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Our Visible Social Contract

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Introduction

During a civics lesson one of my students suddenly looked at me with a puzzled look and immediately shot her hand into the air. She excitedly asked a series of hurried questions, "So...what *is* power? I mean, what is it really? Is it real?" I paused. I didn't really know how to answer her questions. I decided it would be best to approach her questions with questions of my own. I asked, "Well, what do you think it is? When have you experienced power?" She was still confused, but she thought for a moment, then carefully explained, "Power is when someone can make you do something, when someone changes you." I was excited by her insight, especially since she was only eleven years old. I then opened up the discussion to the rest of the class by talking about instances of power in our classroom, school, and city. Power isn't concrete and tangible; it is abstract and changes depending on the situation and time period. Our social contract is not easily detected. This is my challenge in teaching this topic.

With this unit, I seek to clear up some misconceptions students have about why governments are created and the role of our government. During the same discussion I asked, "Why does the government make and enforce laws?" and a few students responded that governments are created to "punish people." They elaborated on this idea by saying that creating consequences for breaking laws is the sole reason why our government exists. This misconception is commonly held by the students year after year. In conversations with other teachers, they have reported some similar misconceptions in regards to the purpose of government. This unit, which includes the graphic novel *The Girl Who Owned a City*, will give me an effective plan of action that will allow my students to thoroughly make the invisible concepts of power and social contract visible.

My school, like schools all over the country, serves a diverse population of students. Skyline Middle School serves students from Pike Creek and Wilmington in northern Delaware, where I teach four sections of sixth-grade social studies. The students come from diverse backgrounds and cultural groups, including African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and low income. This diversity poses challenges in planning and implementing lessons to meet the needs of each child. It is, therefore, imperative that my lessons are student-centered and employ a variety of teaching strategies as each class period is sixty minutes in length.

In my school district, we are required to follow the Delaware Recommended Curriculum. For social studies, units have been created for most of the Delaware content standards to ensure the rigor of the classroom discussions, activities, and assessments in achieving the standard. There is currently no unit for the civics

standard I am required to teach. The standard states, "Students will understand that governments have the power to make and enforce laws and regulations, levy taxes, conduct foreign policy, and make war." The essential question for this standard is, "Why does a government have certain powers?" My unit of study focuses on the first part of the standard, why governments are given power by their citizens. I want the students to understand that people engage in a social contract to form a government that protects the rights of individuals. In addition, the citizens agree to give up some of their personal freedoms to ensure that society is orderly and to protect their rights.

Rationale

Margaret Branson in *The Importance of Promoting Civic Education* wrote, "One of the most important things we know about civic education is that Americans profess it to be an essential— if not *the* essential— purpose of education." ¹ In my school district, as well as far too many others, the truth is that civic education is not at the forefront. With standardized testing focused on math and English, the social studies and science curriculums have become secondary in importance. In my conversations with elementary teachers, I learned that most of the instructional time in the elementary classroom is devoted to math and English instruction. This makes sense as the incentives for teaching these subjects are high because school and teacher ratings are based upon the standardized test scores of students in these areas. At my school in particular, the supports for social studies and science have been redirected to the math and English departments. As a result, the social studies and science departments face higher class sizes, broader range of student abilities, and fewer resources inside and outside of the classroom.

The focus of educational reform is to make students "college and career ready," but shouldn't we also be preparing our students to participate in the civic process? How did we get so far from the principles of our founding fathers? Jill J. Tokumoto explains, in "The Importance of Civics Education in K-12 Schools," that the founding fathers argued for civic education to ensure our country would maintain the principles it was founded upon. I was surprised to learn that Thomas Jefferson "considered elementary school more important than college because the lower grades reach more people." ² Waiting until high school to teach civics is too late; therefore, the students should learn the civic principles throughout their years so that they can apply them in their everyday life. We need to empower the students with the skills to critically evaluate governmental actions and learn the means to make positive social change.

So what does this mean for educators? What is the practical application of these ideas? M. Branson explains, "True, the golden age was never this one, but as scholars and practitioners we can and must work together to at least brighten the aura of civic education in our own time, because nothing less than the maintenance and improvement of our constitutional democracy is at stake." ³ As educators we can work to incorporate more instruction in the area of civics into our curriculum. This can be done by producing and seeking out research-based lessons. The Center for Civic Education is an excellent starting point for finding resources. ⁴ Next, educators should attend professional development on civics education. If no professional development opportunities are available, teachers should encourage their districts to seek them out. Throughout the school year, students should have a hand in governing the school and making decisions that will have a direct impact on the school. Finally, discussions of school governance should not be limited to student council or similar organizations; it should include the entire student body.

Background Information

The Development of Government

Some Americans believe that government plays too large of a role in our lives; others argue it's not enough. As stated in the book *Understanding American Government*, "Some people have the impression that the government grows of its own accord. Usually government grows because citizens or interest groups want it to do more. As crises emerge or society changes, new problems surface and people ask the government to do more to respond to it." Sometimes the government grows to assist in stabilizing the economy or to protect the national security of the country. Other times the growth of government stems from political ideologies. So how did governments evolve to the point at which we are in 2013? ⁵ To understand how we arrived at the governments we know of today, we should begin by studying a time without government.

Encyclopedia Britannica is used widely in my school district because it can be used to search for materials at a variety of reading levels. The information in the next four paragraphs was obtained from the Britannica Academic Encyclopedia entry "Government." The entry explains how the progress toward the complex governments around the world today took thousands of years. I try to think of this process as a natural response to the needs of growing populations. The first "political structure" was the nomadic hunter-gatherer family when the parents held the responsibility for the feeding and security of their children. As the children grew, they developed the skills to care for themselves and eventually left the family unit to start their own. The relationship between parents and their grown child became voluntary as the parents were no longer solely responsible for the care of their grown child. This voluntary association allowed for different relationships to form outside of just the family unit. With technological advancements in farming, nomadic groups created permanent settlements, villages, with growing populations.

As economic activities developed in villages, a need for leadership outside of the family unit was required. The earliest village leaders were usually male, elder, religious figures who were believed to have obtained leadership status from the gods or a higher being. Leadership of the village usually took place at town hall meetings with discussions taking place between village elders and a village council or leader. The laws were typically passed from leader to subject orally and tended to change over time based on the needs of the group. Resource management became critical in sustaining a growing population and producing reserves of crops.

Small villages grew into cities and a more extensive form of governance was needed. This led to the creation of various governmental positions and leadership roles. As the city developed increasing divisions of labor, societies became more complex. With specialization of labor, advanced systems of exchange came into existence. People traded with other citizens living within close proximity. With greater transportation technology, economic activities became more abundant, and people were able to trade with other cities and villages. As villages obtained more resources, the threat of attack from outside nomadic groups and cities became a major concern. Wars broke out as groups battled in a desire to obtain greater amounts of resources. With protection being a crucial component of a functioning city, armies became an integral piece of society. The military played a critical role by intervening when barbarians attacked, when civil wars erupted, and when larger wars broke out. Eventually military leaders became revered as the most important members of society and began to hold leadership positions.

Cities grew into larger societies and eventually into civilizations. Larger populations necessitated a greater

specialization of labor and leadership. This specialization eventually led to a division in social status, social classes began to emerge based upon occupation, wealth, and/or family name. A class of government officials, military leaders and personnel, artisans, professionals, and a working class emerged. To meet their economic desires, the use of slave labor developed in many ancient societies. The forms of government these early civilizations established can be categorized by the number of rulers. In short, leadership by one is a monarchy or dictatorship, leadership by a few is oligarchy, and rule by the people is democracy.

At its core, the government functions to advance social and economic activity. To achieve these goals, the government must have the power to make and enforce laws, conduct foreign policy, levy taxes, and make war. A main function is self-preservation: the society must be protected from internal and external threats, and this is achieved through a system of laws. Judicial systems are established to settle disputes according to the law. Foreign policy sets out to prevent war, settle disputes, provide foreign aid, and ally with other countries on political issues. Taxes are levied to provide public goods that enhance the well-being of the society. Education, national defense, police/fire protection, infrastructure, natural resource management, public health programs are examples of public goods and services many civilizations funded through taxation. To provide for national security, governments typically set up organizations to collect foreign and domestic intelligence as well as fund a military. Disputes between societies usually centered on dissensions about trade, human rights violations, religious differences, and resources. ⁶

The Social Contract

The questions of my students still remain, however: what is power and why do individuals allow governments to have power? Several political philosophers worked to answer these same questions with their theories on the social contract. Social contract explains that early peoples lived in a state of nature without an organized social structure or government; people were free to do as they pleased. In this state, conflicts arose as individuals imposed on others. In order to achieve a better life, social-contract theory states that people choose to give up some of their personal freedoms and in return are able to live and work in an organized and secure society. ⁷ So how does this relate to us? Or more importantly, how is this relevant to our students?

The social contract is the basis for the American system of government, and it is important for our students to understand the major principles behind our Constitution. To better understand social contract, we will explore the ideas of three theorists: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his introduction to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract and Discourses*, G. D. H. Cole states, "For the study of the great writers and thinkers of the past, historical imagination is the first necessity. Without mentally referring to the environment in which they lived, we cannot hope to penetrate below the inessential and temporary to the absolute and permanent value of their thought. Theory, no less than action, is subject to these necessities; the form in which men cast their speculations, no less than the ways in which they behave, are the result of the habits of thought and action which they find around them." ⁸ As I work with my students to understand people and places of the past, I try to keep historical context in the forefront. The time in which a piece was created in plays an integral part in understanding the true meaning of the piece. The students should understand the importance of taking a deeper look into the time period of study to make more logical inferences based on the information they have.

To further understand the writings of said political theorists, we will examine the time period in which their theories arose. In 1651, Thomas Hobbes expressed his view of human nature in his book *Leviathan*. Hobbes wrote during the English Civil War, which lasted from 1642-1651, ending with the execution of King Charles I. The war was fought between the Parliamentarians, supporters of the Parliament, and Royalists, those

supporting the king. John Locke developed his thinking during the Glorious Revolution in England, which took place from 1688-1689 and during which many battles were fought in Scotland and Ireland. The end result of the revolution was the replacement of King James II with Mary II and her husband, William III, forming a co-monarchy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote during the French Revolution, which, put simply, was a revolt of working classes against the wealthy. The French working classes felt that the wealthy government officials and the elite were living too extravagantly, at the cost of the working classes. Clearly, all three men were living during times of political unrest that heavily influenced their writings, especially those writings related to the social contract theory.

Thomas Hobbes coined the influential phrase "state of nature," which he believed was actually a war-like state. In his book *Leviathan*, Hobbes explains, "The right of nature, which writers commonly call the *Fus Naturale*, is the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything, which in his own judgment, and reason, hee [sic] shall conceive to be the aptest thereunto." With this statement he explained his belief that humans are self-serving by nature and if left to their own devices, would lead lives that are "nasty, brutish, and short."⁹ Each person is working toward his or her own goals, working to meet his or her own needs. People think they have the right to everything, even things in the possession of others, even the body of others. In a state of nature, there were no property rights and no security. Hobbes believed people were motivated only by a fear of death, and this fear was the primary incentive for conforming to the rules of government.¹⁰

In contrast to Hobbes, who thought a state of nature would be so unfavorable that people would immediately choose leadership over complete freedom, John Locke saw the state of nature as man living as he is supposed to and people being free to pursue their needs as they saw fit. In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke states, "The *state of nature* has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all *equal and independent*, no one out to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions: for men being all the workmanship of the omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker; all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed and such *subordination* among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours."¹¹ Locke expressed the idea of protecting the natural rights of "life, liberty, or possessions." He believed that governments were created to keep society orderly and resolve conflict. His thoughts on separation of powers and protection of rights were integral in the writing of the Declaration of Independence. He stated that in a state of nature people can pursue their interests but are responsible to God.¹²

In contrast to Hobbes and Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that human nature is generally good and that it is society that corrupts the individual. Society puts people in chains, and getting back to a state of nature would allow people to truly be free. According to Rousseau's theory, going back to a state of nature would correct many problems that societies are facing. Under the right conditions, people are good and will do the right thing.¹³ In *The Social Contract and Discourses*, he explained that democracy is best suited for places with smaller populations; even the most purely democratic government is in the hands of a few powerful people, even in cases in which all citizens are included in the democratic process. He explained, "The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty."¹⁴ Rousseau's idea of right is not clear, but he makes clear the idea that leadership

changes over time in response to the needs of the society and that people will give themselves the laws they deem necessary.

In conclusion, the social contract is not visible; it is implied. One cannot see the social contract itself as if it were a thing. What we can see are the ways governments use their power to maintain the social contract. We see this as laws are made and enforced, as taxes are collected, as wars are waged, and as foreign policy is conducted. Even though styles and methods of leadership have developed drastically over human history, the need for leadership has remained constant as people desired to create a productive society. We were born into the social contract of today; we didn't have a choice as it was established before our time. Only if we could go back to a state of nature could we see the behavioral changes that take place with the institution of government and the effects of the social contract involved in its creation.

Teaching about Government with Visual Media

To engage and hook my students for this unit, I am using a graphic novel *The Girl Who Owned a City*. Based on the 1975 novel by O.T. Nelson, the graphic novel was adapted by Dan Jolley and illustrated by Joelle Jones and Jenn Manley Lee. *The Girl Who Owned a City* pulls the reader in with highly stylized characters in easy-to-follow sequential art. For students with little experience in reading graphic novels, as most of my students are, this is a great book for an introduction to the medium.

Why use graphic novels? Based on research conducted by Maureen Bakis presented in her book *The Graphic Novel Classroom*, graphic novels allow for higher levels of engagement as the combination of words and images appeal to more students. Graphic novels challenge students to make meaning visually as well as textually, an important skill set for twenty-first century learners. She believes the use of words and images allow for a wide range of discussions about the author's choices, artistic representations, and illustrator's decisions, all of which are objectives of the common core standards. While reading *The Girl Who Owned a City*, I will focus on the following common core standards: "CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, and causally)." Students and parents may feel apprehensive about reading graphic novels, so it is important to make classroom objectives clear. ¹⁵

Defending the use of graphic novels in the classroom requires a clear knowledge of exactly what a graphic novel is and what it is not. K. S. Hansen states in her article "In Defense of Graphic Novels," "While most people claim to honor art as a cultivating force, some of those same people also loudly oppose graphic novels because they so heavily rely on visual elements." ¹⁶ Critics of graphic novels hold the belief that they are too easy and lack the sophistication of other novels. In reality, graphic texts are not just comic books with a new name: they are narratives, memoirs, historic fiction, and even nonfiction. Graphic novels today are written for readers of all ages and can be highly sophisticated. With a diversity of genres and writing styles, graphic novels can be used in the classroom to introduce or expand students' knowledge of a particular topic or theme. With the story being conveyed in a visual way, the students will become more apt in interpreting meaning from artistic representations. In *Reading Comics*, Douglas Wolk attempts to clear up misconceptions about comics, when he states, "Comics are not a genre; they're a medium." He explains that with every medium there are good works and poor works. Some novels are worthy of study and others are not, and this mode of thinking can also be applied to the study of graphic novels. Some are worthy of use in the classroom and some are not; undoubtedly, it is up to educators to make the appropriate distinction. ¹⁷

The Girl Who Owned a City: Key Concepts

The graphic novel version of *The Girl Who Owned a City* is not organized into chapters. I will organize the information and suggested themes for discussion according to the setting in which they take place.

Lisa's Family Home (pages 5-30): A virus breaks out, killing all of the adults throughout the world. Interestingly, anyone under the age of twelve is unaffected by the virus. At the beginning of the novel the main character, Lisa, is, on her own, caring for herself and her brother. The resources become scarce, and the competition for them steadily increasing. Children loot homes and businesses to obtain the supplies they need for survival. Lisa's brother wonders why they can't help all of the other kids around them, and Lisa explains that it would be too difficult and that they can only trust themselves.

Themes: The first setting of the story is representative of a state of nature. Throughout the city the kids were doing what was necessary for survival; Lisa and her brother are not concerned with the needs of others because they believe that people cannot be trusted. In a state of nature, there are no authority figures or laws to dictate how people are to behave. This is apparent throughout the story as the kids behave violently, steal, and even drive cars without any consequences from any authorities. Lisa, the older sister, cares for her little brother, representing the earliest political structure, the family. She feels a responsibility for his well-being, physical and mental. John Locke expressed that people act according to their religious or moral code, and Lisa illustrated this through her discussion with her little brother about stealing. She believes that stealing directly from individuals is wrong but taking from abandoned farms and warehouses is fine.

Grandville (pages 31-35): The main villains in the novel, the Chidester Gang, pose a major threat to Lisa and her brother as well as other children throughout the city. The Chidester Gang does what they have to for survival, even if that means hurting others. After being threatened by the gang, Lisa decides to create a safe haven for herself, her brother, and a few friends. With Lisa's wit and leadership skills, she creates a mini city called Grandville. They form a militia. Things run smoothly until members of the Chidester Gang show up on Grandville's doorstep. They tell Lisa she has the choice to either to give up her supplies and join them or to face the consequences. Lisa stands up to the gang, eventually convincing them to leave. But when the kids go out to celebrate the first Grandville holiday, the gang burns their house down, completely destroying their house and the stockpile of supplies inside. Surprisingly, Lisa is not even fazed; she wants to create a life that is moral and good and to make a life separate from the Chidester Gang. To fulfill her goal, Lisa scours the city for a better location, something more secure. She ends up choosing a school building and calling it her fortress.

Themes: Within this short section of the novel, a population growth occurred. Lisa and her brother are no longer living alone. After several discussions, they decide to allow others to live with them. A larger population necessitates more protection, so Lisa establishes a large militia to protect against the Chidester Gang. Lisa uses various methods to bring the citizens together, actions that give the reader a strong sense of her leadership abilities. She organizes a council to discuss current issues, she gives people special assignments, and she even created the first Grandville holiday. When the kids are away for the holiday, the Chidester gang attacks. This event can be related to an act of war, illustrating Hobbes's idea of a state of nature being warlike.

Glenbard (pages 36-126): At the fortress, security is Lisa's main concern. She establishes safety rules, creates an emergency escape tunnel, sets up a security patrol including dogs, assigns jobs, and creates public services (a mini school, medical treatment room, game room, and strategy room). Lisa's closest friends question her leadership style because they want to be given credit for the work they have been doing and the

contributions they make. The population of Lisa's fortress, named Glenbard, grows to six hundred kids. After about a year in which Lisa puts down only a few minor outside threats, the Chidester Gang returns, more powerful than ever. They violently take Lisa hostage, hoping to obtain the fortress for themselves. Lisa's friend Todd organizes a successful rescue mission, and upon Lisa's recovery from injuries suffered during the kidnapping, they work to take Glenbard back. They send Todd into Glenbard in disguise to obtain intelligence, while Lisa travels around the city looking for new recruits to aid in their fight against the Chidester Gang. Lisa expects to be accepted with open arms; yet the kids around Chicago reacted with hostility, and she ends up in a fight with one of the leaders of a group of kids living in the city. This leads Lisa to believe that there were more threats ahead: the Chidester Gang wasn't her only enemy. She becomes motivated to get the fortress back and secure it as best she can. Her story ends when she convinces some of the city kids to come to her aid. A few groups of kids from around the city band together in support of Lisa getting Glenbard back. After a heated argument between Lisa and the leader of the Chidester Gang, the gang leaves the fortress, miserable and defeated. This success reenergized the citizens of Glenbard, and they began working to reestablish the fortress.

Themes: During the final scenes, Lisa establishes a set of rules to keep the kids safe and maintain order within the fortress. This part of the plot illustrates the way governments establish rules and laws aimed at achieving the goals of the society. Lisa wanted the group of kids to remain safe from outside invasions, so they establish the following rules: no candles or lights on in the building, you can leave only if you are on a mission, and you must speak softly. She tells the kids, "You must follow every rule or you will be asked to leave." This statement showed the consequence for breaking any one of the rules that Lisa established. Systems of law typically include consequences for noncompliance. The emergency escape tunnel, security patrol, mini school, medical treatment room, game room, and strategy room represent public goods and services. Lisa assigns jobs, representing a specialization of labor. Lisa's leadership style as one sole ruler illustrated a monarchy. When questioned by her friends, Lisa epitomized Rousseau's idea of "society putting people in chains." The kids feel controlled and resent the power Lisa has. She remains firm in her decision to be the sole ruler.

Strategies

Central to this unit is getting students to talk to one another. Small student-led discussions encourage greater student achievement and higher levels of engagement. Thus the students talk much more than when they are discussing information using a whole-group instructional strategy. Students are more likely to take risks and share information in small groups as compared to sharing with the whole class. Through collaboration, the students can work through difficulties to gain a deeper understanding of the graphic novel. For *The Girl Who Owned a City* the students will read small sections in class. While they read, they will record questions that they have related to vocabulary, comprehension, and personal connections. These questions will drive the conversations of the students. ¹⁸

To further enhance the student-led discussions, the students will be seated in heterogeneous groups and assigned particular "table roles." Since the graphic novel we are reading is based on the establishment of government, the small groups will reflect different structures of government. Sometimes the group of three to four will represent a monarchy, in which one student, the king or queen, gets to make all the decisions during the discussion process. Other times, the group will function as an oligarchy, in which two of the three or four students are working together to lead the discussion. Finally, the groups will work as a democracy, in which

students make discussion decisions by voting. These discussion structures will give the students a chance to experience the different structures of government, leading to deeper understanding of them and fostering higher-order thinking.

Another strategy to get students working together is the jigsaw cooperative learning model. With this strategy, the students have the opportunity to become an expert in one aspect of the lesson and share what they learn with their classmates. Each student is responsible for a piece of the "puzzle." The first step in the process is dividing the information that needs to be covered into logical sections. All sections should have a similar structure and difficulty level because the students need to feel as though each part is important. The next step is to divide the students into groups of the same number of sections. For this unit, the jigsaw activity will include seven sections of content and seven students in a group; this way each section has representation. Each student is assigned his or her part and given time to independently read and/or do research. When students are finished gathering information on their section, the groups will be restructured so that "expert" groups are formed. The teacher will organize the students in groups according to the section they studied to discuss the information, clarifying any questions or concerns they may have. Then the students will devise a plan for sharing the information with their classmates. The students should be given time to practice their presentation with their expert group to ensure its accuracy. The final step is when the original group meets again and each student presents his or her section. Each student is responsible for teaching a portion of the information to the group. Throughout the activity, the teacher acts as a facilitator, periodically checking in on students to keep them focused and to answer questions. ¹⁹

Also, reading is a central component of this unit. To meet the common core standards, my school district is working to add more close readings to the units currently taught in English and social studies. Close reading is a technique used to teach students to carefully study a piece of writing by reading it several times, each time looking for a different bit of information. The process begins with a hook; usually the teacher asks the class a question or gives some background information. Then the teacher explains the close reading technique to the class. The students complete the first reading of the text independently and fill in a graphic organizer related to vocabulary and their understanding of the content. The second reading is done aloud by the teacher. While the teacher reads, the students are directed to listen and look for the central ideas of the text. Next, the students answer a series of text-dependent questions with a partner. To check for accuracy, the teacher conducts a whole-class discussion of the questions and passage. Finally, a short essay is completed that connects multiple sources of information to extend the students' thinking. ²⁰

Classroom Activities

Introduction to the Medium of Comics

A major component in this unit involves building a framework the students can use when reading and discussing visual media. I will begin by teaching the students about sequential art using an excerpt from Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist*. Next, I will use Scott McCloud's categories of words and pictures explained in *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels* to help students to better understand the play between words and images that they will see throughout this unit. Finally, we will take a look at Williams Moebius's "Introduction to Picturebook Codes" to allow for in-depth conversations related to the composition of visual media.

Sequencing

To teach sequencing I will use Robert Crumb's "A Short History of America," a comic without words that shows the development of an area of land over hundreds of years.²¹ Before having any discussion, I will give each student an envelope with the twelve panels from the comic cut apart and mixed up. The students will sequence them as best they can by relying on their prior knowledge and clues from the panels themselves. Next, modeled after Maureen Bakis's idea in *The Graphic Novel Classroom*, the students will discuss the mental process they used to determine the sequence of events. To make the thought processes of the students even more evident, Bakis recommends having the students add captions and/or ideas to each image, then encouraging the students to compare their captions. She explains, when students write their captions, they are generally writing what they believe the text means. The students should be encouraged to be as honest as possible throughout this process: no one answer is correct as each person interprets the images differently.

I selected Robert Crumb's "A Short History of America" based on his wordless panels and content. Having no words will force the students to sequence the panels using the images alone, a process that may be new and/or challenging to the students. The comic's content is relevant to the content of this unit. The comic illustrates a changing region of land that spans many decades. The first panel shows a grassland area with many trees in the distance and birds in the forefront; in contrast, the last panel shows the same area of land as a bustling intersection with homes and businesses, modern cars, streetlights, electric poles, and signs. I will conduct a discussion on how society has changed over time after they sequence and study each image. I will also discuss technology, electricity, pollution, resources, land use, and transportation. I will then ask the students about the way people's needs must have changed as the land use changed in the area. My goal is for the students to bring up the need for government and/or laws.

Word/Picture Combinations

Sequencing is one major aspect of graphic novels; similarly, the balance between words and images is also worth discussing with students. Scott McCloud's word/picture combinations will allow the students to understand the role of the text and images in the comics, visuals, and graphic novels we read throughout this unit. In *Making Comics*, McCloud explains seven categories of word/picture combinations including: word-specific, picture-specific, duo-specific, intersecting, interdependent, parallel, and montage.²² Since these concepts are new to the students, I will spend at least an entire class period discussing each one and showing examples. To accomplish this, I will use the jigsaw strategy to cover the seven word/picture combinations. Chapter Three of *Making Comics* will be split into seven parts, one for each word/picture combination, and distributed to groups of seven students. The students will create a poster and presentation to teach the class about their word/picture combination. The students will use the Concept or Vocabulary Map III from *The Teacher's Big Book of Graphic Organizers* by Katherine McKnight. The graphic organizer requires the students to give a definition, three examples, three non-examples, and an illustration. The graphic organizer will assist the students in planning their presentation and ensuring that they thoroughly understand the word/picture combination that they are studying.²³ The students will be challenged to identify McCloud's word/picture combinations as we read the graphic novel.

Picture Book Codes

The last piece of the framework for looking at graphic novels and visual media is from William Moebius's

"Introduction to Picture Codes." In the article Moebius is very specific as he describes each of the picturebook codes. He thoroughly explains the picturebook codes as well as identifies what message the image conveys based on the codes. For my classroom I plan to introduce the picturebook codes and then allow the students to draw their own conclusions as they apply them to visual media. Below is a table with the picturebook codes in one column and suggested discussion questions to use with students. ²⁴

Picturebook Code	Questions for Discussion
Codes of Position, Size, and Diminishing Returns	What is the main character's position on the page? Left or right? Centered? High or low? Near the top or bottom? Can you see the character's whole body? How big is the main character in relation to the other characters? How many times is the main character shown on the page?
Codes of Perspective	Can you see the horizon? Where is the main character in relation to the horizon? Is he/she grounded or floating? Does the image seem flat or have depth?
Codes of the Frame and of the Right and Round	Is there a frame around the image and/or words? Does anything break out of the frame? Is the frame circular or rectangular?
Codes of Lines and Capillarity	Are the lines thin or thick? Smooth or rough? Parallel or intersecting?
Codes of Color	Do the colors convey a message? Do the colors link any objects or people?

Some follow-up questions are necessary as the students are presented with the questions related to each code. I will ask questions about how the item they have identified compares with the overall piece, story, or book and how the technique is used to convey meaning or move the story along.

Graphic Novel: The Girl who Owned a City

To apply the skills the students have developed over the last few lessons, I will have the students read *The Girl who Owned a City*. As they are reading, I will have them take notes in a graphic organizer related to the content, word/picture combinations, and picturebook codes. The rows of the graphic organizer will have the page numbers. and the columns will be content-based notes, visual/illustration notes, and questions. The students' notes will be used to facilitate student-led discussions. At the beginning of each reading, the students will look back at their notes and the novel to write a few questions for their group. Then they will be given time to discuss their questions, and I will clarify any information the students are struggling with. I will also present themes related to the artwork and content, as described in the table below.

Section or Page	Theme	Suggested Discussion Questions
Introduction		
Front Cover	Picturebook codes	What does the position of the girl tell you about her? What does her body language say? Are the lines thick/thin? Why?
Back Cover	Picturebook codes	What do you notice about the use of color and lines? What message does the image convey? Where is the horizon? How does its location impact the artwork?
Lisa's House		
9	Word/picture combinations	Which word/picture combination is being used on this page?
13	State of Nature	Describe what life is like for Lisa and Todd. Why don't they help the other children? What are the consequences for stealing? Why?
17	State of Nature	What are Lisa's beliefs on stealing? Is she stealing when she takes food from the warehouse? How does the illustrator show that Charlie and Julie are having a difficult time?
20-21	Social Contract	Why does Lisa call the meeting? Why do you think the kids decided to work together under Lisa's leadership instead of fending for themselves?
23	Word/picture combinations	In the last panel on page 23, which of the word/picture combinations is being used? What does the author mean by, "We're feeling pretty good about miracles right now."? How did the image help you to comprehend this part of the novel?
24	Security	Why is the militia so important? Why do we have the military today?
Grandville		
32	Leadership	What kind of leader is Lisa? Why did she create a holiday?
31	Community	Describe the sign. What does the motto tell you about Lisa and the citizens of Glenbard?
35	Act of War	What happened while the kids were away? How does the artwork convey the story?
Glenbard		
39	Specialization	Why does Lisa assign jobs? Why is this so important to her?

41	Laws and regulations	What are the rules that Lisa establishes? Do you think her rules are reasonable? What is the basic principle behind all of Lisa's rules?
42-45	Public goods and services	List the public goods and services Lisa created. Why does she create them?
46	Leadership	What does Lisa mean when she says she will have council meetings with Craig, Jill, and Charlie? Who makes the final decision?
47-49	National Security	What does the council come up with to protect Glenbard? Do you think it is a solid plan? Why or why not?
50-51	Picturebook Codes	Describe what is happening in each room. What is the mood of the illustration?
53	Population growth	Why does Lisa want to increase Glenbard's population? Do you think it is a wise decision?
53	Social contract	What does Lisa mean when she says, "Well, we only want kids we can trust. We'd have to watch out for spies...and make everyone sign some contract"?
54-55	Leadership	What is Lisa's leadership style? Has it changed? How did Lisa react when Jill questioned her on her leadership style?
57	Icons	Describe the flag. What message does it convey?
58-59	Leadership	Does Lisa change her ideas on how to lead Glenbard? What evidence supports this?
66-67	Sequencing	How does the illustrator show the passage of time?
67	Picturebook codes	Describe Lisa's mood in the third panel on page 67. How do you know?
72	Picturebook codes	Describe the image on page 72. Why is it larger than the others?
74	Word/picture combinations	Which of the word/picture combinations is used in each of the panels? How do these style choices emphasize and move the story?
90-93	Security	What is their plan for getting Glenbard back? Do you think it is effective?
95	Leadership	Why doesn't Craig want to continue fighting? What does he say to try to convince Lisa to stop?
94-95	State of Nature	How would Craig describe a state of nature? How would Lisa describe a state of nature?
98-99	Leadership	What is Logan's leadership style?

106-108	Foreign Relations	What happens to Lisa and the others in Wheaton? What were they trying to accomplish?
113	Word/picture combinations	Which of the word/picture combinations is used in each of the panels? How does it add drama to the story?
121	Leadership	Why did Tom walk out of Glenbard?
126	Connection	What do you think the future holds for Glenbard? What do you think Lisa will say to the citizens? How did the image influence your ideas?

The Girl who Owned a City introduces themes at a basic level, helping the students to form a solid base of understanding. To bring the content to a higher level, I will have the students complete a few activities as they

are working through the novel. For the first section, Lisa's house, I will have the students do a close reading of an article about the social contract from The Center for Civic Education website. For the second section, Grandville, the students will design a fortress using a map of a local building. For the last section, Glenbard, the students will debate for either a state of nature or the institution of government.

Section 1- Lisa's House: Close Reading

To activate prior knowledge, I will have the students discuss the following questions in small groups: "What do you think driving would be like if there were no traffic laws?" and "What do you think life would be like if there were no laws to protect your private property?" I will direct students to share their answers with the entire class. Hopefully, the students will explain that driving would be dangerous without laws and give examples such as people driving at any speed they wanted, driving on people's property, and not taking turns at an intersection and causing an accident. To clarify the question about private property, I will tell the students that without any property laws people would be able to take whatever they wanted. People could enter your home or business and take things without any consequences. There would not be much of an incentive to create nice homes and businesses because people would be afraid of others stealing and destroying their property. This discussion will make the students more comfortable with the topic, and they will therefore be prepared for reading the text.

I will explain to the students that they will be using the close reading technique; this means that they will be working together and independently to carefully analyze a text on the social compact. I will explain that they will be reading the text several times and each time they will be focusing on different aspects of it. For the first reading of the text, the students will read and fill a graphic organizer independently. The graphic organizer will contain a section for the students to write the words in the text that they are unfamiliar with and another section for questions or thoughts they have about the text. After the students have independently read the text, I will give them a few minutes to share their graphic organizer with a partner. Then they will share any remaining questions through a full class discussion.

The second and third readings involve reading with a purpose. For the second reading I will read the passage aloud. Before reading I will tell the students to find the central idea of the text; this sets up a purpose for listening and following along. After reading I will give the students time to compare what they have identified in the passage as the central idea with what their classmates have identified. Hopefully, the students will conclude that the central idea is the social compact whereby people give up some of their freedom in exchange for protection and security. Then I will ask the follow-up question: What distinct details convey the central idea of this piece? The students should be able to identify that the details conveying the central idea can be found throughout the second paragraph. The third reading involves a series of text-based questions. I will model the first question working through it with the class, and then they will complete a couple more questions with a partner. As I work through the first question with the students, I will model the following process: re-read the section of the text, take notes, discuss the question with a partner, and write your best answer to each question. Suggested questions and answers can be found in the appendix.

The final step in the close reading process is a short essay. The students will, in two paragraphs, answer a prompt using "The Social Compact" text, their notes, and *The Girl who Owned a City*. The first paragraph will discuss the problem the author introduces in the text "The Social Compact" and a solution to the problem. The second paragraph will explain how the concept of the social contract relates to *The Girl who Owned a City*. Suggested answers can be found in the appendix.

Section 2- Grandville: Making a Fortress

To expand the thinking of the students and bring the graphic novel to life, the students will choose a floor-plan map of our school building, local mall, area grocery store, or a popular restaurant. In a group of two to three, they will be challenged to create a functional city plan within the building they have chosen. They will use diagrams, words, and symbols to show the way they would utilize the rooms of the building and the surrounding land. They will also devise a plan for protecting their fortress using the same amount of materials the kids of Grandville have. The students will be expected to explain how they would set up a government, security system, and public goods. ²⁵

Section 3- Glenbard: State of Nature vs. Government

To take the content of the novel to a higher level, I will review the theories of John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau with the students by focusing on the state of nature. Then the students will pick one of the three political philosophers and draw a panel or series of panels to describe the theorist's view on a state of nature. I will challenge them to think about Scott McCloud's word/picture combinations and William Moebius's picturebook codes as they are drawing. These comic strips will be shared in the classroom and then displayed in the hallway to celebrate the learning of the students throughout this unit.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Standards

Delaware Content Standard

This unit was created to meet the Delaware Social Studies Civics Standard 1a for 6th through 8th grade stating, "Students will understand that governments have the power to make and enforce laws and regulations, levy taxes, conduct foreign policy, and make war." The enduring understanding for this unit is, "Governments are structured to address the basic needs of the people in a society." The unit I created fulfills the content standard and enduring understanding with the use of the graphic novel *The Girl who Owned a City*. The graphic novel introduces the required concepts of leadership, laws, dues, foreign policy, and war. Throughout the unit, the novel is supplemented with some nonfiction readings designed to illustrate the application of the concepts in modern life.

Common Core Standards

The graphic novel *A Girl who Owned a City* provides an opportunity for me to incorporate the Common Core Standards into this unit of study. I focus on CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 that states, "Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources." This standard was addressed through the close reading of the "Social Compact" and the discussion questions throughout the reading of the graphic novel. I also incorporated CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5 that states, "Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, and causally)." This standard is met through the close reading of the "Social Compact," by sequencing R. Crumb's comic, and through the discussions during the reading of the graphic novel.

Appendix 2: Close Reading Resources

The Social Compact

John Locke and other philosophers developed a solution to the problems that exist in a place without government. In a state of nature, people might feel free to do anything they want to do. However, their rights would not be protected and they would feel insecure.

Locke argued that people should agree with one another to give up some of their freedom in exchange for protection and security. They should consent to follow some laws in exchange for the protection these laws would give them. This agreement is called a social compact or social contract. A social compact is an agreement people make among themselves to create a government to rule them and protect their natural rights. In this agreement the people consent to obey the laws created by that government. ²⁶

Text-Dependent Questions: Teacher's Guide

Teacher modeling question: What does the author mean when he/she says "their rights would not be protected and they would feel insecure"? *The students should explain that without leadership, in the form of a government, people would be living in a state of nature. Individuals would be free to act and do as they please. This would pose a problem as people's belongings and safety would not be protected. This would leave the people of this society feeling uneasy.*

Where does government get its right to govern, according to the natural rights philosophers? *The students should explain that the government is given its right to govern by the people. The government's power comes from the consent of the governed.*

How does the author help the reader understand the meaning of social compact? Use examples from the text in your analysis. *The students should explain that the author first gives an example of a social compact ("They should consent to follow some laws in exchange for the protection these laws would give them.") and then defines social compact in a sentence ("A social compact is an agreement people make among themselves to create a government to rule them and protect their natural rights.")*

An important contrast in the text is between ____ and _____. *The students should identify the contrast between a state of nature and life with a social compact. In a state of nature, people would be allowed to do as they please. With the institution of a social compact, people would give up some of their freedom to create a more secure society.*

Problem/Solution Short Essay: Teacher's Guide

In two paragraphs, with at least five to eight sentences in each, answer the following questions using *The Social Compact* text, your notes, and *The Girl who Owned a City*.

Paragraph 1: What problem does the author introduce in the text *The Social Compact*? What is one solution to the problem? Do you think it has been successful? Explain your answer with an example. What are some other concerns you think the author should have mentioned in the text?

Paragraph 2: How does the concept of the social contract relate to *The Girl who Owned a City*? Give specific examples of the way the social contract theory is depicted in the novel.

Student writing should reflect:

What problem does the author introduce in the text *The Social Compact*? *The students should identify the problem as living in a state of nature can cause a lack of security and protection.*

What is one solution to the problem? *The solution to the problem was the formation of government.*

Do you think it has been successful? Explain your answer with an example. *The answers to this portion of the prompt will vary. Students should state whether or not the institution of government has had a positive impact on societies. They should provide an example such as improved relationships between individuals, property rights, and laws to protect people.*

What are some other concerns you think the author should have mentioned in the text?

The answers to this portion of the prompt will also vary. The author could have mentioned the misuse of power, the fair creation of laws, due process, etc.

How does the concept of the social contract relate to *The Girl who Owned a City*? *In the novel, the children decide to give up some of their freedom to go under the leadership of Lisa. They feel more protected under Lisa's care, so they allow her to make decisions and rules for them in hope that they have a better chance of survival.*

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1. M. Branson, "The Importance of Promoting Civic Education," 2.
2. J. J. Tokumoto, "The Importance of Civics Education Programs in K—12 Schools," 9.
3. M. Branson, "The Importance of Promoting Civic Education," 2.
4. <http://new.civiced.org/>
5. S. Welch, J. Gruhl, S. Rigdon, and S.Thomas, "Understanding American Government," 3.
6. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Government" and "Political System."
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8. J. J. Rousseau, Social Contract & Discourses, introduction.
9. T. Hobbes and M. J. Oakeshott, Leviathan; or, The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil, 86.
10. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Thomas Hobbes,"

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23. K. McKnight, *The Teacher's Big Book of Graphic Organizers: 100 reproducible organizers that help kids with reading, writing, and the content areas*, 62.

24. W. Moebius, "Introduction to Picturebook Codes."
25. This activity was inspired by a post on a thread for teachers about the graphic novel.
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