



Why the Bill of Rights Matters to You

Grade Levels: 7-10

Number of class periods: Two (About 55 minutes) with opportunity to extend learning.

Lesson Overview

This lesson will allow students to use primary sources, the Bill of Rights, and Supreme Court cases in conjunction with the game “That’s Your Right” and the Annenberg Guide to the Constitution. Students will be able to understand the meaning and importance of the Bill of Rights as well as how it safeguards freedoms and protects citizens from government intrusion in everyday life. Students will focus on primary sources, the Bill of Rights and real-life scenarios to prepare them to play the game “That’s Your Right.” Afterward, students can extend learning by exploring real Supreme Court cases that affect students in schools.

Objectives

Students will be able to analyze primary sources to assess the point of view of the author in examining the importance of the Bill of Rights.

Students will be able to identify essential liberties protected in the Bill of Rights and understand how the Bill of Rights limits the powers of the federal government by examining each amendment.

Students will be able to evaluate the importance of each amendment to make connections to real-life situations.

Students will be able to understand how the Bill of Rights guarantees freedoms that protect opinions and property against arbitrary government interference.

Students will be able to use historical thinking skills to analyze how the Supreme Court interprets the application of the Bill of Rights by examining three cases on the rights of students in schools.

Materials

Suggested materials to use before this lesson

Annenberg Classroom video: [The Story of the Bill of Rights](#): The story about the struggle over the Bill of Rights is told in this documentary, which explains how these individual freedoms that often are taken for granted today were controversial among the founding fathers and how they were eventually ratified. Ten short videos address each of the amendments.

Lesson Plan Materials

Student Handouts (4): Primary Sources, Coin Amendment, Scenarios and Supreme Court extension.

Annenberg Classroom Game: [That's Your Right](#)

[Annenberg Guide to the Constitution](#)

Essential Questions

How does the Bill of Rights protect essential freedoms found in daily life?

How does the Bill of Rights balance the power of government with the protection of basic rights?

Why does the Bill of Rights matter to you?

Procedure

DAY 1 – Introduce Bill of Rights

Students will start the lesson with the Bill of Rights Worksheet #1 (Primary Sources), which focuses on the importance of the Bill of Rights through analysis of primary source quotes from presidents and Supreme Court justices. Discuss the worksheet with students. Continue the lesson with Worksheet #2 (Coin Amendments), which [will familiarize them with the coins \(amendments\) and the importance of each right they protect to play the game "That's Your Right."](#) Students can finish the worksheet for homework.

DAY 2 – Practice scenarios and play game

To warm up for the game, students will complete Worksheet #3 (Scenarios). Once the class has discussed the scenarios, introduce the game and have them play it for the remainder of the class period either against each other or individually. A [tutorial](#) on how to play the game is found on the site of the game. Students should use the Coin Amendment worksheet to help them with the game.

Homework or Extension Activity

How has the Supreme Court ruled on issues relating to students' rights in schools? Students will apply their learning from the previous worksheets and the game "That's Your Right" to learn about real Supreme Court cases pertaining to students in schools.

6th-8th Grade Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

9th-10th Grade Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claim.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Worksheet #1 – Primary Sources

Name _____

Purpose of the Bill of Rights – Primary Sources

Read the primary sources and explain the author's point of view regarding the Bill of Rights

1. “If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.” – George Washington
2. “I consider trial by jury as the only anchor yet imagined by man by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution.” – Thomas Jefferson
3. “A Bill of Rights is what the people are entitled to against every government, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.” – Thomas Jefferson
4. “If the First Amendment means anything, it means that a state has no business telling a man, sitting alone in his own house, what books he may read or what films he may watch.” – Justice Thurgood Marshall (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1967-1991)
5. “Above all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content.” – Justice Thurgood Marshall

6. “The 4th Amendment and the personal rights it secures have a long history. At the very core stands the right of a man to retreat into his own home and there be free from unreasonable governmental intrusion.” – Justice Potter Stewart (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1958-1981)

7. “The government must pursue a course of complete neutrality toward religion.” – Justice John Paul Stevens (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1975-2010)

8. “To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.” – Frederick Douglass (Abolitionist)

9. “In our adversary system of criminal justice, any person hauled into court, who is too poor to hire a lawyer, cannot be assured a fair trial unless counsel is provided for him.” – Abraham Fortas (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1965-1969)

10. “If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.” – Justice William J. Brennan (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1956-1990)

Worksheet #2 – Coin Amendments

Name _____

We will be playing the “That’s Your Right” game! First, it is important to familiarize yourself with the coins (amendments) and the importance of each right they protect. Use this resource to examine the meaning and importance of each right: [Annenberg Guide to the Constitution](#)

Amendment Coin	Freedom/ Right Given	Meaning and Importance of Amendment
1.1	Freedom of speech	
1.2	Freedom of religion	
1.3	Freedom of the press	
1.4	Freedom of assembly	
1.5	Freedom to petition the government	
2	Right to keep and bear arms	
3	Protection against housing soldiers without owner’s permission	
4	Protection against unreasonable search and seizure	
5.1	Right to be indicted by a federal grand jury for a serious offense	
5.2	Protection against double jeopardy	

Amendment Coin	Freedom/ Right Given	Meaning and Importance of Amendment
5.3	Right against self-incrimination	
5.4	Right to due process	
5.5	Just compensation if government takes property	
6.1	Right to a speedy trial	
6.2	Right to an impartial jury	
6.3	Right to be informed of criminal charges	
6.4	Right to be confronted by adverse witnesses	
6.5	Right to assistance of counsel	
7	Right to a jury trial in federal civil cases	
8	Protection against cruel and unusual punishment	
9	People have other rights that are not specified in the Constitution	
10	Any power not listed is left to the states or the people	

Worksheet #3 – Practice Scenarios

Name _____

THAT'S YOUR RIGHT – Practice scenarios. You are almost ready to play the game! Warm up with these everyday situations related to the Bill of Rights. For each of the cases below, list the coin and amendment to which the situation would apply, then explain if you think the person affected would be protected under the Bill of Rights.

1. Tim told police that Paul is a video game thief. Police search Paul's home without a warrant.
2. Since Gary was always late to history class, his teacher duct-taped him to a chair for a week straight without food or water.
3. Arrested for stealing cookies from the cafeteria, Julia sat in jail for three years before her trial.
4. Chelsea signed a petition for her school to allow students to do absolutely no work and talk with their friends all day. She was suspended for her actions.
5. Since Rose's mom is such a good cook, the federal government decided to make her take in federal soldiers while they waited to be reassigned to Alaska.
6. Michael was at home with his dad when police arrested his dad for having a rifle in his house even though he had a permit and a license for the gun.
7. When James was arrested for driving 5 miles over the speed limit on his way to school, the judge set his bail at \$100,000.
8. After Emily was found not guilty of stealing a cell phone, the following week she was put on trial for the same crime.
9. Anthony's teacher forced his class to pray to a head of lettuce each morning.
10. Danielle was arrested for speaking about the dangers of climate change at a local park.

Worksheet #4 – Supreme Court Extension

Name _____

How has the Supreme Court ruled on issues related to students' rights in schools?

Case #1

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)

Issue: Freedom of Speech at School

Background

To protest the Vietnam War, three high school students in Des Moines, Iowa, wore black armbands to school. School administrators asked them to remove the armbands. When they refused, they were suspended. Saying their First Amendment rights had been violated, the students' parents sued the school district. The case made it all the way to the Supreme Court.

Questions

1. Do you think the students' First Amendment rights were violated?
2. What part of the First Amendment did the students say was violated?
3. How would you rule on this case if you were a justice on the Supreme Court?

Case #2

New Jersey v. T.L.O. (1985)

Issue: Privacy and Search Rights at School

Background

T.L.O. (Terry), a 14-year-old freshman at a public school in New Jersey, was caught smoking in a school bathroom by a teacher. The teacher took the girl to the principal, who questioned her and asked to search her purse. Inside her purse were a pack of cigarettes, rolling papers, and a small amount of marijuana. After the search, the principal called the police and Terry admitted selling drugs at school. Terry was found guilty of drug possession at a trial. Terry said that the search of her purse violated her Fourth Amendment protection against "unreasonable searches and seizures" and appealed her case to the Supreme Court.

Questions

1. Do you think Terry's Fourth Amendment rights were violated?
2. Why or why not?
3. How would you rule on this case if you were a justice on the Supreme Court?

Case #3

Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988)

Issue: Student Journalism and the First Amendment

Background

Journalism students at Hazelwood East High School in Missouri published a monthly school newspaper as part of a journalism class. One month, the students wrote an article about the rise in teen pregnancy and the impact of divorce on high school students. The school's principal thought these two articles contained too many personal details and contained sensitive materials and refused to publish them. The students went to court, saying their First Amendment rights had been violated. The case made it all the way to the Supreme Court.

Questions

1. Do you think the students' First Amendment rights were violated?
2. What part of the First Amendment did the students say was violated?
3. How would you rule on this case if you were a justice on the Supreme Court?

