged, discuss with the students why each individual in a democracy is free to have his/her own opinion and to express it as long as they do so courteously and respect the rights of others.
- Discuss the rules Jimmy and Janie must follow. What gives parents, schools, parks, and libraries the right to make rules? What are the purposes of rules and laws? How do the students feel about all the rules? Do they each have the right to express their opinion if they do so courteously? If they did so out loud in a library where the rule was "quiet," would they be respecting the rights of others? Why? Why not?

Optional substitute: Dr. Seuss, *Oh The Places You'll Go*. (Don't miss the golden opportunity to point out that in America, people travel freely whereas some other countries keep their citizens as virtual prisoners.)

## *Jimmy and Janie Like to Read*

Jimmy is a curious boy with blonde hair and blue eyes. He is a second grader at Mountain Lake Elementary School. He has a cute neighbor who lives next door to him and her name is Janie. Janie is a quiet girl with dark brown hair and dark eyes. She is a second grader too. Jimmy and Janie carpool to school every day and enjoy playing together. Jimmy and Janie enjoy the same teacher at school, her name is Miss Cricker. Jimmy and Janie really like school even though there are lots of rules there. You have to walk in line a lot of the time and go very quickly if there is a fire drill. You can't talk unless you raise your hand for permission except at recess. Jimmy and Janie enjoy most of the subjects that are taught but their very favorite is reading.

Jimmy likes to read all kinds of books. His favorite books are about dinosaurs. He can tell you the name of every dinosaur, but he really does not like to read about snakes. Snakes scare him, but insects do not. He also likes to read about heroic people, adventures in frontier times, circus and zoo animals, science experiments, and traveling to different lands but he does not like to read about people being hurt.

Janie likes to share her books with Jimmy. She likes to read about great men who have been President. Perhaps she will be the first woman President. Janie does not like to read about violence. She likes to read about dogs, adventures in babysitting, adventures of children in other lands, and fairy tales from other lands, but she does not like to read about insects, especially bees, because she was stung once and she is allergic to bees.

Jimmy and Janie like to go to the library for books. The library has lots of rules; you may take out only four books at a time and you must pay a fine if you bring them back late. If you read in the library, you must be quiet and not disturb other readers.

When Jimmy comes home from school, he likes to have a snack. His favorite snack is a chocolate chip cookie but Janie likes to eat popcorn. After their snack, they go off on their bikes to the park where Jimmy climbs the slide and Janie swings on the swings. The park has rules, too, like "keep off the grass." The day is not complete until they both head home for dinner. Janie is having pork chops for dinner tonight. Jimmy would rather eat with Janie because at his house they are having sloppy joes. Janie goes off to bed without a peep at 8 o'clock so she will be refreshed for another big day, but at Jimmy's house the rule is 8:30.

"Good night. Sleep tight. Don't let the bed bugs bite," says Janie's brother. "The rule is no teasing," says Janie's mother. Jimmy and Janie may each choose one more story before they are tucked into their beds for a good night's sleep. What do you think they chose?

## LESSON 2

### No Rule Land

**Objective:** To discover why we need governments, or people and groups with the authority to make, carry out and enforce the rules (or laws) and to manage disagreements about them.

**Materials:** A carton, a package of clear plastic wrap and magic markers to create the knobs on a "TV set," drawing paper and crayons. (Note to teacher: the TV set will be used again for newscasts from "Our Town.")

**Procedure:**

- Cut out a "TV Screen" in the back of the carton. Be sure the screen is large enough for a child's head and shoulders to be seen. Cover the opening with clear plastic wrap and place the carton on its side on a desk or draped table so the "newscaster" can stand behind the "TV screen."
- Select teams of "newscasters" to broadcast what is happening today in "No Rule Land" where nobody knows which side of the street to drive on and there are no traffic lights or stop signs because there are no rules. There are no schools or libraries or highways or bridges because nobody has to pay taxes. The strong can take advantage of the weak because there are no rules and no police. There is no army or navy to defend "No Rule Land" because there are no tax monies with which to pay them. People can put their garbage any place they wish. There are no rules about when garbage must be picked up.
- After the "TV newscasters" have described the chaos taking place, ask the students to draw pictures of what happens when there are no rules.

**Discuss:**

What would happen in a school with no rules? Would students feel safe? Why is government necessary? What are some of the most important things governments do? What are the purposes of rules and laws?

(Note to teacher: The K-4 Content Standards of the New Standards for Civics and Education will be an invaluable asset to the teacher covering these lessons. The Standards can be ordered from the Center for Civic Education. \$14. Call 1-800-350-4223.)

### LESSON 3 Our Town

**Objectives:** To create an imaginary town where services and rules or laws are sometimes the responsibility of the town, sometimes the state, and sometimes the federal government.  
To discuss the division of power in our democracy.  
To vote for a name for our town.

**Materials:** A roll of wrapping paper or newsprint long enough to cover the width of the blackboard. Drawing paper, crayons, scissors, and paste. (Note to teacher: the "town" will become the backdrop for several lessons. Some teachers may wish to keep it going through the holiday season and allow the students to decorate their town.)

**Procedure:**

- Ask each child in the class to draw a building to place in "our town." Be sure there is at least one school, post office, police station, fire station, courthouse and stores. If possible, include a river, a highway (interstate), and a railroad and railway station in the town.
- Ask the students to cut out and paste the buildings in their town. When the town is finished, ask students to suggest possible names for it. List all the names on a chart. Tell the students that each child may choose or vote for just one name. When you read that name, all the students who would like it best will raise their hands to "vote." The name with the largest number of votes wins.

**Discuss:**

- Other possible ways to vote that the students know about. How do they believe the people in their town will vote? Who will make the rules for the town? Who will make sure the rules are obeyed? Will the only rules the town needs to be concerned about be town rules?
- Which rules does the US post office in the town need to be concerned about? If a train from far away goes through the town, will the railroad engineer be concerned only about the town's rules? If a boat that started its trip far way passes the town on its way down the river, will the captain need to know about any rules besides the town's rules? Will the citizens of the town pay taxes to the town? Why? Why not?
- What rules or laws would the students like to suggest for their town? List the ideas on a chart and save the chart for a future lesson.

(Note to the teacher: Use this introductory lesson to elicit the student's current ideas so that you can "start where the child is," and gradually build the concept of federal, state, and local laws that the citizens of the town must obey.)

LESSON 4  
The Rule of Men vs. The Rule of Law

**Objective:** To demonstrate the difference between living under the rule of law and living under the rule of men.

To find out why the purpose of the Constitution is to protect the rights of people and limit the rights of government.

**Materials:** Two cartons to create puppet stages, fabric for curtains, puppet clothes, old socks and /or balloons for making hand puppets, scissors, paste, colored paper, gold paper or aluminum foil for a king's crown, newspaper.

**Procedure:**

- Cut openings in the backs of the cartons to allow small hands to manipulate hand puppets. Make slots for the puppeteers eyes. Place a cardboard band a few inches high across the bottom front of the carton to conceal the manipulator's hands. Staple a string holding the curtains across the tops of the cartons.
- Create puppets for the casts of two shows; the first featuring a king and his subjects, the second a president and "we the people." If you choose to use balloons for puppet heads, rolled sheets of newspaper can make arms and legs. (Choose smaller sized papers.) Fold one roll over the other to create a V shape. Use a rubber band to attach the balloon to the newspaper body. Paste on colored paper eyes and a mouth. Add a crown for the king. Dress the puppet. The newspaper puppet operator places his fingers through slits in the newspaper rolls. (Note to teacher: It may be necessary to cut off the ends of the rolls to achieve arms and legs of the right size. You will use the puppet stages and the puppets for future lessons.)
- Select students for several traveling "(theater companies." The "theater companies" will create two traveling puppet shows. The first will depict a king who is an absolute ruler, with power of life or death over his subjects. Whatever he tells them to do, or not to do, no matter how unfair, must be obeyed for fear of their lives.
- The second show will depict a president and "we the people." Explain that in our democracy the president cannot make the laws, he can only suggest the laws he would like to see passed. /.(We the people" elect members of Congress to make the laws on our behalf. (We cannot all go to Washington and write the laws, but we can write to and/or visit our representatives in Congress and tell them what laws we would like to see passed.) The President can veto a law if he thinks it is a bad law, but even his veto can be overruled if most of the members of Congress disagree with him.

- Discuss how long it took "we the people" to win the power that kings and dictators used to have and still do have in some parts of the world.
- Ask students to be sure their puppet shows make clear the difference between living under the rule of men and under the rule of law.
- Show students a copy of the U.S. Constitution, "the highest law of the land."

Discuss with the students:

- What is the U.S. Constitution and why is it so important? In our democracy, the government is our servant and not our master. Even the President of the United States must obey the laws. The Constitution is the set of laws that "we the people" wrote to limit the powers of government; the people control government, and they have the right to change it and remove anyone working in government who is failing to fulfill his or her responsibilities.
- The Constitution is the highest law of the land. Nobody in the government can make laws that take away the rights the Constitution gives to the people. We are a government of laws, not of men. The Constitution states that the purposes of government are protection of the rights of individuals and to promote the common good.
- What are some of the people's rights?  
The right to:
  - freedom of expression
  - freedom of religion
  - freedom from unfair discrimination
  - freedom to vote
- (Reminder to the teacher: These are introductory lessons. You, and the teachers who follow you, will build upon them as time goes on. The important initial concepts for young students are that in our democracy we are all equal before the law and that the purpose of the Constitution is to protect the rights of the people and limit the rights of government.)
- Help the students make a tiny copy of the Constitution to place in the hand of the "we the people" puppets.
- Send the traveling "theater companies" to other classes to share their new knowledge about the Rule of Men vs. the Rule of Law.

## LESSON 5

### The Class Constitution

- Objectives:** To exercise critical thinking skills while choosing the rules for our class.  
To write a class constitution.
- Materials:** Dictionaries, chart paper, markers, 6th grade buddies, computer with access to the internet.
- Procedure:**
- Invite older students to help younger students write their class constitution. Discuss with both groups why there needs to be rules for our class just as there are rules for our nation. Ask older students to help younger ones look up in the dictionary such words as rule, principle, value, belief, freedom, rights, responsibility, consequence, diversity, majority, minority, and vote. Write the definitions on a chart. Hang the chart on the classroom wall.
  - Ask the younger students to suggest some of the rules they believe would make their classroom a good place to spend the day. What rights should their class constitution protect? How should the diversity of the students in the class – and their right to be different from someone else – be protected?
  - What other values or principles should their class constitution protect? e.g. if a child breaks a rule, should the consequences be the same for him or her as for any other child? Must each child respect rights of other students? of the teacher?
  - Explore with the students the consequences they believe would be fair ones if a rule is broken.
  - Explore the kinds of consequences that would not be fair. What limits do they believe should be placed on their class government? (e.g. a child who has broken a rule may not be physically hurt as a punishment).
  - Invite the older students to suggest possible rules and consequences for the class.
  - Encourage the younger students to debate whether or not the rules and consequences being suggested would be fair to each of them.
  - Allow the younger students to vote on each of the rules and the consequences proposed for their class constitution.
  - Ask each child to sign the constitution that has been approved by majority vote.

Discuss:

- Will those who voted with the minority still need to follow the rules? How can the citizens of a democracy work to get rules they disagree with changed?
- Send copies of the class constitution home to parents.
- E-mail your school principal or assistant principal and ask for a visit to your classroom so that the students may share what they have learned about the values and principles of a democratic society with their visitor.
- How do they relate these values and principles to their own experience in writing a class constitution and voting on it?

## LESSON 6

### Choosing a Class Monitor

Objective: To learn how to make wise choices.

Materials: Chart, markers.

Procedure: Explain that now that the class has a set of rules, or a constitution, a class monitor is needed to watch that nobody breaks the rules, or to report on a broken rule if necessary.

- Brainstorm the qualities and characteristics the students believe would make a good class monitor (e.g. fairness, courtesy, honesty, etc.). Record the ideas on chart paper.
- Invite class monitors from upper grade classes to come and tell the younger students what they do.
- Ask if listening to the upper grade monitors has given the students new information and new ideas for their chart.
- Ask the students to suggest, or nominate, members of the class they believe might make a good monitor.
- Ask each of the nominees if they are willing to be a candidate for monitor.
- Make a list of nominees who have agreed.
- Tell the students they will soon vote for class monitor but first they must learn more about how to make wise choices when they vote.

## LESSON 7

### Power and Authority

**Objectives:** To explore the difference between the power of authority and power without authority.  
To understand that authority comes from custom, law and the consent of the governed.

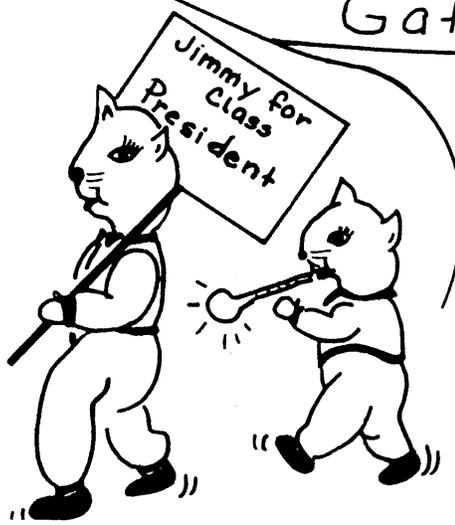
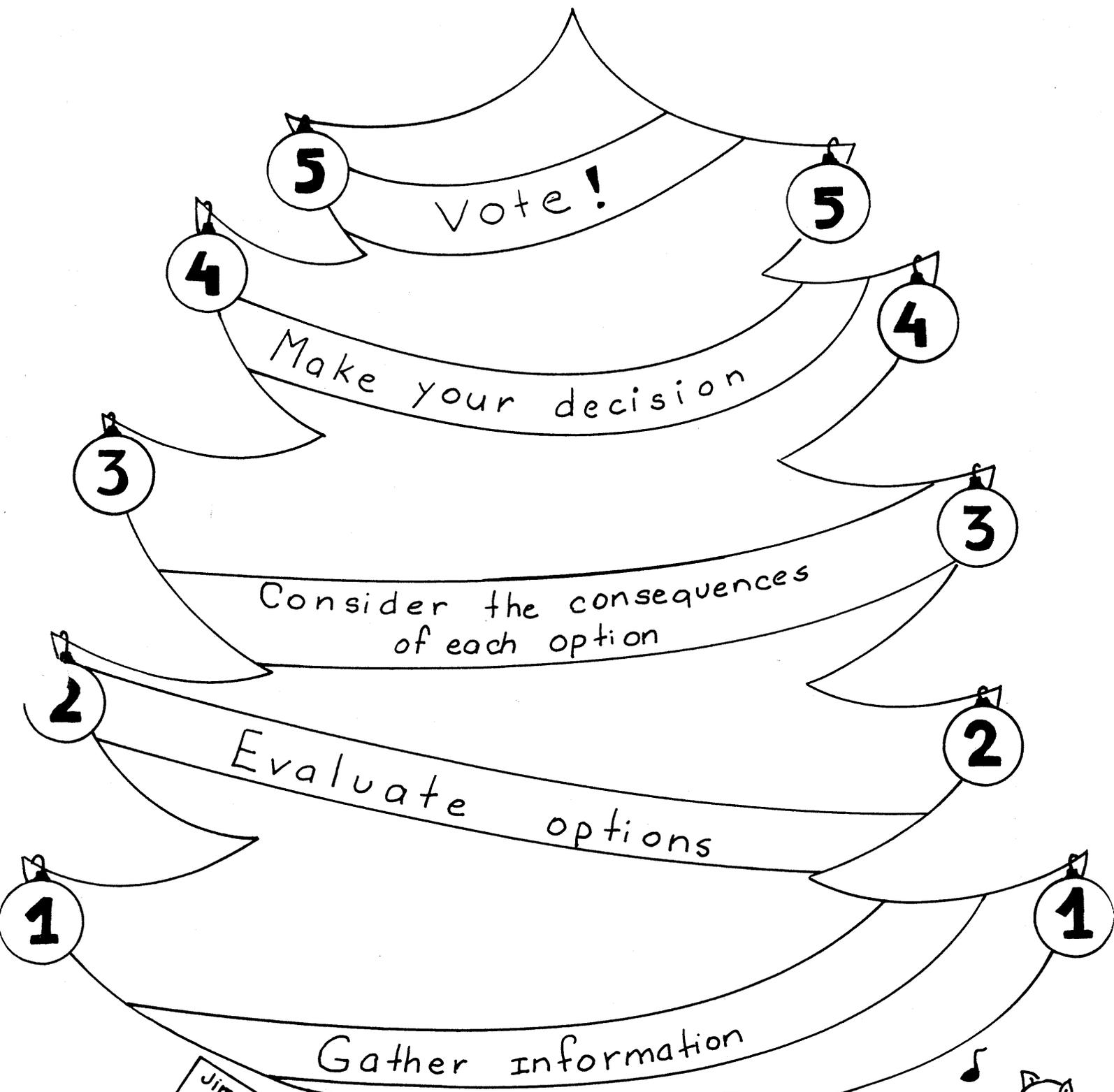
**Materials:** The puppet stages, a puppet dressed to look like a bank robber, a puppet representing a bully, puppets representing students and other citizens.

**Procedure:**

- Look up "authority" in the dictionary. Look up "power." How are they alike? How are they different?
- Discuss why parents, teachers and principals have authority. Where does the authority come from?
- If students vote to give another student authority, where will the authority come from?
- Identify examples of trying to use power without authority.
- Stage a puppet show to show examples of the misuse of power (e.g. a bully trying to force younger students to give him their lunch money, a robber trying to rob a bank, etc.).

**Discuss:**

- If an elected official used his authority to give good jobs to his friends and to members of his family, whether or not they were the best person for the job, would that be a proper use of power?
- If a traffic policeman gave a speeding ticket to people who were speeding but were not his friends, then let his friends speed by him without giving them a ticket, would that be a proper use of authority?
- If the class constitution has a rule that everyone in the class must (*choose a rule from the constitution*) but the class monitor reported only the people he didn't like if they broke the rule, would that be a proper use of authority?
- Stage additional puppet skits to show proper and improper uses of the power of authority.



## LESSON 8

### Making a Decision

**Objective:** To explore the steps of decision making that will allow us to make a wise choice about our vote for class monitor.

**Materials:** Worksheets for each student containing a "decision tree" that can be colored. (See student handout page.) Chart paper, markers, crayons.

**Procedure:**

- Hand out worksheets.
- Tell students they will be permitted to color and decorate their decision trees as they wish as soon as they have "climbed" the tree.
- Introduce the steps of decision making.

#### *Step 1: Gather Information*

- Explore with students what information they will need in order to vote for a good class monitor. (e.g. What does a monitor do? What powers and authority will we give the monitor? What kinds of students might make good monitors?)
- How can students get the information they need?
- Invite older students to visit the class and share information about what their class monitor does, and the kind of students they believe makes good class monitors.
- Discuss how political campaigns allow citizens to get information about and evaluate the candidates before they vote.

#### *Step 2: Evaluate Options*

- Tell nominees they will be given an opportunity to campaign before the class votes so that the voters will have enough information on which to base their choice.
- Ask the students to help you list the qualities they would like to see in a good class monitor.
- Make a class chart with the list of qualities the students suggest.
- Ask students to keep their own "charts" about each nominee during the campaigns. Has s/he convinced the voter s/he has the qualities that are important? Do the students believe they have enough information to make a decision?

*Step 3: Consider the Possible Consequences of Each Option*

- Ask students to help you list what they believe would be the consequences of a wrong choice. What might happen if they elected a bad monitor? Why do they need to have enough information before they vote? Should they vote for the most popular or the best looking nominee? Why? Why not? Should they vote for someone who likes to bully? Why? Why not?

*Step 4: Decision*

- Tell students they can make "a tentative" decision now but can change it until they vote. After eight weeks you will ask them to reevaluate their decision and tell you whether or not they believe the class made the right choice. (Look up "tentative" and "reevaluate" in the dictionary.)
- Allow students to decorate their decision trees and post the best looking ones as a permanent reminder of the steps of decision making.

## LESSON 9

### Voting for Class Monitor

**Objective:** To engage students in the election process as they choose a class monitor by campaigning with peers, older grade peers, teachers, administrators, parents, and grandparents.  
To give students the opportunity to register and to vote for class monitor.  
To engage students in cooperative learning to achieve a common goal.  
To involve parents in voter education.

**Materials:** Chart paper, markers, ballots, ballot box, pencils, poster boards, oak tag button-making paraphernalia, old cardboard rolls to make "microphones," T-shirts, alphabetical list of students' names to be used as registration forms, individual ballot cards made from index cards, polling booth for classroom (this can be another cardboard carton on a desk positioned to ensure privacy), ballot box (a covered carton with a slit in the cover), computers, access to the internet.

**Procedure:**

- Give the "candidates" an opportunity to campaign for class monitor. Invite older students to become the young "candidates" campaign managers. (Make sure that the teachers in the older grades are aware of the guidelines for selection a campaign manager, e.g., good grades, good role models, mature, etc.)
- Discuss the role of the campaign manager with both groups together. During the course of the next few days, have older students assist the younger students in creating speeches, posters, slogans, buttons, T-shirts, bumper stickers, "TV commercials" (to be presented on the class "TV set"), "brochures" with lists of campaign promises, and mock press interviews.
- Invite parents and grandparents to the class for the mock press interviews and campaign speeches.
- Allow the students who are not candidates or campaign managers to make "microphones" and role play reporters interviewing candidates on TV. Use black construction paper to cover old cardboard rolls (paper towel or toilet tissue). Use the "TV" the class previously constructed to present the commercials and conduct the press interviews. Encourage "reporters" to prepare their interview questions beforehand.
- Discuss the reasons for a secret ballot when you are voting for a person.
- Appoint one child in the class to serve as election judge.

- Have students sign their names in the registration column of the alphabetical listing that was made up earlier and state their names to the election judge. The election judge will hand them their index cards (voting ballot).
- Students will take their cards to the polling booth and mark their choice for class monitor.\*
- When they come out of the booth, students drop their cards into the ballot box without allowing anyone to see.
- Have older students count the votes and report the results to the teacher.
- Share the election results with the class.
- Discuss with students how they followed the steps of decision making to arrive at a decision about their vote.
- Share with students why losing one election can be the first step toward winning another.

(\*Note to teacher: If students are not yet able to read the candidate's names, candidates can be "color-coded" (e.g., red for Janie, blue for Jimmy, with each candidate wearing their large color-coded name tag as the voting proceeds). .