

Two Kinds of Law

Describe natural relationships and distinguish them from community rules.

SC.6.N.3.2 "Recognize and explain that a scientific law is a description of a specific relationship under given conditions in the natural world. Thus, scientific laws are different from societal laws."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline statements that describe a natural relationship or its conditions. Circle statements about rules that people create or enforce.

Laws in Nature and Society

- ① On the Moon, an astronaut can drop a hammer and a feather at the same time. With almost no air, both fall toward the ground and land together if released from the same height. This event is not caused by a rule made by people. It happens because of a natural relationship. Scientists observe patterns like this many times, measure them carefully, and describe what occurs under stated conditions. Their description can help people predict another drop on the Moon.
- ② A scientific law describes a specific relationship in the natural world. For example, under the Moon conditions in the first example, objects released together fall at the same rate, even when their masses differ. A law tells what happens when those conditions are met. It does not command nature to behave. Scientists may revise a law's wording or limits when new evidence shows that the description needs improvement. The law is useful because it summarizes repeated observations and supports predictions.
- ③ Societal laws are different. People create them to organize communities and protect people or property. A town might require bicyclists to use lights after dark. Police officers and courts can enforce that rule, and leaders can change it. Gravity would still pull objects downward whether or not a town wrote any rules. Scientific laws describe natural relationships under given conditions, while societal laws tell people what they must or must not do. Mixing the two meanings of law can make a science explanation unclear.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 What natural relationship does the Moon example describe, and what condition makes the example work?

- 2 According to the passage, what does a scientific law do, and what does it not do?

- 3 Why can a scientific law help scientists make predictions?

- 4 Give two differences between a scientific law and a societal law.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write three sentences about a natural event. In the first two sentences, describe a specific relationship and the conditions where it occurs. In the third sentence, explain why your description is not a societal law.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline statements that describe a natural relationship or its conditions. Circle statements about rules that people create or enforce. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What natural relationship does the Moon example describe, and what condition makes the example work?	A hammer and feather released from the same height fall together on the Moon because there is almost no air.
2	According to the passage, what does a scientific law do, and what does it not do?	It describes what happens when stated conditions are met. It does not command nature to behave.
3	Why can a scientific law help scientists make predictions?	It summarizes repeated observations of a relationship, so scientists can predict what will happen when the same conditions occur.
4	Give two differences between a scientific law and a societal law.	A scientific law describes a natural relationship under given conditions. A societal law is created by people, can be enforced, and can be changed by leaders.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Under standard atmospheric pressure, pure water freezes at 0°C. This describes what happens when the conditions are met and can help predict the freezing point. It is not a societal law because people did not create or enforce it.

Accept accurate natural relationships that name relevant conditions and describe what happens. The final sentence should clearly distinguish the student's description from a people-made, enforceable societal rule.