



The Office of Sheriff | Lesson Plan

What are the roles and responsibilities of a sheriff?

Students will understand the history, duties, and importance of the office of sheriff in the United States. They'll join Uncle Sam as he quizzes kid contestants about the topic and complete a fun follow-along worksheet.

Learning Objectives: Students will

- Explore the origin and history of the office of sheriff in the United States.
- Investigate the duties and responsibilities of a sheriff.
- Understand how sheriffs are chosen and the length of their terms.
- Recognize the importance of the office of sheriff in our society.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Law Enforcement:** People and agencies who make sure laws are being followed, investigate crimes, and make arrests.
- **State Constitution:** A set of rules that guides how a state operates.
- **Shire:** A term once used to designate what is now called a county in England.
- **Bailiff:** An officer of the court. In the United States, a bailiff acts as a kind of usher and security guard.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4

Academic Subject Areas: Political Science, Civics, America

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Office of Sheriff* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Office of Sheriff* (Click [Here](#))
- Online image(s) of fictional sheriffs from the American Wild West era

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Search online images of fictional sheriffs from the American Wild West era. Display the picture(s) on a screen. Talk about ways sheriffs have been portrayed in books and movies over time.
2. Initiate a discussion about the true role of sheriffs in present-day America.
3. Write "What do Sheriffs Do?" on the board.
4. Underneath the question, write students' responses to the question. Explain that you will return to the list at the end of the lesson.

Scan to watch episode:



5. As a class, talk through the definitions of each Key Vocabulary word.
6. Write the words *sheriff*, *plaintiff*, and *bailiff* on the board and ask students to point out what is similar. The *-iff* ending in these words signifies roles related to law enforcement and court duties, with origins in Old English and Old French words for officials who managed local law and order. This is a good way to remember that “sheriff” is spelled with two fs at the end.
7. Reveal that, through the upcoming video, students will learn more about the history, duties, and importance of the office of sheriff.
8. Give each student a copy of the “Street Smarts: Voting in the U.S. Worksheet” and display it on a screen.
9. Divide the students into small groups. Have groups work collaboratively to complete the worksheet answers they know.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented so that students may record correct answers on their worksheets.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, return to the answers written on the board from the Warm Up activity. Invite volunteers to come up and circle correct responses and mark through or erase incorrect guesses.
2. Quickly review a sheriff’s roles and responsibilities as presented in the video.
3. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

Don’t have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.