



## Summer Assignment 2022 Honors U.S. Government and Politics (*Grade 12*)

**Directions:** This webquest makes use of the website, Democracy Web, and walks students through the concept of “Rule of Law.” They will use the web site to learn the definition of rule of law as it applies in the United States and under international law. Then, they will use the site to compare nations that are ranked as “free, partly free, or not free” according to the definitions of rule of law.

**Academic Integrity:** All work should be completed independently and without the assistance of unapproved resources. Any work violating academic integrity will be subject to a “0” and any additional consequences as outlined in the Knox Academic Integrity Policy attached to this assignment.

**Due Date:** Your work is due the first day of your (course name) class. All late work will be subjected to a grade reduction or penalty as outlined in the course syllabus and copied below:

*All major assignments not submitted on the due date will face a 10% deduction of max points per day for up to five (5) days and up to a 50% deduction.*

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this assignment, please contact the History Department Chair, Mrs. Mandia, at [kmandia@knoxschool.org](mailto:kmandia@knoxschool.org) or the Dean of Academics, Mrs. Pergola, at [dpergola@knoxschool.org](mailto:dpergola@knoxschool.org).

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**The RULE OF LAW** is at the heart of our American democracy, yet it is something that is hard to define and often hard for students to comprehend. The “Rule of Law” is the principle or idea that every citizen is governed by the same laws, and that those laws are applied through a fair and equal judicial process so that disputes within society can be resolved fairly and peacefully.

It is the faith we have in and to the rule of law that allows us to live in a civil society. Living in the United States, we know that everyone’s rights will be respected, and that each of us is guaranteed liberty and equality of opportunity. However, this rule of law does not exist in all places. In comparing our nation with other nations (where a strong rule of law does not exist), students can better grasp the role of the government, and especially the courts and judicial system. Students can begin to gain a greater understanding of the role that the rule of law plays in preserving democracy.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Ours is a government of liberty, by, through and under the law. No man is above it, and no man is below it.” This statement embodies the idea of the rule

of law. Government must seek to make laws that are the same for all citizens. The courts and judicial process then ensure that everyone is treated in the same way, that we are all accountable to the same laws, and that we can rest assured that our fundamental rights will be protected. This is the foundation of the rule of law in the United States.

In a democracy, the power of the government comes from the people. People entrust the government with power and in turn the government protects them. By creating a rule of law, the government puts into place a system of laws (and people to enforce and interpret these laws) that offers protection to its citizens. By applying those laws to everyone in a fair and just way the government gains legitimacy. When we as citizens deem our government to be legitimate, we are more likely to support it, and to follow the laws established for us.

Democracy Web provides some basic guidelines for defining the rule of law that will help to clarify the point. The site points out that there is “no set definition” for the term “rule of law” which encompasses “all its practices”. The authors of the web site defer to Rachel Kleinfeld Belton, who identifies five characteristics or defining principles of the rule of law<sup>1</sup>

**1. a government bound by and ruled by law;**

Example: A government bound by and ruled by law: In the United States, the U.S. Constitution is the “supreme law of the land,” and not only explains how our government is organized but defines its powers and limits. Similarly, each of the states has a constitution, thus on all levels our government is bound by and ruled by law. Government is bound by the laws, which it must follow, but so are the people. If we break the law, we can be held accountable, thus we are “ruled” by the law.

**2. equality before the law;**

Example: The principle of equality before the law can be found in the Declaration of Independence. It is also embodied in the Bill of Rights which, in defining the basic rights and civil liberties of all American citizens, helps to ensure that they can be applied equally to all. If a person or group is denied rights, or not treated as an equal, they can use the courts to rectify the situation.

**3. the establishment of law and order;**

**4. the efficient and predictable application of justice; and**

**5. the protection of human rights**

<sup>1</sup> Belton, Rachel. “Rule of Law, Essential Principles,” on Democracy Web. July 24, 2012.

<http://democracyweb.org/rule/principles.php>

## **The Rule of Law WebQuest Directions**

The following WebQuest will take you to several web sites and will help you to define the principle of the “Rule of Law.”

**FIRST** – Go to web site for the *Judicial Learning Center*.

<http://judiciallearningcenter.org/law-and-the-rule-of-law/>

Scroll down to find *The Rule of Law* Answer the following questions:

1. I would find the words “Equal Justice Under the Law” engraved on the front of the \_\_\_\_\_ building in Washington, D.C. What do the words “Equal Justice Under the Law” mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In the U.S.A., the rule of law means that every \_\_\_\_\_ is governed by the same law, and that a fair and equal \_\_\_\_\_ exists to apply that law, and settle disputes that arise amongst members of society.

3. Rule of law helps us to maintain a civil society, where all the citizens are guaranteed \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of opportunity.

4. What American statesman said, “Ours is a government of liberty, by, through, and under the law”?

5. In the U.S.A, everyone is held \_\_\_\_\_ to the same laws.

**NOW** – Move on to **Democracy Web** at [www.DemocracyWeb.org](http://www.DemocracyWeb.org).

Click “Study Guide,” then select “Rule of Law” from the drop-down menu. This will take you to a page titled “Rule of Law: Essential Principles.” Or, use this link

<http://democracyweb.org/rule/principles.php> to go directly to the page.

**Refer to the section *A Necessary Accompaniment for Democracy*:**

1. This section tells us that the use of \_\_\_\_\_(1A) power is considered \_\_\_\_\_(1B) to the rule of law.

2. Use an online dictionary – and look up the words you used to answer in 1A and 1B. What do these words mean?

**1A** – definition:

**1B** – definition:

3. Based on these two definitions, what do you think that the first sentence in this section means?

4. According to this section, it is the \_\_\_\_\_ limits on power that require people to adhere to (or follow) the law.

5. The point is made that the rule of law can be defined as the “subjugation” of state power to the nation’s constitution and laws. This means that the government (state) must follow the national constitution and law of the land. In a democracy, the government abides by the law; it is not above it. In this way, the \_\_\_\_\_ becomes the “supreme” check on political power and helps to make sure that the government cannot use its power against our rights.

6. Without the regulation of state power by a system of laws, procedures, and courts \_\_\_\_\_ could not survive. Why do you think this might be true?

7. One of the key principles embodied in the rule of law is that the law protects the majority from the arbitrary power of the government or state, while at the same time making sure that the rights of the \_\_\_\_\_ are protected as well.

**Refer to the section *The Rule of Law: Contrasting Principles*:**

1. Most of our American tradition of rule of law comes from an \_\_\_\_\_ legal tradition (as in from England/Northern Europe).

2. Based on what you know of American history, why might this be true?

3. Not all societies have the same ideas about the rule of law, nor do they all follow the same legal traditions or principles. This section gives you the example of the American and British principles of “\_\_\_\_\_ until proven \_\_\_\_\_” and “the right to not \_\_\_\_\_ yourself,” and the “right to a trial by \_\_\_\_\_,” which are embodied in the legal systems both the U.S.A and Great Britain.

4. Most of Europe follows a \_\_\_\_\_ legal tradition, which does not operate by any of these tenets. *Therefore, we can assume that not all nations view the rule of law the same way, or apply legal principles and rights the same way that we do here in the United States.*

**Refer to the section *The Rule of Law: Common Definitions***

1. This section points out that having a rule of law is important for any democracy. Even with a rule of law in place, there can be limitations placed on people’s rights and everyone might not be treated equally. Even in nations with a strong rule of law and a clear legal and judicial process there can be “deviations” from the principles of that rule of law. List the two examples of this from American history that are mentioned in this section:

Example 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Example 2 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Both of these problems have been dealt with in the United States in many ways; one via the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation, and the other by the Civil Rights Movement. What might this tell us about the rule of law in the United States in general?

3. In this section, Ms. Belton identifies five basic principles that most definitions of rule of law have in common. They are:

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

E. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Using the list above, can you think of an EXAMPLE FROM THE UNITED STATES for each one? In other words, where do you see these things in our country?

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B.

C.

D.

E.

5. Ms. Belton also notes that in the United States and the Western (European) tradition, we tend to include the separation of \_\_\_\_\_ and the state as a basic constitutional principle.

Refer to the section *Institutions of the Rule of Law*

1. In this section Ms. Belton defines the institutions within society that help us to achieve the rule of law (or which help to ensure that it remains in place). These are:

A.

B.

C.

2. Using the list above, can you think of an EXAMPLE FROM THE UNITED STATES for each one? In other words, where do you see these things in our country? In your state? In your city?

A.

B.

C.

3. Ms. Belton notes that without these institutions the rule of law might break down, and people might lose respect for the government and laws. Why do you think this would be dangerous?

Refer to the section *The Will of Society*

1. In this section, Ms. Belton notes that one factor needed to achieve the rule of law is the “will of society” to enforce the basic principles of equality, fairness, and justice. Read the rest of this section and briefly describe what it means by the “will of society.”

**NOW** – Use the TABS at the top of the page to go to the sections on **GERMANY**, then **SINGAPORE**, and then **SAUDI ARABIA**. For each, scroll down and read the section on **RULE OF LAW**. Then answer the following questions:

1. After reading about the rule of law in these three places, which seems the **MOST** like the United States? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think this is so?

2. Which of the nations is **LEAST** like the United States, or seems to have the most challenges to the rule of law? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think this is so?

3. Look under “*elements of law*” in the *Saudi Arabia* tab. What common actions does law prohibit in this nation that most Americans view as personal freedoms?

4. Stay in this section. What does it tell us about the *rights of women in Saudi Arabia*?

5. Can “rule of law” truly exist if the laws and rights given to citizens are not given to all citizens equally (as in men and women, people of all races)? Why do you think this?

### **Map of Freedom: Comparing the Rule of Law, Nation by Nation - Directions**

At this point, you should have some understanding of the “Rule of Law.” This is the idea that nations must have a system of law that is applied equally to all citizens, by a justice system that is fair, for democracy to exist. Today, not all nations have a rule of law, nor are all nations democratic.

For this activity, you will **choose 2 nations** to compare with the United States. You will look at how/if a rule of law exists in your nations of choice, and at how they are the same or different from the United States.

**FIRST** - Go to the *Freedom Map* on the *Democracy* Web page at [www.DemocracyWeb.org](http://www.DemocracyWeb.org). Click "*Map of Freedom*"

Or, use this link <http://democracyweb.org/new-map/> to go directly to the page.

**The Freedom Map** has the United States in **GREEN**, meaning it is a **FREE** nation:

- It lists the U.S.A as one of the world's longest surviving democracies.
- It points out that Americans have a wide degree of religious freedom.
- It also points out that America's limited government is founded upon principles like separation of powers, which ensures that no branch or part of the government can become too strong or threaten democracy.
- It also points out that the U.S.A is a federal system in which the national government has power, but so too do the states. This ensures that powers are divided and limited, and makes tyranny less likely.

**YELLOW** nations on the map are those that are considered to be **PARTLY FREE**. Click on a **YELLOW** nation:

What nation did you choose?: \_\_\_\_\_

What number is this nation given for **POLITICAL RIGHTS**? \_\_\_\_\_

1\* = highest and reflects the MOST freedom –

7\* is the lowest and reflects the LEAST freedom. What number is this nation given for

**CIVIL LIBERTIES**? \_\_\_\_\_

1\* = highest and reflects the MOST freedom –

7\* is the lowest and reflects the LEAST freedom.

Click on "**FREEDOM IN THE WORLD REPORT**" and find the section on Political Rights and Civil Liberties. Read this section and summarize the challenges faced by this nation in the space below:



How might this nation meet some of these challenges, or, what might need to change in this nation for the people to gain more freedom?

**RED** nations on the map are those that are considered to be **NOT FREE**. Click on a **RED** nation:

What nation did you choose?: \_\_\_\_\_

What number is this nation given for **POLITICAL RIGHTS**? \_\_\_\_\_

1\* = highest and reflects the MOST freedom –

7\* is the lowest and reflects the LEAST freedom.

What number is this nation given for **CIVIL LIBERTIES**? \_\_\_\_\_

1\* = highest and reflects the MOST freedom –

7\* is the lowest and reflects the LEAST freedom.

Click on “**FREEDOM IN THE WORLD REPORT**” and find the section on Political Rights and Civil Liberties. Read this section and summarize the challenges faced by this nation in the space below:

How might this nation meet some of these challenges, or, what might need to change in this nation for the people to gain more freedom?

**NOW** – Go back to the Map of Freedom once more for some general questions.

1. In what region of the world do you see the greatest amount of **RED** on the map? (These are nations which have great challenges to freedom.)

2. Can you think of reasons that these parts of the world might have more challenges than the nations found in the **GREEN** portion of the map? (*Green* nations have the **MOST freedom.**) You may want to consider things like geographic location, history, etc.
3. If you were a member of Congress or President of the United States (one of the freest nations of the world), what could you do to promote the rule of law and democracy in some of the least free nations?

Why might you want to do this?