These two relief carvings on the outside of the Nebraska State Capitol represent the foundations of our judicial system in events that occurred in past civilizations. Modern governments and citizens can learn from how people lived and governed themselves in the past.

1. How do the activities in these two drawings remind you of a scene from a modern courtroom? It appears like there is an attorney pleading for a client in front of a jury.

2. Why is it better for a government to hold trials to determine guilt or innocence than for citizens to respond to crimes themselves? A victim may want to take revenge before all the facts of the case are known. Trials decide guilt beyond a reasonable doubt and follow special rules of order.

3. Why is it important for members of a jury to be fair and unprejudiced before they begin a trial? So that people can get a fair trial.

4. Who can be members of a jury? How are they selected? Citizens are chosen from voter registration and motor vehicles registration records to form a jury pool. The attorneys from each side interview the jurors and choose 12 plus alternates to be on the jury.
These two relief carvings on the outside of the Nebraska State Capitol represent the foundations of the executive branch in events that occurred in past civilizations. Modern governments and citizens can learn from how people lived and governed themselves in the past.

1. In these two drawings what are these people doing? The leaders and the citizens are discussing and trying to make a binding legal document through which a government can function.

2. In a democracy, who determines who will be the president or governor? Citizens who vote. Why is it important for all people in a democracy to vote in the election? So that all people and all views can be represented, not just a particular group.

3. In a democracy, do citizens have a right to require their leaders act according to their wishes? How can we be sure they do? Citizens can be sure that their leaders vote according to their wishes by communicating with their elected leaders, watching how they vote and not voting for them again if they do not vote as they wish.
These two relief carvings on the outside of the Nebraska State Capitol represent the foundations of the legislative branch in events that occurred in past civilizations. Modern governments and citizens can learn from how people lived and governed themselves in the past.

1. What is happening in these two drawings? Laws are being created and made available for the citizens to use as they govern themselves and live together.

2. Why is it important to have laws to govern how people live together? Laws organize all interactions in the public arena so that everyone is treated fairly and the public does not get hurt by the actions of some.

3. How do citizens participate in making laws? Write to elected leaders, testify at public meetings and hearings, discuss laws with others and encourage them to become involved.

4. How does a person become a lawmaker? File and run for office.
MEN SHOULD NOT THINK IT SLAVERY TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF THE CONSTITUTION FOR IT IS THEIR SALVATION — Aristotle

LAWS AND CONSTITUTIONS SPRING FROM THE MORAL DISPOSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STATE — Plato


1. What is the purpose of a constitution? Constitutions govern how the citizens and their leaders interact. Constitutions set limits on what government can do and indicate what the citizens want their governments to do for them.

2. Is it possible for citizens to make changes in the constitution? How can Nebraskans change their constitution? Yes, citizens can amend their constitutions. At a national level citizens are asked to approve amendments created by their representatives. In Nebraska citizens have the right to petition and amend the constitution through an act of the citizens without their representatives.
Match the branch of government with the historic event on the exterior of the Capitol. Draw a line from the branch to the event.
These two paintings in the Governor’s Reception Room of the Nebraska State Capitol represent the rights and responsibilities of the citizens in a democracy. Representative democracy relies on the involvement of citizens in the government. Study the actions of the people in the paintings closely.

1. What freedoms guaranteed by the first amendment are the citizens in the image on the left exercising? Freedom of speech and assembly.

2. What civic responsibility are the citizens on the right exercising? Rights of suffrage, right to vote in a free election.

3. How can citizens use the activities pictured above to involve themselves in the promotion of laws? Citizens can vote for their leaders, they can speak out about proposed laws, they can assemble and speak to their elected leaders.