



## Making Laws

### Areas of Learning:

Learning for Life and Work: *Local and Global Citizenship*

Language and Literacy: *English with Media Education*

### Learning Intentions

**By completing the activities, pupils will have the opportunity to:**

- develop an understanding of the steps in the law-making process;
- discuss why we need laws and the safeguards that are in place to ensure fairness and equality;
- write and present a speech to persuade the class why/why not their Bill should be passed.

### Statutory Requirements:

The online and class activities will contribute to the following statutory requirements:

### Learning for Life and Work: *Local and Global Citizenship*

**Pupils should have opportunities to:**

- investigate the basic characteristics of democracy;
- investigate why rules and laws are needed, how they are enforced and how breaches of the law affect the community; and
- investigate an issue from a range of viewpoints and suggest action that might be taken to improve or resolve the situation.

### Language and Literacy: *English with Media Education*

**Pupils should have opportunities to become critical, creative and effective communicators by:**

- talking, to include debate, role-play, interviews, presentations and group discussions.

**Pupils should be able to:**

- communicate effectively in oral, visual and written formats (including ICT and the moving image), showing clear awareness of audience and purpose and attention to accuracy.





## Cross-Curricular Skills/Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The online and class activities will provide pupils with the opportunity to develop the following skills and capabilities:

|                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Communication</b>                                 | In the Follow-Up Activities, pupils have the opportunity to develop their talking and listening skills by creating an effective and persuasive argument in favour for, or against, their new law.                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making</b> | By developing a rationale for why a new law is needed, and predicting counter-arguments that may be used against the law, pupils will have the opportunity to develop their skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a line of reasoning; and</li> <li>• analysing multiple perspectives.</li> </ul> |



### Overview

The Making a Law activity in the **Years 8–10** section of the [Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service](http://education.niassembly.gov.uk) website gives pupils an opportunity to propose a new law for Northern Ireland. They think about the arguments for and against their Bill before attempting to pass it successfully through the various stages of consideration by the Northern Ireland Assembly.



The Follow-Up Activities develop the pupils' understanding of the function of rules and laws in our society and enables them to actively present their proposals for or against the Bill they have created.

Activity 1 focuses on Learning for Life and Work: *Local and Global Citizenship*, recapping on the starter/online activities and relating the knowledge gained to laws from the Apartheid era in South Africa.

Activity 2 develops on this knowledge from an English perspective, giving pupils the opportunity to write a speech to persuade the class why the Bill they have created should or should not be introduced.

### Starter Activity

In the online Making a Law activity pupils will be asked to come up with proposals for, and possible objections to, a new law. Before beginning the activity, make sure that pupils understand the function of rules and laws in our society, and are able to prepare arguments for and against a new law.

This activity complements Unit 9 of the Local and Global Citizenship Folder (CCEA, 2005), found under **Key Stage 3, Local and Global Citizenship** on the Northern Ireland Curriculum website at: [www.nicurriculum.org.uk](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk) Unit 9 looks at the subject of rules and laws. Use the activities described in this unit to lead into the Making a Law activity.

Alternatively, you could begin by leading a class discussion on rules and laws. Prompt questions could include:

- Why do we need laws?
- What might happen if we didn't have laws?
- Can a government pass any laws they want? For example, in a democracy, laws must not discriminate against minorities or deny people their human rights. The Northern Ireland Assembly can only make laws on matters that have been devolved from London. In the First Stage of the law-making process, it is part of the Speaker's role to decide whether the purpose of a Bill is within the Assembly's powers (concerns a devolved matter). The Bill is then sent to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to ensure that it meets human rights requirements. If everything is in order, the Bill is introduced to the house.
- Are there any laws that your pupils believe are unjust? (*Relate this to laws that affect the pupils personally – for example, parents or guardians are breaking the law if a child decides to stop going to school before the age of 16; it is illegal for shopkeepers to sell cigarettes to children under the age of 16; it is illegal to drive before the age of 17.*)

Divide the class into groups and give them one of the following topics. Ask them to discuss the effects of these problems and how they might be dealt with:

- Underage alcohol misuse
- Illegal downloading of films and music
- Dangerous driving by people under 21
- Littering
- Increases in household waste
- Cyber-bullying.





Then ask the groups to consider a law that could be introduced to help solve the problem and what would happen if someone breaks that law. They can come up with their own ideas in relation to problems they have observed in Northern Ireland, or you could provide them with one of the following examples:

|                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Underage alcohol misuse</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a 'naming and shaming' law that publishes the names and photos of children under 18 who are found drunk.</li> <li>• Force children who are caught drinking to attend school on a Saturday for substance abuse education.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Illegal downloading of films and music</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close internet accounts of repeat offenders.</li> <li>• Confiscate repeat offenders' computer equipment.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Dangerous driving by people under 21</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a driving curfew for drivers under the age of 21.</li> <li>• Raise the age at which you can sit the driving test to 21.</li> </ul>                                                                                                  |
| <b>Littering</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce litter collection community service for people who are caught littering.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Increases in household waste</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impose a €100 fine on households that produce too much waste.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Cyber-bullying</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ban bullies from social network sites.</li> <li>• Confiscate offenders' mobile phones and computer equipment.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      |

Each group must create a short argument or presentation that explains:

- why this law is needed;
- how the law will solve the problem they have identified; and
- how they would punish people who break that law, for example a fine, a prison sentence, community service, or other actions.

Ask each group to present their new law to the class and explain why it is needed. After each presentation ask the rest of the class to comment on whether they think the law and punishment are fair. Do they think any particular groups or individuals might object to the law?

Before starting the Online Activity, ask each group to make a list of the potential objections to their Bill, as they will need this during the activity.



## Online Activity

In the Making a Law activity in the **Years 8–10** section of the [Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service](#) website, pupils write their own Bill and attempt to pass it through the various stages of consideration by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

A progress bar will appear at the beginning of each stage to guide the pupils on their advancement through the activity. Rolling over each title in the progress bar will provide information about that stage. The stages to complete are:

- **First Stage:** After viewing sample Bills, pupils will fill in the name and content of their Bill before presenting it to the Speaker.
- **Second Stage:** Pupils must enter three arguments for and three against their Bill to proceed to the debating game.
- **Committee Stage:** Pupils must select appropriate witnesses to give evidence to the committee. Based on the evidence the committee receive, they will decide whether or not the Bill should progress.
- **Consideration Stage:** MLAs will vote 'Aye' or 'No' on the details of the Bill in the activity. It's the last chance to win support!
- **Final Stage:** This is the final vote to pass or reject the Bill by MLAs. If the pupils succeed, their Bill will become law.

Preparation using the Starter Activity should help the pupils think of ideas for their Bill and the arguments for and against it, required in the Second Stage of the Making a Law activity.

## Related Activities

The **Years 8–10** section of the [Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service](#) website contains other multimedia resources related to this activity:

### MLA for a Week

Get the bigger picture of what an MLA does in the week by taking on that role. As well as juggling a busy diary, other tasks to participate in include writing a speech, question time and press conferences.

### Inside Parliament Buildings

Navigate through the online tour to learn more about work at Parliament Buildings. Click on photos to see actual areas, for example the division lobby doors of the Assembly Chamber, featured in the Consideration Stage of the Making a Law activity.

### Who Decides What?

The Levels of Government activity will inform pupils of the areas in which the Assembly, UK Parliament and European Parliament can make laws.

## Follow-Up Activities

### Activity 1: Learning for Life and Work: *Local and Global Citizenship*

With the pupils, recap on the different stages the Bill goes through and how scrutiny at each stage ensures that the Bill is good and fair, for example:

- Before it is read, the Speaker has to decide whether the purpose of a Bill is within the Assembly's powers/ concerns a devolved matter and does not contravene any EU laws. The Bill is then sent to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, to ensure that it meets human rights requirements. If everything is in order, the Bill is introduced to the house.
- The Bill goes through the Committee Stage, where a report is made on it with the help of expert witnesses. The committee can suggest changes, called 'amendments'.
- The Bill is debated in the Assembly several times, so that MLAs can discuss whether it is fair and fit for purpose.
- The Bill must be voted for by a majority of MLAs before it can become law.

After discussing these safeguards, distribute the resource cards for Activity 9.7 from the Local and Global Citizenship resource (CCEA, 2005), found under **Key Stage 3, Local and Global Citizenship** on the Northern Ireland Curriculum website at: [www.nicurriculum.org.uk/](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/)

This activity asks pupils to look at laws from Apartheid-era South Africa. Ask pupils to read through the laws on the resource card and discuss why they are unfair: do they contravene any human rights, equality or EU laws?

### Activity 2: Language and Literacy: *English with Media Education*

After completing the Online Activity, ask pupils to imagine they are MLAs about to debate their Bill. Divide each group in two: one half of the group will write a speech in favour of the Bill, the other will write a speech against the Bill.

Remind pupils that the purpose of the debate in the Assembly is to make sure that the Bill is fair, is fit for purpose and does not contravene any human rights, equality or EU laws. Refer pupils to the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).

Ask pupils to write a speech persuading the rest of the class why their Bill should/should not be introduced. In their speech, they must demonstrate how the Bill fits/does not fit with the guidelines in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Pupils should be reminded to employ persuasive language, relevant rhetorical devices and an appropriate tone to convince their audience that they are right.

Give the pupils a set time for their speech, depending on their previous experience of presenting to an audience.

When pupils have completed their speeches and are happy that they have had enough practice in presenting within the time limit, allow them to deliver their speech to the class.