

## **Lesson 2    Learning about Levels of Government**

Students often are confused about the different levels of government, and which decisions are made at different levels. The vocabulary and concepts are difficult, and to help, this lesson uses a map and a grid to provide a visual model of political boundaries and responsibilities.

### **Teacher preparation:**

1. Bring a map of the United States and pin it on the wall.
2. Make copies of the story and questions for all students.

**Warm up:** Ask students to go to the U.S. map and identify where they live now, and other places they have lived. Explain that there is the same government for all people living in the United States, called the federal government. Each state has its own government, and so on. Point out the geographical area and corresponding level of government.

**Review of previous lesson:** Write vocabulary words you learned in the previous lesson on the board for review. Ask students to reconstruct the story of the previous lesson, and then ask for questions or thoughts about this lesson.

**Story and Questions:** See instructions for Lesson 1.

**Activity:** When students read about the levels of government, copy the grid on the board and use the map to show the jurisdictions of government. You may want to expand the information by including other responsibilities of government and other jurisdictions.

**Closure:** Review the vocabulary words you learned, and repeat the main themes of the lesson. Ask students to talk about one thing they learned today.

## Story *Fatima Studies a Map*

Fatima moved from Iran to Minnesota in 1998. She has lived in the United States more than five years, and now she can become a citizen. Fatima is taking a citizenship class because she wants to vote in the election in November. Last week her citizenship class listened to candidates talk on a radio program.

Fatima listened carefully to the candidates but she was confused. The candidates gave their opinions about schools, parks, roads and libraries. Fatima wanted to know their opinions about the war, but they didn't talk about the war.

This week at citizenship class, Fatima asked the teacher why the candidates didn't talk about the war. Her teacher, Amy, explained, "These candidates don't make decisions about the war. The candidates at the town meeting are running for the city government, and they make decisions about things in the city, like schools, parks, roads and libraries.

"The federal government in Washington D.C. makes decisions about things that effect the whole country. Some of these things are war and national security, trade between countries, health care and Social Security.

"There are other levels of government, too, and voters elect people to these governments, also. Here are some of the levels of government and the titles of the elected people."

Amy brought out a map of the United States, and wrote this on the board:

<b>United States of America</b>	<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>City or Town</b>
President & Vice President	Governor	Commissioners	Mayor
Senators (2)	Senator	Judges	City Council
Representative	Representative		Park Board
			School Board

"That helps me understand the levels of government, and what are some of the responsibilities," said Fatima. "Now I need to write a letter to the President, my Senators and my Representative to tell them my opinion about the war."

"That's a great plan!" said Amy. "You are going to be a responsible citizen."

### **Questions *Fatima Studies a Map***

1. Where did Fatima's citizenship class go to learn about candidates?
2. What did Fatima want to learn from the candidate's?
3. What are some of the responsibilities of the city government?
4. What are some of the responsibilities of the federal government?
5. Who does Fatima need to write to tell her opinion about the war?
6. What do you think a responsible citizen does in addition to voting?