

Topic: Laws and Lawsuits

Let's get started... What are examples of laws? Are there good laws and bad laws? Explain.

Story: Once there was a widow who sold her house after her husband died. A woman bought the widow's house and moved into it. But, the woman never paid for the house. So, the widow lost her house and didn't get her money.

The widow went to court and said, "This woman took my house but didn't pay for it. It's against the law. Give me justice. The woman should pay me for my house!" The judge was very busy and ignored the widow for many months. But the widow came back again and again and said, "Give me justice! The woman should pay me for my house!" Finally, the judge said (ruled), "The woman must pay you for your house. It's the law."



The widow received her money but had to wait many months for it. What do you think about this story?



In pairs, ask and answer these questions:

Do you know anyone who went to court for some reason? What was the problem? Do you think the court or judge made a good decision? How long did it take to get a decision?

Share one of your partner's answers with the group.

Here are some sample problems that people might have. How can they resolve (solve) these problems? How do people in your home culture solve these kinds of situations?

The neighbor's tree falls on their fence.

The neighbor steals a cow.

Someone owes money but doesn't pay it back.

A dog bites someone.



If friends asked you to judge between them and their neighbor - how would you do it? Have you ever been in such a position? Explain. Is **mediation** common in your home culture?

Have you ever been inside a courtroom? Have you ever hired a lawyer? Explain. What are examples of situations when people may go to court or hire a lawyer?

Discussion Questions - talk in pairs or small groups:

Do you or someone you know work as a lawyer? Do you think it's a good job? Why or why not?



Imagine you have one free hour with a lawyer. What would you like to talk about? What questions do you want to ask?



In the U.S., there is a system of courts - state, county and federal courts. If you believe a court made a wrong decision, sometimes you can **appeal** the decision to a higher court. The highest court is the federal Supreme Court. Do you have a court system (justice system) in your home country? How does it work?



Do you believe that the justice system in your country works well and is fair to all people? Explain.

What are some famous court cases (lawsuits) that were decided in the courts of your home country? Perhaps a president or leader was involved; or there was a big change in laws.

Some laws give freedom - they say that we **may** do something. Some laws take away freedom - say that we **may not** do something. Do you think we need **more** freedom or **less** to
get a job?

get health care?

practice religion?

buy or own guns?

New vocabulary: widow, law, court, courtroom, lawyer, lawsuit, justice, justice system, Supreme Court, resolve, solve, decision, decide, state court, county court, federal court, appeal, freedom, hired, mediation

Keep talking about it this week: Ask friends "What laws would you change?" Write down their answers and be ready to share with the group at the next Talk Time.

More on justice: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9MShGb2fGw>

Low-cost mediation services: <http://www.kcdrc.org/mediation/whatismediation.html>. (King County Dispute Resolution Center)

Community Resources: Low income residents of King County can have 30-minutes of free legal assistance through Eastside Legal Assistance Program. (425-747-7274)