

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview:
Harm or Not? – Rapid-Fire Challenge (8-10 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students distinguish between actions that justify government force (harm to others' life, liberty, property) and those that do not.

Instructions

1. Read each scenario below aloud. Students must immediately respond with one of two answers: (1) "Government may act" or (2) "Not the government's role."
2. After each, call on one student: "Based on what?" (They must justify their answers using the principles explained by Locke, Bastiat, or Mill in the last section.)

Key

1. A man steals \$500 from his employer.
Government may act (theft — violation of property).
2. A teenager drinks alcohol at home alone.
Not the government's role (personal behavior — Mill).
3. A business owner lies in advertising and tricks customers into buying defective products.
Government may act (fraud — deception harming property/consent).
4. A citizen refuses to attend school.
Not the government's role (from a Locke/Bastiat/Mill framework — no direct harm to others' rights).
5. A neighbor builds a fence on another person's property.
Government may act (trespass — violation of property).
6. A man gambles away his savings.
Not the government's role (self-harm/personal choice — Mill).
7. A company dumps toxic waste into a river used by others.
Government may act (pollution — harm to others' property/health).
8. A person spreads cruel gossip that ruins someone's reputation.
Debatable (moral wrong; students must argue whether it rises to a legal violation and causes "harm").

Wrap-Up/Debrief

Press students with these:

- "What counts as harm?"
- "Is emotional harm the same as physical or property harm?"
- "Where does law stop and personal responsibility begin?"

Not everything that is wrong should be punished by government—but what government does punish should be rooted in justice: protecting people from violence, theft, and oppression.