



Lesson Plan: A “Commemorative” Bill of Rights

Context of the Unit:

These series of classroom lessons and activities focus on fifth grade standards in History/Social Science. The students will analyze and interpret historical primary documents, namely the Constitution’s Bill of Rights. Students will understand the Founders’ intent on securing individual liberties and limiting governmental power. Students will be able to compare and contrast the monarchies of Europe (chiefly, England) of the 1770’s and modern dictatorships with the democratic republic of the United States.

Context of the lesson within the unit:

The students will understand the revolutionary and evolutionary aspect of the creation of the United States, through writing about and artistically interpreting the rights and freedoms granted in the Bill of Rights, and how they affect people’s lives to the current day.

Prior Knowledge/Prior Lessons: Students have studied the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution. Students read “Can’t You Make Them Behave, King George?” by Jean Fritz. They wrote a Class Constitution at the beginning of the school year, wrote a class Preamble, and performed the song “We the People”.

Class Preamble (Rewritten by students):

“We the Students of Room 61, in order to form a more perfect classroom, establish fairness, ensure educational tranquility, provide for everyone’s safety, promote the general harmony, and secure the blessings of learning, to ourselves and our future, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United Students of Room 61.”

With the help of thinking maps (Double Bubbles), students compared and contrasted undemocratic societies (from stories they read ie. “Number the Stars”) with the United States. The reasons for the Revolutionary War were also discussed in class. The concepts of



“democracy” and “dictatorship” were discussed. Students understand the Founding Fathers’ intents on distinguishing the American democratic system from the British monarchy circa late 1700’s.

Standards Addressed: History Social Science

5.7.3 Understand the fundamental principles of American Constitutional democracy, including how the government derives its power from the people and the primacy of individual liberty

5.7.5 Discuss the meaning of the American creed that calls on citizens to safeguard the liberty of individual Americans within a unified nation, to respect the rule of law, and to preserve the Constitution

Standards Addressed: Language Arts

Reading:

2.2 Analyze text that is organized in sequential and chronological order

2.4 Make inferences, conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and prior knowledge

Writing:

2.2 Write responses to literature; demonstrate understanding of a literary work; support judgments through references to the text and to prior knowledge; develop interpretations that exhibit careful reading and understanding

Visual Arts: Artistic Expression

2.7 Communicate opinions, values or personal insights through an original work of art

Common Core State Standards for ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects K-5



College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading K-5

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Craft and Structure

3. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Objective(s):

Students will have a deeper understanding of what rights and freedoms the people in our country are given, of the limits of governmental power, and why our government is often described as “We, the People”.

Students will have a deeper understanding that the Constitution is timeless, yet also a “living document”.



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Big Idea(s):

1. The United States Constitution is the foundation of the American democratic republic, and at its inception, distinguished the United States from the rest of the world.
2. The Constitution is timeless, durable, and binding to all Americans.
3. The Constitution is a living document.

Essential Questions/Issues/Higher Order Thinking Questions:

1. Why are the rights given to us in the Bill of Rights important for maintaining a democratic republic? (Analysis, Evaluation)
2. How would our country be today if we didn't have free speech, religious freedom, freedom of the press, the right to a lawyer and a jury trial, the right against unreasonable searches and seizures (without a warrant), the right to have fair punishment if convicted of a crime, etc.? (Analysis, Eval.)
3. How would our country be today if our government was a monarchy (ruled by kings and queens), instead of a democratic republic? (Analysis, Eval.)
4. What rights do we have in school and at home? What responsibilities do we have at school and at home? Can a person have rights without responsibilities? Why or why not? (Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation)
5. What would a “Bill of Rights” for a school be like? (Synthesis, Evaluation)
6. Is freedom “free”, or is it very costly? Explain. (Analysis, Evaluation)
7. Why did the Constitution need additional amendments, such as for the abolition of slavery, and women's right to vote? (Analysis, Evaluation)



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8. If you were chosen to add a new amendment to the Constitution, what would you write? Why? (Synthesis, Evaluation)

9. How would Anne Frank's life have been different, had her family escaped to the United States, instead of living in German-occupied Holland during World War Two? (Analysis, Eval.)



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Assessment: Students will be evaluated through teacher observation and during class discussions, informal checking for understanding, writing assignments, quality of artwork (understanding of ideas and creativity), and formal assessments. (Rubrics for stamp, three paragraph essay and persuasive letter)

Quality Criteria:

Necessary components of Essay—Content, Conventions to support topic (see rubric)

Necessary components of the Commemorative Stamp—Content, Creativity, Connections to concepts (see rubric)

Necessary components of the Persuasive Letter—Content of writing, Evidence/Reasoning, Conventions (see rubric)

Teacher Formal Assessment—Essay questions, multiple choice, cloze, Research reports

Rubrics:

Scoring Rubric for Commemorative Stamp:

Required Elements:

1. Drawings of pictures and/or symbols that represents a right or freedom granted in the Bill of Rights
2. The letters USA, and the price of the stamp
3. Your name written on the stamp

4 pts. Your stamp has all the required elements. Your stamp relates an excellent understanding of the right/freedom. The graphics are excellent--colorful and very detailed.

3 pts. Your stamp has all the required elements. Your stamp relates a satisfactory understanding of the right/freedom. Good graphics, colorful and somewhat detailed.



2 pts. Your stamp has most of the required elements. Your stamp relates a limited understanding of the right/freedom. It may need additional details and effort. Graphics are fair, but may lack many details.

1 pt. Your stamp has only some of the required elements. Your stamp relates a very limited or no understanding of the right/freedom. It is incomplete and lacks many details. Graphics show little to no effort.

Scoring Rubric for Three Paragraph Essay:

Required Elements:

1. The first paragraph will be a copy of the exact wording of your amendment as written in the Constitution.
2. The second paragraph will tell what a specific right or freedom in this amendment means. You will write this in your own words. You will give an example of how this amendment affects our life today.
3. The third paragraph will explain how your commemorative stamp represents and relates to the specific right/freedom of the amendment.
4. The essay is written in complete sentences with correct spelling, grammar, capitalization and punctuation.
5. The content of your writing must show accurate information, understanding of the amendment.
6. Your writing should be neat and legible.

4 pts. The essay has all the required elements, and the writing is consistently excellent, with many details.

3 pts. The essay has all the required elements, and the writing is consistently good, with some details.

2 pts. The essay has 1-2 required elements missing, and the writing is inconsistent and lacks details.



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1 pt. The essay is missing 3 or more required elements, and the writing is incomplete, illegible, or shows a lack of details and understanding. The writing may be difficult for the reader to follow.



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Activity Steps:

Students will read, discuss, and write their interpretation of one of the various amendments in the Bill of Rights in a three paragraph essay.

Students will design an original work of art--a commemorative stamp-- representing a key right or freedom granted in the Bill of Rights, and describe in writing how their stamp represents or symbolizes that right or freedom.

Based on the book “Number the Stars” by Lois Lawry (set during WWII) students will write a persuasive letter to Ellen Rosen, trying to convince her why her family should move to the United States from German-occupied Denmark. The letter should specify why they would have more freedom (specific to their chosen freedom) in the U.S under our Constitution than under the Germans, and how their lives might be different.



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References:

- 1) <http://bensguide.gpo.gov>
- 2) www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html
- 3) www.cms-ca.org/constitution_day.htm
- 4) www.crf-usa.org
- 5) [www.mce.k12tn.net/reading23/number the stars.htm](http://www.mce.k12tn.net/reading23/number_the_stars.htm)
- 6) [www.ccle.fourh.umn.edu/children literature.pdf](http://www.ccle.fourh.umn.edu/children_literature.pdf)
- 7) www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2008/pr08_136.htm
- 8) <http://constitutionday.wikispaces.com/>
- 9) www.constitutioncenter.org
- 10) www.civiced.org/index