

Intermediate 3-5

By Jeanne Wray

Pledge of Allegiance Or I Pledge a Lee Gents

Objectives: Students will:

1. gain understanding of the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. compare the Texas Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Pledge of Allegiance
3. analyze a Supreme Court case involving the Pledge of Allegiance.

TEKS: SS 2.14 (C), 3.10 (A), 4. 17 (C), 5.18 (C), 5.25 (B), LA 3.8 (C), 4.6 (C), 5.6 (C)

Materials Needed: Dictionaries, thesauruses, “I Pledge a Lee Gents” overhead and copies, strips containing phrases from the U.S. and Texas Pledges, case summary, *West Virginia v. Barnette*

Vocabulary: Supreme Court, justice, liberty, pledge, allegiance, republic, indivisible

Teaching Strategy:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students to read “I Pledge a Lee Gents ” from the overhead. Ask students if they recognize it. Some may say it sounds like the Pledge of Allegiance. Ask students to recall when they first learned to say the Pledge, to describe the overall meaning of the Pledge, and why it is important.
2. Express concern that not all young children understand the words when they first learn it. In fact, sometimes they have it totally wrong, as in the example of “I pledge a Lee Gents.” (Optional: Make copies of “Lee Gents” and ask students to illustrate Lee Gents and the flag of the Night and Skates of America on the bottom of the page.)
3. Divide the class into 6 groups. Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary, each group of students will simplify one of the words of the Pledge, so that it can be better understood by children. (“How would you reword it so children could understand it more easily?”) Possible words to look up include *pledge*, *allegiance*, *liberty*, *justice*, *republic*, and *indivisible*.) Allow work time, then ask each group to announce the replacement word, compiling all responses into one simplified Pledge on the overhead.
4. Lead students in the Texas Pledge of Allegiance. Ask students to notice similarities and differences in the Texas Pledge of Allegiance and the U. S. Pledge of Allegiance. Explain to students that you have prepared strips of paper on which the phrases of the two pledges are printed.(attached) Due to the fact that they have gotten mixed up, you need help sorting them. Distribute the strips at random. Ask students having phrases of the Texas Pledge to line up in order on one side of the room, and students having phrases of the U. S. Pledge to line up in order across from the first group. After students have lined themselves up correctly, each group will say the pledge they are holding. Ask students to notice words and/or phrases that are alike. Which are the same? Which are almost the same? How does the meaning of each compare?

Extension:

1. Lead students in a discussion about the Pledge by asking:
 - *Should all students say the Pledge?
 - *Why is it important?
 - *What does it mean when we say the Pledge?
2. Introduce *West Virginia v. Barnette* by reviewing facts of the case using case summary handout.
3. Assign each student a partner. At the top of a piece of paper, students will mark two columns. "Why they should have to say the Pledge" and "Why they should not have to say the Pledge."
4. Each pair of students will record several reasons for each side of the issue.
5. Each pair of students will present arguments for both sides, with the teacher compiling a class list of arguments on the overhead.
6. Inform students that some justices of the Supreme Court voted for the school and some for Barnette. Ask students to vote by posing the following question: "If you had been on the Supreme Court that day, would you have voted for the school or for the Barnette children?" Tally their votes and announce the results.
7. Inform students of actual Supreme Court decision and reasoning behind the decision. Invite class discussion of the Court's decision.

I Pledge a Lee Gents

I pledge a Lee Gents
To the flag of the
Night and Skates of America
And to the Republican
For witches stand
One nation,
Under God, invisible,
With liver teeth and juices for
all.

Honor the Texas flag

I pledge allegiance

To thee, Texas

One

and indivisible

I pledge allegiance

To the flag

Of the United States of America

And to the Republic

For which it stands

One nation

Under God

Indivisible

With Liberty

And Justice for All

West Virginia v. Barnette

The Right Not to Say the Pledge

Case Summary

The United States fought in World War II from 1941 to 1945. Many Americans thought it was especially important to show loyalty to the country during a war. In West Virginia, the state ordered teachers to lead their classes in a salute to the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance every day. Students who refused were sent home and were not allowed to return to school until they agreed to obey the order.

A religious group called the Jehovah's Witnesses objected. They asked to have their children excused from saying the Pledge to the flag. They said it was against their religious beliefs because the law of God was more important than the laws of any government. They believed that God's law stated that it was wrong to worship any man-made things or signs. This is why they believed it was wrong to pledge allegiance to a flag. Instead, the Jehovah's Witnesses offered to say a pledge of allegiance to God and to respect the United States flag, but not salute it. They also said that the Constitution gave them the right to practice any religion they wanted to.

The school officials in West Virginia refused to accept this. They sent the children home from school and warned the parents that they could be arrested.

The Jehovah's Witnesses brought their case to court. They said that they had been denied their freedom of religion. They added that the order to recite the pledge also denied their freedom of speech. This case eventually went before the United States Supreme Court.

What do you think?