

Stateless: Why would a government use its power to limit citizenship?

Grade 6 World Geography



Overview

This lesson uses the ideas of the purpose of government and its motivation to limit the power of specific people. It is meant to be used either with a larger unit on government, on issues of conflict and cooperation, or with a unit focusing on Southeast Asia.

This lesson looks specifically at the country of Burma/Myanmar as an example of how governments can wield its power. There are several discussion opportunities, which can be accommodated to both face-to-face and virtual settings. Students have the opportunity to choose the format of a final project which incorporates the story of Burmese activist, Wai Wai Nu, and accompany their visual work with a written reflection.

Driving Questions

- Why would a government use its power to limit citizenship?
- Why would a government want to make certain people feel powerless?
- What does it mean to be stateless?

Supporting (Case Study) Questions

- What is a nation-state?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- What is the government of Burma (Myanmar) like?
- Who are the Rohingya?
- Why have the Rohingya been denied citizenship?
- Who is Wai Wai Nu, and what is her story?

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to explain and give examples of the term nation-state.
- Students will be able to give examples of the advantages of being a citizen and reflect on the difficulties of being stateless.
- Students will be able to describe the location and general background information of Myanmar (Burma), including why it has two names.
- Students will be able to give a basic explanation of the Rohingya crisis, including examples of why there is a conflict.
- Students will be able to make connections between the story of Burmese activist Wai Wai Nu and their own reflections of being stateless.

Enduring Understandings

- Citizenship means something to everybody; we should not take it for granted if we belong somewhere.
- Millions of people around the world are denied citizenship because of who they are; their lives are extremely difficult and dangerous.
- Although countries have the right to choose who is a citizen or not, some governments are using this power to keep certain groups of people from belonging. An American point of view tells us that it is not okay to exclude people because of their religion, ethnicity, or race.

Key Concepts

- purpose of government
- nation-state
- citizenship
- belonging

Content Expectations/Standards

Michigan Grade 6 Social Studies Standards

- C1.1.1 Compare and contrast different ideas about the purposes of government in different nations, nation-states or governments.
- C3.6.1 Define the characteristics of modern nation-states.
- C4.3.1 Explain how governments address national and international issues and form policies, and how the policies may not be consistent with those of other nation-states.
- G4.4.1 Identify factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict between and among cultural groups (control/use of natural resources, power, wealth, and cultural diversity).

Common Core Literacy Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Teacher Preparation and Instructional Resources

- Teachers should plan to use this lesson in conjunction with a larger unit about government, cooperation and conflict, or on Southeast Asia.
- Teachers should become familiar with the subject area by previewing the articles and videos in the Sources section as well as the Extension Options and Additional Resources. Not knowing something is okay, but it's a complicated issue so a basic understanding is essential here to avoid needless confusion.
- Teachers should be prepared to support multiple discussions, both small group/partners and in a large group. Routines and norms for these discussions should be established ahead of time. Students will also be prompted to write informally in a class journal, scraps of paper, or on an online discussion board.
- Teachers should be able to project or share video clips with students. Chart paper (or a digital version) will be needed. All handouts are available to be assigned via Google Classroom or other Learning Management System.
- Teachers should supply any art materials and paper required for students to complete their Choice Board Project. The process for submitting and sharing work should be accommodated if assigned digitally.
- There are a few opportunities in this lesson for the teacher to share some personal experiences and stories; if you cannot supply your own, you can create a hypothetical situation instead.
- Students will need easy access to computers with an internet connection.

Lesson Sequence

Opening

1. Begin by posing this question to the class: *When have you felt powerless in a situation? How did you overcome or move past that feeling?*
 - a. Students can respond in a class journal, slips of paper, or an online discussion board (though responses should be kept as private or anonymous as possible for now).
 - b. Ask volunteers to share their feelings in the situation, not necessarily the circumstances.
 - c. Keep track of these descriptions on a whiteboard or chart paper for later.
2. Relate to and validate their feelings. Tell your own story of feeling powerless and comment on the descriptions provided by the students.
3. Ask some follow-up questions for discussion or for them to write further in their journals (alternatively, you can give one question to a table group and have them discuss and share out):
 - a. *When you felt powerless, did you want to blame someone else?*
 - b. *Do you think you have ever wanted to make someone else feel powerless? What advantage would that give you?*

- c. They can perhaps relate to feelings of being a 5th grade student - top of the school - and how they may have felt more powerful than younger students. Why is that?
 - d. Well, I'm older than you. Should a teacher make students feel powerless?
 - e. My principal is more powerful than me. Should he make me feel powerless? What advantage would he have if he did that?
 - f. What about a country's government? The government is way more powerful than I am, should it try to make me feel powerless?
 - g. Allow students to generate discussion questions as well.
4. Have students use a Think-Pair-Draw protocol to express a response to the following questions: What advantage would the government have if they took away the powers I have as a citizen? Why would a government want to make me feel powerless?
 - a. Give time for students to write independent responses in their class journals.
 - b. Give time for student pairs to summarize their thoughts, not just read their journals to each other.
 - c. Give time for pairs of students to represent their ideas through a drawing or symbols. Ask them to label their drawings or describe the symbols. Either share these drawings by grouping pairs together or posting in the classroom and conducting a casual gallery walk.
 5. Discuss the patterns found in the drawings or assign as an exit ticket - What is similar? What are some themes that stand out to you? What is an idea that got you thinking?
 - a. These responses can serve as a formative assessment of student thinking and processing of these big ideas. Be sure to address misconceptions.

Guided Inquiry

6. Distribute [Handout 1](#) for students to begin learning about the term nation-state. They will work independently for some areas, and with partners for other areas as indicated on the handout.
 - a. Have partner groups corroborate their ideas with other partner groups, then discuss the results as a large group.
 - b. What are the patterns of what we think "nation-state" means? Look up this definition and post it on the classroom wall where it can be easily found.
7. Distribute [Handout 2](#) for students to begin learning about citizenship. They will work independently, in a table group, and with a partner to complete this handout.
 - a. Discuss the responses to the last prompt on the handout in table groups, then share out with the class.
 - b. An extension idea is to have students draw a stateless person, labeling all the things they wouldn't be able to do or things that were taken from them.
8. Let's begin to study one nation-state in particular so we can look closer at how the government there is using its power to limit the citizenship of an ethnic group.
9. *Optional:* Show the video "[Geography Now! Myanmar](#)" to students. The hosts speak quickly, so consider slowing playback speed to 0.75.
 - a. You can pause the video at each segment to discuss or take notes. This video serves to give a brief overview of the country, its location, and some cultural background. Students can use an atlas during the video to look at or point to these places for themselves.
10. Distribute [Handout 3](#) for students to collect background information about Burma/Myanmar's government, demographics, and history.

- a. Students may complete this independently as homework or complete in pairs during class.
11. Close this Guided Inquiry with a discussion about the last section of Handout 3. What do you think the government might use its authority to do to keep the Rohingya people powerless? Students should be able to tie this back to their work on citizenship, predicting that the Rohingya people might be stateless or there might be violence against them.

Collaborative Inquiry

12. Why are the Rohingya being targeted like this? Why does the government want these people to be powerless? Let's do some background reading.
- a. Assign the NEWSELA article appropriate for each student's reading level
 - i. [Why are Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims fleeing to Bangladesh? \(1090L\)](#)
 - ii. [Why are Rohingya Muslims being forced to flee Myanmar? \(900L\)](#)
 - iii. [Why Rohingya Muslims are fleeing Myanmar in droves \(790L\)](#)
 - iv. [Why Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims are fleeing to Bangladesh \(590L\)](#)
 - b. Allow time for students to independently read their article and respond to the TQE prompts in class journals, which can be collected as a formative assessment:
 - i. What are your *thoughts* as you learn about this?
 - ii. What *questions* do you have about why this is happening? (If a student claims to have no questions, then have them write a summary of the article.)
 - iii. What *epiphanies* have you had as you learn about this?
13. *Optional:* Based on the responses from students, decide whether showing [this video](#) may assist students to understand the conflict between the Rohingya people and others in Myanmar, specifically in Rakhine State.
- a. students can work in pairs to create a timeline of events in Myanmar's history
14. Look at the questions students posed in their responses to step 12. Be sure that the following ideas are included in the discussion: Why are the Rohingya being targeted like this? Why does the government want these people to be powerless? Why does this government use its power to limit citizenship?
- a. Write each student's question on a separate sheet of paper (students can do this) and post them around the room for later.
15. Let's look more closely at this by learning about one person's story. Wai Wai Nu was 18 when she was sent to prison. She had committed no crime, but her father was a schoolteacher and political activist in Rakhine State. So, Wai Wai, her mother, brother, and sister were all arrested too. Since her release from prison in 2012, Wai Wai Nu had dedicated her life to changing human rights policies in Myanmar and to help all disenfranchised women in the world. She is the founder of the organization [Women's Peace Network](#) and has spoken to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Let's hear more of her story.
- a. Wai Wai Nu tells about her life as she speaks to the Oslo Freedom Forum in 2017, "[My Struggle for Burma's Future](#)"
 - b. article from the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "[Wai Wai Nu, Rohingya activist: 'I am not free. My community is not free. My country is not free.'](#)"
16. Go back to the chart paper from step 1c in the Opening. What feelings did you share about being powerless that were similar to what Wai Wai Nu said about her experience?

- a. Have a student highlight those responses on the chart paper. Allow students to verbally summarize these patterns.
17. Because of my experience in the Teacher Program, I am using my notes from our conversation with Wai Wai Nu for the first page of [Handout 4](#).
 - a. Give students time to read and annotate this handout.
 - b. Each student should choose one of the excerpts and one of the options from the digital choice board as their independent project.

Reflection and Conclusion

18. Have students do a Think-Pair-Share on this prompt: What is the government's goal when it takes citizenship away from groups of people?
 - a. Replies should include ideas of powerlessness, lack of belonging, disadvantage, hope they will leave, prove they don't like them...
19. Have students re-visit the questions posted from step 14.
 - a. You can do a Chalk Talk routine with each question on a separate chart paper and students silently walk around the room responding to the prompts on the chart paper. You can then have students read aloud and summarize the collected responses.
 - b. Alternatively, you can give each table group a question and have them present a summary of their discussion ideas to the large group one by one. Other groups can add to or challenge the ideas.
20. Have students write a response to this prompt: So, if Myanmar's goal was to make the Rohingya feel powerless, did it work on Wai Wai Nu?
 - a. Students should respond with a claim and provide at least one example to support.
 - b. Show this [short clip](#) of Wai Wai Nu profiled by TIME Magazine and have students discuss or respond in their class journals.
 - i. What is the positive message that she explains at the end?
 - ii. How can we use that message here at our school and community?

Assessment Ideas

21. When students have completed their Choice Board Project, have them add a paragraph to explain their work. Look for evidence of the learning goals and enduring understandings.
 - a. Using the thinking routine, "I used to think..., but now I think..." is a helpful guide for reflection.
22. Students can respond to the other driving questions: What does it mean to be stateless? Why would a government want to make certain people feel powerless?
 - a. student responses should contain a claim and supports, including examples from the lesson and their Choice Board Project.

Extension Options and Additional Resources

- Teaching Tolerance lesson "Exploring the Refugee Experience": <https://www.tolerance.org/node/122986>
- AJ+video, "Why I left Myanmar for America": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQQLh3RPOqI>
- article and radio segment, "What it's like to become a U.S. citizen after a lifetime of statelessness": <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-09-18/what-it-s-become-us-citizen-after-lifetime-statelessness>

- works by Greg Constantine, “Nowhere People”: <https://pulitzercenter.org//nowhere-people-greg-constantine-human-face-statelessness>; <http://www.nowherepeople.org/new-page-1>; <http://www.nowherepeople.org/exiled-to-nowhere-burmas-rohingya>
- Migration Policy Institute, “Surge in violence against Myanmar’s Rohingya spurs world’s fastest-growing refugee crisis”: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-10-2017-issue-2-surge-violence-against-myanmars-rohingya-spurs-worlds-fastest-growin-g-refugee-crisis>
- Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, “The stateless Rohingya”: <http://children.worldstateless.org/3/migration-displacement-and-childhood-statelessness/the-stateless-rohingya.html>

Sources

- Image: https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/styles/press_release_feature/public/UN0226412.JPG?itok=6KznIAsG
- Handout 1: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-COtK1t5G0gBWaw-hF9iXyb8V20BJyiclgMup7NUXyY/edit?usp=sharing>
- Handout 2: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A1pykvXtDUFr_8yXOGzkIBgYf9zI8o6daQ_-1m14rD0/edit?usp=sharing
- Handout 3: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wUzEYP37IGkuqbWu2IaCjhxw9FdSOa1pc5Cnr9RWB8/edit?usp=sharing>
- Handout 4 and Choice Board Project: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/10YtBDwBt3fukGRSXsBK5dKevX5mtrM-9-b1KSCGVI/edit?usp=sharing>
- Geography Now! Myanmar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMaaUTWzv8U>
- Myanmar - The Rohingya Crisis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bDgDiBO4Co>
- NEWSELA article, “Why are Rohingya Muslims being forced to flee? (L900)”: https://newsela.com/read/myanmar-rohingya-crisis/id/35379/?search_id=d4c4d7ee-3c53-4e59-b78f-755eeaf4bca5
- Women’s Peace Network: <https://www.womenspeacenet.org/>
- Wai Wai Nu speaks at the Oslo Freedom Forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyYEo6dTmw>
- article, “Wai Wai Nu, Rohingya activist: “I am not free. My community is not free. My country is not free.”: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/WaiWaiNu.aspx>
- TIME magazine video clip, “The Activist Bridging a Democratic Divide “: <https://time.com/collection-post/4684884/wai-wai-nu-next-generation-leaders/>
- Nations Online (Myanmar) https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/myanmar_map2.htm
- United States Department of State: <http://www.state.gov>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

Handout 1 - What is a nation-state?

On Your Own: Read through these definitions of the terms “nation” and “state.” **Highlight** the part of each definition that you think would help someone understand the political term “nation-state.”

nation <i>noun</i>	state <i>noun</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. a large body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own: <i>The president spoke to the nation about the new tax.</i>2. the territory or country itself: <i>the nations of Central America.</i>3. a member tribe of an American Indian confederation.4. an aggregation of persons of the same ethnic family, often speaking the same language or cognate languages.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the condition of a person or thing, as with respect to circumstances or attributes: <i>a state of health.</i>2. the condition of matter with respect to structure, form, constitution, phase, or the like: <i>water in a gaseous state.</i>3. status, rank, or position in life; station: <i>He dresses in a manner befitting his state.</i>4. the style of living befitting a person of wealth and high rank: <i>to travel in state.</i>5. a particular condition of mind or feeling: <i>to be in an excited state.</i>6. an abnormally tense, nervous, or perturbed condition: <i>He's been in a state since hearing about his brother's death.</i>7. a politically unified people occupying a definite territory; nation.8. the territory, or one of the territories, of a government.9. any of the bodies politic which together make up a federal union, as in the United States of America.10. the body politic as organized for civil rule and government (distinguished from church).11. the operations or activities of a central civil government: <i>affairs of state.</i>

On Your Own: Based on these definitions, what do you think a nation-state is?

With a Partner: Check to see what you have the same so far. If you have different ideas, discuss your thinking.

With a Partner: What are some synonyms for the term “nation-state”?

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With a Partner: Is the United States a nation-state? Give your reasons.

With a Partner: The Executive Branch of the United States government has a cabinet called the Department of State. The person who runs that department is called the Secretary of State. Their website is www.state.gov. In these ways, what do you think the word “state” refers to? Copy and paste the part of the definition of “state” from the page above.

On Your Own: Considering the meanings of “state,” if a person is described as being “stateless,” what do you think that means?

Handout 2 - What does it mean to be a citizen?

On Your Own: Go to dictionary.com and search the term "citizen." You will see four different interpretations of that definition. Copy and paste all of them below.

On Your Own: Which definition do you think best applies to our discussions about governments and the power they have over citizens? Copy and paste just that one below.

On Your Own: Explain your thinking. Why did you think you chose the right one?

With Your Group: Check your responses with the others at your table. Did you all choose the same one? If you didn't, discuss your picks and decide if you want to change your choice.

With Your Partner: What are advantages to being a citizen of a country? What do citizens get to do? Work with your partner to come up with as long of a list as you can.

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With Your Partner: About 30 countries in the world, like the United States, have a law called *jus soli* (which means “right of soil” in Latin) which means that you become a citizen of the country just by being born here. Most of the other countries, like India, have a law called *jus sanguinis* (“right by blood” in Latin) which means you become a citizen of that country if one (or both) of your parents is a citizen there. Some other countries have very strict laws about how people get citizenship, such as: only if your father was a citizen, only if your family has lived there for over 60 years, or only if you can prove that you are fully integrated into the society.

Why do you think countries would make it very easy or very difficult for people to become citizens?

A country would make it very easy to become a citizen because...

A country would make it very difficult to become a citizen because...

On Your Own: What would life be like for someone if their country took away their citizenship? Imagine you have citizenship in a country and you’ve lived your whole life there. Suddenly, the government changes the law and your citizenship has been striped away because of your race, your religion, your ancestors, or for a reason you don’t understand. How do you think your life would change? What do you think you would do? What problems do you think you would face as someone who is “stateless”?

Handout 3 - Burma (Myanmar)

Use the information from [CIA World Factbook](#) to complete these questions about Burma/Myanmar.

1. Open "Government" and scroll to the bottom of the first section "Country Name." Read the note given there. What is the reason that the CIA World Factbook lists this country under the name Burma instead of Myanmar?

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2. Use the various sections of the Burma CIA World Factbook page to collect the following information:

GOVERNMENT	
government type	
capital city	
regions	
states	
independence date from which nation	
citizenship by birth	
citizenship by descent only	
chief of state/head of government	
state counsellor	
PEOPLE AND SOCIETY (demographics)	
population	
ethnic groups (add percentages)	
language	
religions (add percentages)	
life expectancy at birth	
literacy (total population)	

3. Move the labels to the correct spots on this map of Burma. You can use the maps on CIA World Factbook and [this website](#) to guide you.



Bay of Bengal
India
Bangladesh
Andaman Sea
Rakhine State
Thailand
Laos
China

4. The following passage is from the Introduction section. **Highlight** the sentences that explain how Burma became a colony of the United Kingdom and then became independent.

Various ethnic Burman and ethnic minority city-states or kingdoms occupied the present borders through the 19th century, and several minority ethnic groups continue to maintain independent armies and control territory within the country today, in opposition to the central government. Over a period of 62 years (1824-1886), Britain conquered Burma and incorporated all the groups within the country into its Indian Empire. Burma was administered as a province of India until 1937 when it became a separate, self-governing colony; in 1948, following major battles on its territory during World War II, Burma attained independence from the British Commonwealth. Gen. NE WIN dominated the government from 1962 to 1988, first as military ruler, then as self-appointed president, and later as political kingpin. In response to widespread civil unrest, NE WIN resigned in 1988, but within months the military crushed student-led protests and took power. Since independence, successive Burmese governments have fought on-and-off conflicts with armed ethnic groups seeking autonomy in the country's mountainous border regions.

5. The following passage is also from the Introduction section. **Highlight** the sentences that explain why the Burmese government first attacked the Rohingya people of Rakhine State.

Attacks in October 2016 and August 2017 on security forces in northern Rakhine State by members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya militant group, resulted in military crackdowns on the Rohingya population that reportedly caused thousands of deaths and human rights abuses. Following the August 2017 violence, over 740,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh as refugees.

Handout 4 - Conversation with Wai Wai Nu and Choice Board Project

- **speaking to large groups (including the UN):** she doesn't get nervous because she is telling her own story and telling it from her heart.
- **how did the situation get so bad:** "Slow-burning genocide" - gradually took away rights in "delicate" way over 40 years - 1970s to 1990s and became more severe to 2012; change was so delicate, so slow, cannot see how it becomes so severe - step by step - UN cannot take action because each step was so minor.
- **how has Myanmar further limited rights:** Rohingya only allowed 2 children - if more, those children are "blacklisted" with no access to anything, their existence can be criminalized, no record of their existence, if try to emigrate often through human trafficking which created an entire industry
- **what motivates her:** she is determined to stay hopeful for the younger generations, solidarity, work to create allies, community is strong - most hopeful when working with people and not so much when working with governments...
- **her family:** Born in Burma, grew up in Yangon (modern, urban, less discrimination), both parents are Rohingya Muslims, father was English teacher, became involved in politics, when "democratic" revolution of 1988 caused military to "hunt down" politicians, including her father (who still corrects her English grammar), Her father formed a teachers' union to support the Democratic Uprising - seen as a politician - lost his job in 1988, still tutored on the side, arrested, Wai Wai says "I inherited his work", her father is proud but worried, especially bc she's a woman, Rohingya culture - female's role - no work outside home - not outspoken - "I am an exception."; Wai Wai does not wear scarf on purpose - to break that tradition of expectations; her relatives are religious leaders, higher social status, tradition to be involved in community work
- **what was prison like:** Worst part of prison was not knowing when she'd be released - losing hope and dreams as a teenager, hard to accept to be treated as criminal when I know I didn't do anything wrong, to be treated like this by the officers, this experience transformed into my strength, took care of mother and sisters, therefore interacted with officers more, started helping others too, she had no strategy, just saw what needed to be done and just did it, seven years in prison, released with change in power in 2011
- **your goals/current work:** Founder of Women's Peace Network - mission is peace-building, education development, human rights advocacy - positive outlet, prove friendship in diversity is possible, convince leaders to take correct action, "Can't have democracy with genocide in the backyard," Wai Wai produces the UPI report for UN Human Rights Council on behalf of Rohingya, has not been in the country since beginning of 2018 - working for attention to situation, putting self in danger
- **what do you want people to know:** The privilege, freedom you have is not sustainable unless you keep working for it. Any group can become "outsiders" within one generation; Freedom we have can change if not aware of condition - as a child never aware I'd become an outsider in my own country and be unwanted

CHOICE ONE

Create visual art (hand-drawn, collage, sculpture, etc.) to represent Wai Wai's perspective shown by the excerpt you chose

CHOICE TWO

Using Wai Wai's words and your own, write a poem (free-verse, rhyming, etc.) as a reflection on your chosen excerpt

CHOICE THREE

Wai Wai's goal is to teach the world about what is happening to the Rohingya people. Write a public service announcement (script, poster, video, etc.) informing others about this situation. Use your chosen excerpt as the focus of your work.

CHOICE FOUR

Wai Wai's story is both about things being taken away and then building new things. Create a visual slideshow which symbolizes this process - each slide removes a symbol then begins to build with new symbols. Use your chosen excerpt to focus this part of her story.

CHOICE FIVE

WAI WAI NU HAS A COMPLEX STORY TO TELL. USE THE IDEA OF A GRAPHIC NOVEL TO TELL A PART OF HER STORY. CHOOSE ONE OF THE EXCERPTS AS THE FOCUS FOR THE PART OF THE STORY YOU WILL TELL.