



17. What is Copyright?

The Internet has changed things dramatically for creative artists, making “copyright” an important topic for digital citizens to know about and understand. In this first lesson (which may take a couple class meetings to complete), students will be introduced to this important law by making a “creative work” of their own. This provides a framework for lessons that follow in **fair use, the public domain, Creative Commons, remix, mashups**, and more. Students will learn why it’s important to respect creative works they find online and, hopefully, be inspired to make and share creative works of their own.

Key Standards—CCSS.ELA-LITERACY: SL.7.1, SL.7.1.A, SL.7.1.B, SL.7.1.C, SL.7.1.D, L.7.3, L.7.3.A, L.7.6. ISTE: 1c, 1d, 2b, 2c, 3d, 6a, 6b, 6d, 7c. CASEL: 1d, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5f.

Learning Objectives

Students will...

- ✓ Gain a basic understanding of copyright law.
- ✓ Work together to make a creative work of their own.
- ✓ Perform and record a creative work to share with others.



Introducing The Lesson

Kick off this lesson by helping students understand that a **“creative work” is any original artistic creation**, such as a poem, drawing, essay, video, photo, dance, video game, painting, and more. Explain that nearly everyone is a creative artist. For example, ask students: *Have you taken and posted a photo on social media? Then you are a photographer!* Go around the room and ask students to give examples of creative works they might have recently made.

The Lesson

1. Once students have shared their examples, point out again that this illustrates they are *all* creative artists. Explain that the rights of creative artists are protected by **copyright law**. This law ensures artists get credit for or even paid for their work. Copyright law goes into effect the moment an artist “records” a creative work they’ve made—by writing it down, taking a photo, shooting a video, or uploading a blog post to the Internet, for example. Once that creative work is recorded, the artist is automatically protected by this important law.

The Lesson, continued

3. Screen [Video 1].

4. Remind students that all recorded work is automatically protected by copyright law, even if it doesn't display the © copyright symbol. Registering creative work with the U.S. Copyright Office isn't necessary, but it does make it easier to protect works against "infringements" (as they will learn in a moment). Explain what this means and have students record:

- **INFRINGEMENT:** The act of breaking the terms of a law.

5. Tell students that while "creative works" are protected by copyright, some things are **not** protected by copyright, such as (more about this in future lessons): *Ideas, Facts, and U.S. Government Documents*.

6. Explain the following terms (have students record):

- **COPYRIGHT:** An important law that gives the owner of a creative work the right to determine how other people can use it. This law helps creators receive credit for and get paid for their work.

Copyright is *different* from a trademark, which is this:

- **TRADEMARK:** A symbol, word, or words legally registered or established by use as representing a company or product.

7. Explain that when Internet users aren't careful about how they use the online creative work of others (by downloading, copying and pasting, or sharing), it might be considered stealing. It's important to be respectful of the creativity and hard work an artist puts into making a poem, story, photo, song, dance, blog post, video game, or other creative work that might be found online.

8. The best way to help students understand this is by providing a relevant example. Ask: *Has anyone ever heard of or played the game Fortnite?* Likely, nearly every student will be familiar with this game. Tell them that in 2018, Epic Games (the developer of Fortnite), was sued for **stealing dance moves without permission**, and was also accused of exploiting various African American artists' talent without credit. Screen [Video 2] and then discuss.

9. Tell students that Milly Rock eventually dropped his lawsuit against Epic Games following a Supreme Court decision (on another case), which ruled that copyright infringement lawsuits must wait until the copyright is registered before moving forward.

Activity

10. Divide your class into small groups of 4-5 students. Explain that each group should come up with *their own original dance moves*. Since dance moves often need music, they should also come up with their own original music (no copyright infringements in this class!). This can be a very simple dance, with a simple tune, and even lyrics. If students do have access to musical instruments, encourage them to use whatever they have, however even clapping their hands will work. The point is for students to work together to make something that is truly original, creative, and their very own!
11. The next step is for students to **record** their work as they perform it. If you can...have each group enter your classroom separately to perform (so their classmates don't see/hear what they have created), **or** have them find a place where they can do this where their classmates can't see or hear. Each group could designate one member (perhaps someone who does not want to "perform") to use a phone or other digital device to make a video recording of the performance. Have each group **send you their video before your next lesson.**

Goal

The goal of this lesson is for students to begin to understand copyright law.



CREATIVE WORK

Any original artistic creation, such as a poem, drawing, essay, video, photo, dance, video game, painting, and more.

INFRINGEMENT

The act of breaking the terms of a law.

COPYRIGHT

An important law that gives the owner of a creative work the right to determine how other people can use it. This law helps creators receive credit for and get paid for their work.

TRADEMARK

A symbol, word, or words legally registered or established by use as representing a company or product.