



THE MUSEUM OF *We the People*

Independence Mall | 525 Arch Street | Philadelphia, PA 19106

Congress of the United States
A convention held at the City of New York
on Wednesday the fourth of March in the second year of our independence

BILL OF RIGHTS

★★ Lesson Plan ★★

GRADES
3-5

Article the Fourth

Article the Sixth

Article the Seventh

Article the Eighth

Article the Ninth

Article the Tenth

Article the Eleventh

Article the Twelfth

Article the Thirteenth

Article the Fourteenth

Article the Fifteenth

Article the Sixteenth

Article the Seventeenth

Article the Eighteenth

Article the Nineteenth

Article the Twentieth

Article the Twenty-first

Article the Twenty-second

Article the Twenty-third

Article the Twenty-fourth

Article the Twenty-fifth

Article the Twenty-sixth

Article the Twenty-seventh

John Adams, Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson, which includes a pre-lesson and several post-lesson ideas, is intended to be used in conjunction with the National Constitution Center's *Bill of Rights* show. Together, they provide students with first-hand experience with one of our nation's most important documents.

In this lesson, students begin by learning about the specific rights and freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights. In order to understand the ten amendments clearly, they work in small groups to act out different amendments through role playing.

After the NCC program, which provides students with an overview of the Bill of Rights, its history, and its modern-day relevance, students return to the classroom to participate in one of two follow-up activities. In the first activity, students make connections between the ten amendments and real-life scenarios through playing *Bill of Rights Bingo*. In the second activity, students write and ratify a Bill of Rights for their classroom.

Designed for students in grade 3-5, this lesson takes approximately three or four class periods from beginning to end.

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BACKGROUND

Americans enjoy a wide range of rights, from the freedom to practice religions of their choosing to the right to a trial by jury. Many of the rights and freedoms that we associate with being American are protected by the Bill of Rights, or the first ten amendments of the United States Constitution.

When the Constitution was signed in 1787, it was missing a Bill of Rights. But many people in the ratifying conventions that followed, believed that the Constitution needed a section that preserved fundamental human rights. James Madison set out to write this section. Madison introduced his ideas at the First United States Congress in 1789, and, on December 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights was ratified by three-fourths of the states.

More than 300 years later, the Bill of Rights still protects many of the rights that Americans hold most dear, including freedom of speech and of the press, the right to bear arms, and protection from unreasonable search and seizure.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify and understand the ten amendments that comprise the Bill of Rights.
- Role play specific amendments in action.
- Make connections between real-life scenarios and the Bill of Rights.
- Write a Bill of Rights for their classroom community.

GRADE LEVEL(S)

3-5

CLASSROOM TIME

- Two 45-minute class periods (pre-lesson)
- Two 45-minute class periods (post-lesson)

HANDOUTS

- Decoding the Bill of Rights
- Bill of Rights Bingo Playing Card
- Bill of Rights Bingo Scenarios

CONSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS

Amendments 1-10

STANDARDS

5.1.3.D: Identify key ideas about government found in significant documents:

- Declaration of Independence
- United States Constitution
- Bill of Rights
- Pennsylvania Constitution

5.1.3.B: Explain rules and laws for the classroom, school, and community.

5.2.3.A: Identify personal rights and responsibilities.

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

1. Introduce students to the Bill of Rights by leading a discussion about the rights and freedoms it protects. Ask the following questions to guide the discussion.

- What is the Bill of Rights? What does it consist of? Which document is it part of?
- What is an amendment?
- What are examples of important rights and freedoms that Americans have because of the Bill of Rights?
- What are examples of *other* rights and freedoms that Americans have?
- What are examples of rights and freedoms that Americans do *not* have?

2. Distribute the handout *Decoding The Bill of Rights* so that students understand exactly which rights are protected by which amendments. This handout includes both the original language in the Bill of Rights (preamble and ten amendments) and parenthetical translations in language that younger students will more easily understand. Ask the following questions to guide a discussion about this handout:

- Which of the ten amendments are familiar to you? How did you first learn about them? Why do you think they were familiar to you?
- Which of the ten amendments are new to you? Why do you think you are less familiar with these amendments?
- Are any of the ten amendments confusing to you? If so, what questions do you have about them?
- Why do you think it is important that Americans have these rights and freedoms?

3. Like the rest of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights is written in language that can be challenging for many students to understand. To help students gain a solid grasp of what the Bill of Rights actually says, have them translate the document into their own words—by acting it out!

Divide students into small mixed-ability groups (3 or 4 students per group), and explain that each group will be role playing one of the ten amendments in action. For this activity, consider dividing the first amendment into five separate parts (freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion, freedom to assemble, and freedom to petition the government). You may also want to consider using only the amendments that are most understandable to younger students, like the first, second, third, and sixth. Assign each group one amendment or section of an amendment. Students should work as a group to create a role play that illustrates their amendment in action. Explain that their role plays can take place anywhere (in a classroom, on a playground, in front of the White House, etc.) as long as they demonstrate what the amendments mean.

Once all groups have prepared their role plays, invite a group to perform in front of the class. Give other students an opportunity to guess which amendment the group acted out and explain why. Continue until all groups have performed their role plays.

POST-LESSON ACTIVITIES

Below are two options for follow-up activities that will help your students apply what they have learned during the *Bill of Rights* show to other classroom experiences.

BILL OF RIGHTS BINGO

As the *Bill of Rights* show explains, Americans exercise the rights and freedoms protected by the first ten amendments on a daily basis. In order to encourage students to make connections between real-life scenarios and the rights and freedoms preserved by the first ten amendments, play a round of *Bill of Rights Bingo* with them as a post-show activity.

Distribute copies of the *Bill of Rights Bingo Playing Card* to students (one per student or pair of students) and instruct them to fill in each of the blank spaces with one of the first ten amendments. Since the playing card includes 16 spaces, students will need to repeat amendments, but they should use each amendment at least once.

Begin the game by reading one of the 16 real-life scenarios provided on the *Bill of Rights Bingo Scenarios* handout. As you read each scenario, students should mark the square with the specific amendment that the scenario illustrates. After reading each scenario, briefly discuss with students why it illustrates that specific amendment. The first student or pair of students to mark four squares in a row correctly (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally) wins the game.

CLASSROOM BILL OF RIGHTS

Once your students have participated in the *Bill of Rights* show, they should understand that writing and ratifying the first ten amendments was no easy feat for James Madison and his fellow delegates. After all, they were responsible for determining which rights and freedoms Americans would enjoy from their government, not just in the 1700s, but today!

Have students write a Bill of Rights for your classroom, and challenge them to take it just as seriously. Explain that it's their job to write ten amendments that will give students the types of rights and freedoms they expect to enjoy in a classroom and protect students from having their rights infringed upon. To get students thinking about what may belong in a Bill of Rights for their classroom, lead a brief whole group brainstorm before breaking students into smaller groups to work. Examples of possible classroom amendments include:

- Students have the right to express their opinions, provided they do so in a respectful and appropriate manner.
- Students have the right to ask for help when they have a question or do not understand something.
- Students have the right to play outside for 30 minutes each day, provided the weather is good and they follow all recess rules.

Have students write first drafts in groups of 3-4. Then pair off groups into larger groups of 6-8 and have them combine their drafts into single drafts. Continue this process until the class is divided in half with two different drafts. Have students work as an entire class to combine both drafts into a single classroom Bill of Rights that at least three-fourths of them will ratify. Have students sign the final document and hang it in the classroom.

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

If time allows, consider having students write opinion letters to their representatives or senators in response to the following prompt:

The Bill of Rights was written more than 200 years ago when our country was, in many ways, a very different place. Over time, the Constitution has been amended, or changed, and now includes a total of 27 amendments. But the original Bill of Rights has not changed.

If you could add one more amendment to the Bill of Rights, what would it be and why? Be sure to explain the right or freedom your amendment would protect and why you believe it is important for Americans to have that right or freedom.

FURTHER RESOURCES

NCC's Interactive Constitution

www.ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution

NCC's Bill of Rights

www.constitutioncenter.org/ncc_edu_The_Bill_of_Rights.aspx

NCC's Bill of Rights online game

www.constitutioncenter.org/BillOfRightsGame/Final.swf

DECODING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

THE PREAMBLE TO THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Congress of the United States begun and held at the City of New-York, on Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.

(On March 4, 1789, the Congress of the United States held its first meeting in New York City.)

THE Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.

(The conventions of many states wanted additions made to the Constitution to make sure that the government did not abuse its powers.)

RESOLVED by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring, that the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution; viz.

(Two-thirds of the Senate and the House of Representatives voted that the amendments below should be proposed to the state legislatures and become part of the Constitution if three-fourths of the state legislatures approved them.)

ARTICLES in addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution. Note: The first ten amendments were ratified December 15, 1791, and form what is known as the “Bill of Rights.”

(The Bill of Rights—or the first ten amendments of the Constitution—was approved on December 15, 1791.)

AMENDMENT I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

(Congress cannot pass laws that establish a specific religion for Americans, forbid Americans from practicing their own religions, or interfere with Americans' freedom of speech, press, the right to gather peacefully, or the right to express disagreement with the government.)

AMENDMENT II

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

(Americans have a right to bear firearms—or guns—legally.)

AMENDMENT III

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

(The government cannot force Americans to keep soldiers in their homes during times of peace.)

AMENDMENT IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

(Americans cannot have their personal property searched without a proper warrant and just cause.)

AMENDMENT V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

(Americans cannot be forced to be witnesses against themselves; Americans cannot be tried for the same crime twice; Americans cannot be deprived of life, liberty or property without a proper trial.)

AMENDMENT VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

(Americans deserve the right to a fair trial, which includes an impartial jury, an opportunity to question witnesses against them and to find witnesses in favor of them, and access to an attorney.)

AMENDMENT VII

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

(Civil, or non-criminal suits, must be tried by jury.)

AMENDMENT VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

(When accused of crimes, Americans are protected from excessively high bail amounts or fines and from brutal punishments.)

AMENDMENT IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

(Americans are entitled to enjoy additional rights and freedoms not included in the ten amendments.)

AMENDMENT X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

(Powers not granted to the Federal government belong to the states and the people.)

Source: www.constitutioncenter.org/ncc_edu_Text_of_the_Constitution.aspx

BILL OF RIGHTS BINGO PLAYING CARD

Fill out each of the 16 spaces with one of the first ten amendments found in the Bill of Rights. You will need to repeat several amendments in order to fill in all the spaces, but be sure to use each amendment at least once.

BILL OF RIGHTS BINGO SCENARIOS

Scenario #1: The death penalty is only legal in certain states and can only be used in cases of homicide. *(Amendment 8)*

Scenario #2: Before entering a suspect's home, a police officer shows a search warrant. *(Amendment 4)*

Scenario #3: A registered voter receives a summons to report for jury duty. *(Amendment 6 or 7)*

Scenario #4: In 1965, the Supreme Court found that couples have a right to "marital privacy," which is not specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

Scenario #5: A group of people assemble on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. *(Amendment 1)*

Scenario #6: When being interrogated by police, a person refuses to answer certain questions and chooses to remain silent. *(Amendment 5)*

Scenario #7: When a passenger sues a city transportation authority because she sustained neck injuries, the case is decided by a jury, not by a judge. *(Amendment 7)*

Scenario #8: In Pennsylvania, a person has to be at least 16 years old to apply for a learner's permit for driving; in Alaska you can apply at age 14. *(Amendment 10)*

Scenario #9: A teenager goes duck hunting with her father in October. *(Amendment 2)*

Scenario #10: During election season, a local newspaper publishes an editorial endorsing one candidate over another. *(Amendment 1)*

Scenario #11: A person accused of murder cannot afford to hire a lawyer and is assigned a public defender. *(Amendment 6)*

Scenario #12: In 2000, members of the Ku Klux Klan organized a rally outside of a courthouse in Skokie, Illinois, a historically Jewish town. *(Amendment 1)*

Scenario #13: A student chooses to sit silently in his seat during the Pledge of Allegiance. *(Amendment 1)*

Scenario #14: In 1982, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the State of New York for evicting striking correctional officers and allowing members of the National Guard to live in their housing instead. *(Amendment 3)*

Scenario #15: A family displays a Nativity scene on the front lawn during Christmas. *(Amendment 1)*

Scenario #16: A police officer administers a Breathalyzer test because she has probable cause that the driver has been drinking.

Whether planning a field trip, looking for innovative ways to enhance classroom instruction or seeking a deeper understanding of American history and active citizenship, the National Constitution Center is an educator's ultimate civic learning resource.

Learn more at

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