



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

By Jennifer Juskowiak

Teacher's Guide

Lesson Overview

Students will analyze the roles and responsibilities of the Framers of the Constitution at the Philadelphia Convention. They will evaluate the men's motives and input into the formation of our government. Students will analyze why states would not accept the plan of government without a Bill of Rights, as well as the importance and relevance of these rights today. In this lesson students will take a deeper look into the specific causes and effects of the First Amendment as a cornerstone to the Constitution.

This lesson requires students to closely look at the impact of the First Amendment throughout history. It will require evaluation of the rights and responsibilities of American citizens and will call into question how the advancements of technology impact the original ideas, but not necessarily the concepts, of the Framers.

Correlations to the SVPDP curriculum can be found at the end of this lesson plan.

Suggested Grade Level

Upper elementary (grades 4–5)

Estimated Time to Complete

60 minutes

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson students should be able to

- explain why government is necessary;
- describe why it is important to limit the power of government;
- describe the purpose of the Philadelphia Convention;
- evaluate the roles and responsibilities of the Framers of the Constitution;
- evaluate the roles of the national government and how it protects individual rights and promote the common good;
- analyze the impact of the First Amendment throughout America's history;
- analyze the impact of technology on the First Amendment today.

Materials Needed

- *We the People: The Citizen & The Constitution* textbook
- *Foundations of Democracy, Authority* textbook
- *Foundations of Democracy, Privacy*, “Intellectual Tools for Solving Problems of Privacy”
- *Foundations of Democracy, Responsibility*, “Intellectual Tools for Deciding to Take on a Responsibility”

Before the Lesson

Allow the students the opportunity to individually brainstorm the “rights” they believe they have. Develop a class list of “rights” prior to discussing the meaning of the word. After learning the definition, the class will review the list and discuss whether each is an actual “right” they possess, or simply something they feel they deserve. Have students answer to: Where do we get our rights?

Lesson Procedures

1. As a class, review the problems associated with the Articles of Confederation (*We the People*, Lesson 7). Discuss how these problems led to the formation of the Philadelphia Convention. From Lesson 8 in *We the People*, review the purpose of the Philadelphia Convention, the responsibilities of the delegates at the convention, and what actually occurred. Have the students decide whether the Framers had the authority to create the Constitution and why they say yes or no. If they believe the delegates had the authority, have the students identify the source of authority. Review the fact that some people/states (Patrick Henry and Rhode Island) did not attend the convention because they suspected that the delegates were not going to complete the task handed to them.
 - Students can use the “Intellectual Tools for Deciding to Take on a Responsibility” to evaluate what the delegates went through when deciding to make the Constitution.
2. Discuss it. Although the Framers did not comply with the job they were originally given, on June 21, 1788 New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution (the number needed to ratify the Constitution) on the promise that the Framers would add a Bill of Rights. Thus the new government under the Constitution was scheduled to begin on March 4, 1789. It was only after the inclusion of the Bill of Rights that all thirteen states ratified the Constitution, with North Carolina and Rhode Island being the last two. Have the students determine why the states would not ratify the Constitution without the Bill of Rights. The students should point to the overbearing central government and the lack of individual freedoms they experienced under British Rule.
 - *Note:* On September 25, 1789, after several months of debate, the first Congress of the United States adopted twelve amendments to the U.S. Constitution—the Bill of Rights—and sent them to the states for ratification. The first two original amendments were not ratified (they concerned the number of representatives and the compensation of congressmen) thus we ended up with ten amendments, the first of which was the freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and petition.
3. As a class, read accounts of events that led to the formation of the “rights” described in the first amendment.

- Events can be written accounts pulled from the Internet or from literature (there are descriptions of events that impacted the Framers in *We the People*, Lesson 17).
 - Examples for freedom of the press
 - *John Peter Zenger (Profiles in American History)* by Karen Bush Gibson
 - Written account of James Franklin’s arrest for articles he published in his newspaper *The Courant*. He was Benjamin Franklin’s brother.
4. Break the students into groups and give them one of the events that influenced the First Amendment. Students will identify which aspect the event influenced (freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, or petition) and why it had such an effect to warrant the need for inclusion in the Bill of Rights.
 5. Have students identify instances where the First Amendment has impacted life today. The students should then specify an impact it has had on their own lives.
 6. Lead the students in a class discussion about the responsibilities that come with the rights given in the First Amendment. Ask them if there are times we give up or limit these rights. Have them describe situations where the First Amendment rights are limited or given up all together, then have them analyze why we are willing to give up or limit our rights in those instances.
 7. Conclude the lesson. Discuss how technology has influenced/affected the First Amendment, especially in relation to privacy (use “Intellectual Tools for Solving Problems of Privacy”).
 - Examples:
 - The Internet is far-reaching, which means electronic petitions can reach people from all over the country. This has the potential to reach more people instead of the limited few people that could be reached by traveling in the late 1700s.
 - Audio recordings can be made and edited to make it sound like someone has said, or implied, something they did not.
 - Video recordings can be obtained and used by others, even of events we want kept private.

Common Core State Standards

Students will

- quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inference from the text;
- determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
- explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text;
- determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies;
- integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably;
- identify the important rights of citizens of the United States;
- describe the important responsibilities of Americans.

Correlations to SVPDP Curricula

We the People: The Citizen & The Constitution, Level 1 (elementary school)

- Unit One, Lessons 1 and 6
- Unit Two, Lessons 7 and 8
- Unit Three, Lesson 16
- Unit Four, Lessons 17 and 18
- Unit Five, Lessons 22, 23, and 24

Foundations of Democracy, elementary school level

Authority

- Unit One, Lessons 1, 2, and 3
- Unit Two, Lessons 5 and 7

Privacy

- Unit One, Lessons 1 and 2
- Unit Two, Lesson 4
- Unit Three, Lessons 5 and 6
- Unit Four, Lesson 8

Responsibility

- Unit One, Lessons 1 and 2
- Unit Two, Lessons 3 and 4

Justice

- Unit One, Lesson 1
- Unit Two, Lessons 2 and 3