

# MY SENATOR AND ME A DOG'S-EYE VIEW OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

## MY SENATOR AND ME

### A Dog's-Eye View of Washington, D.C.

by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, ill. by David Small  
Ages: 6-12

Themes: U.S. Government, Washington, D.C., Pets, Conflict Resolution, Friendship, People At Work, Humor

## SUMMARY

Splash is a real-life dog belonging to Senator Edward Kennedy and a familiar face on Capitol Hill. Splash accompanies the Senator on his busy days of meeting with other lawmakers, voting on bills, and holding press conferences. Splash takes students through the underground corridors of Capitol Hill and into important committee meetings. The only place he can't go is the Senate Floor! Through Splash's eyes, students will gain a fundamental understanding of the responsibilities of a senator and how laws are made in America. They will also connect with the special place that pets hold in the hearts and lives of their owners.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will make text-to-self connections.
- Students will identify the steps of lawmaking in the American government.
- Students will identify their state senators and write a letter to one of them.
- Students will identify significant landmarks in Washington D.C.

## BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Locate Washington D.C. on a map. Explain to students that this is the home of the U.S. government. Then, using Power Point or photographs, identify significant landmarks in Washington, D.C., such as the White House, the Capitol Building, the Supreme Court, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial. Give students a brief summary of the history and/or functions of each building. Encourage the students to look for these landmarks in the program.

Explain to students briefly what a senator is and does. Identify your state's senators, and locate their webpages online, providing students with a brief biography of each one. Create a "My Senators" chart with the students. For each senator, guide students in filling out the following categories:

- Political party
- Years as a senator
- Job before becoming a senator
- Committees
- Personal information

## AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Invite students to bring in pictures of pets that they have. If a student does not have a pet, encourage him/her to draw a picture or cut a picture out of a magazine of a pet that he/she wishes to have. Then, give students the opportunity to share details about his/her pet such as: where the pet came from, activities that the pet likes to do, and how old the pet is. Encourage students to make text-to-self connections between activities they do with their pets and activities Senator Kennedy and Splash do.

Guide students through writing a persuasive letter to one of their senators. Help students focus on a current issue that is important to their personal lives, school, or community. Students should identify three to four reasons why they feel strongly about the issue and support each reason with at least three details or examples. Students should complete the steps of the writing process: brainstorming, planning, writing, revising/ editing, creating a final draft. Model a business letter format for students. Send students' published letters to their senators.

Use the book, *My Senator and Me*, to walk students through the steps of how a bill becomes a law. (If students are unfamiliar with what a bill is, offer a brief definition.) Create a flowchart for students to summarize the steps detailed in the book. Break the class into two groups, representing the House and the Senate. In each group, form smaller "committees." Then, introduce a mock bill for students to vote on, acting as the Congress. The bill should be related to an element of the school or classroom, such as extended library time on Fridays, or personal computer time for students who reach certain goals. Have each committee discuss the pros and cons of the bill and present any suggested changes to the class. Then have the Senate and House groups vote on the bill. If it passes, have students create a poster that explains the law. Post this in the classroom and follow the law's guidelines for a week or for the rest of the month.

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