

This lesson by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education was made possible with funding by the Arizona Supreme Court.

2026 Arizona Law Day
How has the United States Changed from 1776 to Today? Lesson Plan
Grades 6-8

Objectives: Students will...

- ✓ Analyze how life in the United States has changed since 1776.
- ✓ Collaborate to categorize major events by historical time period.
- ✓ Research a law or right that has evolved since 1776 and gather credible information.
- ✓ Create a slideshow presentation that clearly communicates how their chosen law or right has evolved.

Materials:

- ✓ Slide deck
- ✓ Technology to display slide deck (e.g. projector)
- ✓ Paper (1 per pair)
- ✓ Writing utensil (1 per student)
- ✓ Whiteboard and markers (1 for teacher)
- ✓ Laws and Rights Strips (1 set per pair)
- ✓ Paper clips (to keep sets of strips together)
- ✓ Technology device (e.g. Chromebook; 1 per student)
- ✓ Internet and access to slideshow software (Google Slides, PowerPoint, etc.)

Preparation: Prior to the lesson...

- ✓ Print/cut Laws and Rights Strips and paper clip into sets
- ✓ Gather remaining materials (paper, writing utensils, technology devices)
- ✓ Prepare slide deck for presentation

Timeframe: Two 60-minute class periods

1. Divide students into pairs and distribute **paper** and **writing utensils** to each pair.
2. Ask the class, "How has life in the United States changed since 1776?" Utilize the **slide deck**. Have students discuss with their partner and write ideas down on their paper.
3. Call on students to share ideas they discussed with their partner. Record ideas on the **whiteboard**.
 - a. *Answers will vary: Population growth, urbanization, expanded civil rights, technological advancements, industrialization, improved education and healthcare, expansion of voting rights*
4. Distribute a set of **Laws and Rights Strips** to each pair.
5. Instruct students to work together to arrange their strips into four categories for which century they think it belongs: 1700s, 1800s, 1900s, or 2000s.

6. After groups have finished arranging their strips, use the slide deck to go over the correct answers.
 - a. Before revealing the answer, instruct students to use their fingers to show a number one if they think the answer is 1700s, two for 1800s, three for 1900s, or four for 2000s.
 - b. Have pairs make corrections to their strips as needed.
 - c. Continue in this manner until all have been reviewed.
7. Display the “Evolution of a Law/Right” directions slide and explain the project: Pick a law or right that has evolved significantly since 1776. Create a slideshow presentation explaining how it has evolved and the impact it has had on American society.
 - a. Each student will create their own slideshow.
 - b. Slideshows should be 5-10 slides.
 - c. Everything in their presentation should be written in their own words (they should not copy/paste or use AI).
 - d. They should keep track of the websites where they find information and pictures and put the links on a “Works Cited” slide at the very end of their presentation.
 - e. Optional: Limit sources to websites that end with .edu or .gov. Adding “site:.edu” or “site:.gov” to the end of a Google search limits your results to websites with those endings.
8. Ask students to brainstorm some potential topics with a shoulder partner.
9. Call on students to share ideas and record them on the whiteboard. Add additional ideas if needed.
 - a. *Possible responses: voting rights, civil rights, due process, religious freedom, freedom of speech, health and safety regulations, women’s rights, child labor, education*
10. Distribute a **technology device** to each student.
11. Optional: Let students know what presentation software you would like for them to use (Google Slides, PowerPoint, etc.)
12. Give students time to decide on a topic and begin researching. Walk around and assist as needed.
13. Debrief Day 1 by calling on a few students to share the topic they selected and one interesting fact they found during their research.
14. On Day 2, remind students of the expectations for their slideshow presentations (outlined in step 7).
15. Distribute a **technology device** to each student.
16. Give students time to research and finish creating their slideshows. Walk around and assist as needed.
17. Debrief by calling on volunteers to share the topic they chose and briefly discuss how it has evolved since 1776.

**To enter student presentations into the 2026 Arizona Law Day Contest, visit lawforkids.org/contests/az-law-day-contest. They could win an iPad!*

This lesson by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education was made possible with funding by the Arizona Supreme Court.

2026 Arizona Law Day
How has the United States Changed from 1776 to Today? Lesson Plan
Grades 6-8 Standards Alignment

6th Grade

- ✓ 6.SP1.3 — Classify historical events as examples of change and/or continuity.
- ✓ 6.SP1.4 — Evaluate the significance of past events and their effect on students' lives and society.
- ✓ 6.SP3.4 — Evaluate the credibility and usefulness of sources (author, date, purpose, etc.).
- ✓ 6.SP3.7 — Construct and present explanations using reasoning, sequence, examples, and details.
- ✓ 6.C2.1 — Analyze beliefs, experiences, and perspectives underlying civic issues.

7th Grade

- ✓ 7.SP1.2 — Classify historical events as examples of change and/or continuity.
- ✓ 7.SP1.3 — Evaluate the significance of past events and their effect on students' lives and global society.
- ✓ 7.SP3.5 — Evaluate the relevance and utility of sources using author, date, audience, and purpose.
- ✓ 7.SP3.7 — Construct and present explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details.
- ✓ 7.H3.3 — Trace how individual rights, freedoms, and responsibilities have evolved over time.

8th Grade

- ✓ 8.SP1.2 — Classify a series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.
- ✓ 8.SP1.3 — Evaluate the significance of past events and their effect on students' lives and society.
- ✓ 8.SP3.5 — Gather relevant information from multiple sources while evaluating origin, authority, context, and corroboration.
- ✓ 8.SP3.7 — Construct and present explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details.
- ✓ 8.H3.1 — Explain how and why civil, social, and political movements changed the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries.