



## THE BILL OF RIGHTS: OUR GUIDE TO AMERICAN FREEDOMS

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**Subject Matter:** Social Studies - The United States Bill of Rights

**Grade Levels:** 7-9

**Time Allotment:** One 50-minute class session as part of an overall study of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, U.S. Bill of Rights and/or The Federalist Papers

**Master Teacher:** Ken McCoy

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### Overview

This lesson provides students with an introduction to the United States Bill of Rights, especially as it relates to the United States Constitution. Students will research the various aspects of the Bill of Rights and make applications to their daily lives through a discussion board, where they will remark on experiences, ask questions and state opinions – all based on their independent discovery of the Bill of Rights.

### Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and defend important aspects of the Bill of Rights as they apply to their daily lives.

### Oregon Standards Available at:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/cifs>

### Social Sciences - Civics and Government

- Understand the purposes of government as stated in the Constitution and the specific provisions that limit the power of government in order to protect the rights of individuals.
- Understand the powers of each branch of government as stated in the Constitution.
- Understand citizens' rights and how the Constitution protects those rights.

## Media Components

### Video

Check the link at <http://www.opb.org/edmedia/trs/> to find access to the video(s) from unitedstreaming™ referenced in this lesson plan.

- “Bill of Rights” (15:09)
  - **Clip:** “A Brief History of the Bill of Rights” (02:05)
  - **Clip:** “Some Opinions About Our Rights” (00:32)
  - **Clip:** “The First Amendment: Freedom of Speech” (02:09)
  - **Clip:** “The Second Amendment: The Right to Bear Arms” (03:09)
  - **Clip:** “The Fourth Amendment: Protection from Unreasonable Search and Seizure” (03:10)
  - **Clip:** “Interpreting the Bill of Rights: Controversial Issues” (02:49)

### Web

- **U.S. National Archives & Records Administration: The Charters of Freedom**  
The complete Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and U.S. Bill of Rights, including links to amendments and signers of the documents.  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/charters\\_of\\_freedom/charters\\_of\\_freedom.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/charters_of_freedom.html)
- **Explore the Constitution**  
Web site for the National Constitution Center which includes the documentation of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Also includes an interactive “Save the Bill of Rights” game in the “For Kids” section (as of this writing, to access the game, click on the image rather than the “Play” link).  
<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/explore/TheU.S.Constitution/index.html>
- **U.S. Government Forum**  
Created by Ken McCoy specifically for this lesson, this public discussion board allows students to share their experiences, knowledge and questions regarding the U.S. Government – specifically the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights. (Users register for a free and immediate new user account; teachers can request “moderator” status via email.)  
<http://www.arborwood.com/forums/usgovernmentforum>
- **Stu Dent’s U.S. Government Blog**  
Created by Ken McCoy, specifically as an example for this lesson, to illustrate an option for fulfilling assignments.  
<http://usgovernmentexample.blogspot.com/>

## Materials

- A copy, electronic or book form, of the Federalist Papers for reference (See Web site listings for this lesson, the public library and most bookstores.)
- A copy, electronic or paper form, of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, The U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Bill of Rights for students to read (See Web site listings for this lesson, the public library, most bookstores or many textbooks.)
- A computer (or computers) with Internet connectivity, the Windows Media Player installed and downloads of the video clips listed above
- Red and white beans, enough for each student to have 4 of each
- 4 clearly labeled small opaque containers and lids with small holes (only large enough for a red or white bean) punched through the lid
- Large opaque container for all beans
- A copy of the Bill of Rights Scenarios and Discussion Tally Sheets for each student (at end of lesson plan)
- A copy of the Bill of Rights Assignment Sheet for each student (at end of lesson plan)

## Prep for Teachers

Acquire materials and equipment.

Download and preview the video clips, discovering helpful points to highlight for students during discussion and activities. Acquire the free Window's Media Player to view clips.

Create a list of appropriate Internet sites and search methods to aid students in independent discovery, printing them out as a handout and/or bookmarking them on class computers or creating a Web site with links. Prepare each computer to be used with the necessary plug-ins for Web sites used (especially the free Flash and Shockwave Players available at <http://www.macromedia.com/>).

When using media, provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites or other multimedia elements.

## Teacher Activities

**Discussion Board:** Visit the discussion board regularly to supervise and evaluate student contributions. Though you may choose not to post messages, it will be important to read your students' posts. Send an email to the discussion board moderator to request moderator privileges so you will be able to quickly remove postings that may be offensive or go against the spirit and intent of the discussion board.

**Web Logs:** Acquire the Web addresses of active student blogs so you can periodically check progress and comment via email.

## Introductory Activity

Give each student a ziplock bag of beans and their Bill of Rights Tally Sheet. First, explain that the Tally Sheet is not to be recorded until their vote is cast. Explain that each red bean is a negative vote and each white bean is a vote in favor. Give the class the Bill of Rights Scenarios for Discussion in succession, passing around clearly labeled containers in which students can cast their votes. Each student must place a single bean in the container and record their vote along with any notes in defense of their vote. Students should be encouraged not to discuss a scenario before or during voting, but instead to save any comments for a class discussion following the voting period. Students will want to keep their vote, tally sheet, notes and remaining beans private. When the scenarios are complete and voting is finished, walk around the room with a large opaque container to confidentially collect remaining beans. (10 minutes)

## Learning Activities

**Step 1:** Introduce students to the concept of the Bill of Rights, including its importance, history, purpose and role in society today. (5 minutes)

**Step 2:** Following the voting period held during the Introductory Activity, give students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by having them identify which scenario fits within the First Amendment during the video clip, “The First Amendment: Freedom of Speech” (02:09), from the video, “Bill of Rights” (15:09). **Play** the clip.

**Step 3:** Allow students to discuss the scenarios from class or opinions stated in the video clip that relate to the First Amendment. Before sharing occurs, lay the ground rules for sharing opinions (best to be displayed or handed out for each member of the class):

- 1) We all have opinions.
- 2) We are all entitled to our opinions.
- 3) We are all free to share our opinions or not (a manifestation of the First Amendment).
- 4) No one is free to prejudge, retaliate or belittle anyone else based on opinions upon which we may not agree.

While debate and discussion are important, respect must play a large role in that process. No name-calling or unacceptable behavior will be tolerated, and a person who breaks these ground rules may not be able to participate in the discussion. (5 minutes)

**Step 4:** As discussion concludes or time runs out, give students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by having them identify which scenario fits within the Second Amendment during the video clip, “The Second Amendment: The Right to Bear Arms” (03:09), from the video, “Bill of Rights”(15:09). **Play** the clip.

**Step 5:** Allow students to discuss the scenarios from class or opinions stated in the video clip that relate to the Second Amendment. Point out to students that, as with all controversial subjects, people are passionate on both sides of Second Amendment issues. (5 minutes)

**Step 6:** As discussion concludes or time runs out, give students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by having them identify which scenario fits within the Fourth Amendment during the video clip, “The Fourth Amendment: Protection from Unreasonable Search and Seizure” (03:10), from the video, “Bill of Rights” (15:09). **Play** the clip.

**Step 7:** Allow students to discuss the scenarios from class or opinions stated in the video clip that relate to the Fourth Amendment. Ask students if the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 influence their decisions and if they think those events should have such an influence on our thinking. (5 minutes)

**Step 8:** Acknowledge the fact that the class time and the public nature of the class did not allow for much discussion, either due to time constraints or the fact that some may not feel completely comfortable making their opinions known in the class environment. Despite these reasons, stating our opinions is still an important thing to do, not only in life, but also for the purposes of this lesson. (1 minute)

**Step 9:** Hand out the Bill of Rights Assignment Sheet. As you do, explain to students that for the next few weeks, they will be responsible for commenting on their own experiences, questions and opinions – all based on their study and independent discovery of the Bill of Rights. Students will have multiple ways in which to exhibit this aspect of the lesson and to gain an assessment of their efforts. (1 minute)

*Note: Steps 10 through 12 can be included in part or in whole depending on your preference, class make-up, etc.*

**Step 10:** The first way students may fulfill the assessment portion of the lesson is to write a paper addressing the assignment. Give a deadline for the paper along with any particular details of your expectations. (If you’d like to encourage use of other options, make this option unattractive through difficulty, length, deadlines, etc.) Ask students to consider the strengths and weaknesses of this option. (1 minute)

**Step 11:** Give students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by asking them to consider the strengths and weaknesses of this second option. Introduce students to the U.S. Government Forum discussion board at <http://www.arborwood.com/forums/usgovernmentforum>. In this option, students contribute to a public discussion and debate on the topic. Students who may not wish to contribute to this open discussion can still read postings to gain information. To evaluate participation, have students post a pre-determined number of messages covering topics, scenarios, insights, questions and/or amendments of your choice. This activity encourages ongoing participation. (3 minutes)

**Step 12:** Give students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by asking them to consider the strengths and weaknesses of this third and last option. Introduce students to the concept of Web logs, first through the example at <http://usgovernmentexample.blogspot.com/> (or one you create for each of them) and secondly through the Blogger Web site (located at <http://www.blogger.com/>). This avenue will give students a more private opportunity to express their opinions. To evaluate participation, have students write a pre-determined number of entries covering topics, scenarios, insights and/or amendments of your choice. If students choose this option, they must provide you with the address for their blog so you can assess their work. They may, of course, also give their blog address to anyone else they wish. This activity also encourages ongoing participation. (5 minutes)

## Culminating Activity

Students will contribute to the overall dialogue of the Constitution and Bill of Rights through their individual papers, discussion board postings and Web logs. Return to the concept and discussion of the Bill of Rights in days or weeks, and ask for informal and formal evaluations and insights from the students on other opinions, statements and beliefs. It will be important for students to examine the ways in which other views influence or shape their own. This activity can be formalized into a collaborative class paper, article for the school or local newspaper, or as a class Web site linking to papers, discussion board and/or blogs.

## Cross-Curricular Extensions

### Writing

- Students can rewrite the Bill of Rights in the vernacular and style of today, maintaining the all-encompassing purpose, accuracy and generality of the original authors.

### Speaking or Debate

- Have students participate in a mock trial regarding a particularly difficult aspect of constitutional law.

### Art

- Students can create a detailed timeline of the period beginning with the Declaration of Independence through today, including creation of important documents, and reactions to or results from these documents and their amendments.

## History

- Students can write a paper on one of the many Founding Fathers who was important in the formation of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, U.S. Bill of Rights or Federalist Papers.

## Community Connections

- Invite a constitutional lawyer or federal judge to speak to the class (consider representing varied and differing political views).
- Host a debate of political candidates, public servants and/or activists open to the public.
- Have the class write a collaborative newspaper article for the school or local newspaper.

## THE BILL OF RIGHTS SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION

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### Scenario One

A Web site was created in 1999 directly referencing Dr. Martin Luther King in its address. Its design and front page content are geared toward school-age students, including photographs of Dr. King and links to information about civil rights, Kwanzaa, rap, flyers to download and give out at school, etc. After exploring the site, it's discovered the Web site was created by a white supremacist group and is an effort to denounce the life and efforts of Dr. King.

*Is this right? Should any group be able to publish their opinion and gear it toward kids?*

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### Scenario Two

Following the shootings at Columbine High School, many people suggested that the violent acts of the two students could have been avoided with a simple search of their lockers, leading to evidence of troubled students who were on their way toward being a danger to themselves and others. If the administration of the school were to have the policy of open, surprise inspections of lockers, backpacks and personal effects, then students who were not a problem would have nothing to hide, but those who were troubled could be found and helped or expelled before violence occurred.

*Is this acceptable? Should school lockers be subject to search by school personnel?*

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### Scenario Three

In the last year, your aunt has had her car broken into twice, litter dumped on her lawn, a window of her house broken, a nasty note left in her mailbox and a lot of phone calls where no one is there. She's beginning to get pretty scared and decides to get herself a gun for protection. She talks to her neighbor about the situation and he says he has an extra gun and that she can have it. Your aunt keeps the gun in her nightstand and sometimes puts it in her purse if she's going to be out for very long. She knows that she should register the gun so that she doesn't get in trouble, but she's afraid something might happen during the eight-week waiting period.

*Is this okay? Can she have the gun?*

## THE BILL OF RIGHTS SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION TALLY SHEET

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### Scenario One


### Scenario Two


### Scenario Three


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## THE BILL OF RIGHTS ASSIGNMENT DETAILS AND OPTIONS

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### Assignment:

For the next few weeks, you will be responsible for commenting on your own experiences, questions and opinions – all based on your study and independent discovery of the Bill of Rights.

#### Of particular interest will be:

- Your experience of the way the Bill of Rights, in whole or in part, affects your life or the lives of others
- Your genuine questions regarding the specifics of the Bill of Rights and its importance
- Your clearly stated, and defended, opinions regarding the Amendments of the Bill of Rights

You will have multiple ways in which you may fulfill, and gain a grade for, this activity. You can concentrate on just one of the options below or include all of them in your efforts.

#### Option One:

Write a paper addressing the assignment. The due date for the paper is \_\_\_\_\_ and should be \_\_\_\_\_ pages in length. Follow typical guidelines for paper writing including footnotes, bibliography, double-line spacing, etc. as well as \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Option Two:

Visit the following teacher-created U.S. Government Forum discussion board on the Internet at <http://www.arborwood.com/forums/usgovernmentforum>. In this option, you will contribute to a public discussion and debate on the specifics of the assignment and more. Those who may not wish to contribute to this open discussion can still read postings to gain information. In order to receive credit for your participation, you must post a minimum number of on-topic messages covering aspects, scenarios, insights, questions and/or amendments of your choice. Teachers will moderate this discussion board, so be sure you follow the guidelines and terms of service for the board.

#### Option Three:

Visit the example Internet Web log available at <http://usgovernmentexample.blogspot.com/>. If you choose this option, you'll need to set up your own blog or sign in to one previously created for you. This avenue will give you a more private opportunity to express your opinions. To gain credit for your participation, you must write a minimum number of entries covering topics, scenarios, insights and/or amendments of your choice. If you choose this option, you must provide the teacher with the address for your blog so your work can be assessed. You may, of course, also give your blog address to anyone else you wish.

Remember, you may choose to work in any or all of these options.