



The Bill of Rights | Lesson Plan

Why is it essential to defend the protections afforded by the Bill of Rights in the face of changing societal and technological landscapes?

Students will understand how the Bill of Rights protects individual liberties against governmental overreach, its historical context, and its impact on their lives today.

Learning Objectives:

- Recall the total number of amendments in the Bill of Rights and the reasons for their creation.
- Identify the specific freedoms protected by the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 10th Amendments.
- Discuss the historical arguments for and against the Bill of Rights and its significance in limiting federal power.
- Analyze how the protections afforded by the Bill of Rights apply in modern contexts.
- Evaluate the role of the Bill of Rights in shaping American democracy and protecting civil liberties.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Bill of Rights:** The first ten amendments to the United States Constitution that enumerate specific prohibitions on governmental power.
- **Amendment:** A formal change or addition proposed and ratified according to the procedures laid out in the U.S. Constitution.
- **Civil Liberties:** Personal guarantees and freedoms that the government cannot abridge.
- **Due Process:** The legal requirement that the state must respect all legal rights owed to a person.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization, Political Science, Liberty, Freedom

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Bill of Rights* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Bill of Rights* (Click [Here](#))
- Copies of the Bill of Rights for each student
- Highlighters or colored pencils for each student



Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Discuss what the Bill of Rights is and why it was necessary, including the origin of these rights. Consider going over the following historical influences or briefly introduce them as the influences that the early Framers wanted explicitly stated in the Constitution:
 - Magna Carta (1215): established the principle that everyone is subject to the law, even the king, and guaranteed the right to justice and a fair trial.
 - English Bill of Rights (1689): further declared the rights and liberties of the people and was a key predecessor to the American Bill of Rights.
 - Enlightenment Philosophers: John Locke, Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacque Rousseau influenced the theories on natural rights to life, liberty, and property, which had a profound effect on the development of the Constitution.
2. Sum up by highlighting how the Bill of Rights was designed to protect individual freedoms and limit the powers of the federal government.
3. Give each student a copy of the Bill of Rights.
4. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one or two of the amendments to focus on. Ask them to read their amendments aloud within their groups and then discuss what these amendments mean in their own words.
5. Instruct each group to highlight key phrases in their assigned amendments that they find crucial or particularly relevant to society and civil rights. Encourage them to think about why these rights might have been included and how they protect individuals.
6. Have a representative from each group share a brief summary of their discussion with the class, focusing on the importance and reliance of the rights they explored.
7. Distribute the "Street Smarts: The Bill of Rights Worksheet" to each student and prepare to show the episode. Inform the class that the episode they are about to view will delve into several of the rights they've just explored in their readings. This will help them anticipate and confidently respond to the trivia questions presented during the video.

Watch and Complete (20 minutes)

1. Play the *Street Smarts: The Bill of Rights* video. Pause after each amendment discussed to review and fill out the worksheet. Focus on:
 - The 1st and 2nd Amendments: Describe and discuss their specific freedoms and their importance in American democracy.
 - The 5th, 6th, and 7th Amendments: Analyze their legal implications and the protections they provide against potential abuses of power.
 - The 10th Amendment: Evaluate its role in federalism and the distribution of power between federal and state governments.
2. After each segment, encourage students to discuss how these rights impact modern American life and legal issues.

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

1. Invite students to reflect on the entire Bill of Rights and discuss as a class which amendments they believe have the greatest impact on their lives today. Encourage them to think about how these amendments affect current events and societal issues.
2. Challenge the students to consider how different their lives might be without these specific amendments. Ask them to articulate why maintaining these rights is crucial for a free society.
3. Share that the Bill of Rights stands as a cornerstone of American democracy, safeguarding individual freedoms and embedding principles of justice and equality. These ten amendments balance governmental power with the unalienable rights of the people, reminding us that true liberty thrives when individual rights are respected. As a crucial element of our Constitutional framework, the Bill of Rights not only defines our nation but also inspires global aspirations for justice and democracy.
4. Assessment: Collect the completed worksheets to assess understanding and engagement.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.