



## Lesson Plan: “Why is this important to *me*?”

### Activity Steps:

**Hook:** Teacher presents to the class the PowerPoint *The Constitution & Bill of Rights* An Introduction ©2002 Constitutional Rights Foundation. This PowerPoint introduces the project’s background information and leads into the unit on the Constitution.

### Procedure:

#### Focus activity:

Teacher asks students how they would feel if:

- there was a rule at lunch time that you could not talk to anyone about anything that happens at school
- there was a rule that they were not allowed to read about or listen to news that described anything negative about our government
- only teachers were allowed to talk to the principal

As a class, students discuss how they might react to these situations.

### Reading and discussion:

- Analyze how our society would be different without First Amendment freedoms
- Distinguish the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment

Teacher distributes the handout, “The Land of Cantdo...Where the First Amendment is Missing,” to the class. Teachers explains that this story is about a place where there is no Bill of Rights, no First Amendment. Students read the story as a class.

After students have completed the reading, teacher leads a discussion asking the following questions:

1. How would you like to live in Cantdo? Why?
2. What were some of the problems the family encountered?
3. What freedoms did the family miss having?
4. What laws were in place that took away personal freedoms? What were the freedoms that were taken away?
5. How would our lives be different if these freedoms were taken away?



Teacher writes “First Amendment” on the board (or on laptop with LCD projector) and leads students to list the First Amendment freedoms and what they mean.

- Speech – to be able to say what we want
- Assembly – to gather in groups
- Press – to write, televise, report, perform what we want
- Petition – request change or complain to and about the government
- Religion – to practice any religion [also, the government cannot start a religion].

Teacher passes out handout of the Bill of Rights and refers to the First Amendment.

Teacher lead class discussion by asking students, “How do you use these freedoms in your life?”

### **Content assessment:**

- Distinguish the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment
- Examine ways the First Amendment freedoms have affected everyday life
- Analyze why it is important to be responsible with these rights and freedoms

Teacher distributes the handout “First Amendment Freedoms.”

Teacher explains class assignment:

- Students are to illustrate and write a brief description of how each
- First Amendment freedoms have affected our everyday life  
(Students can refer to the story of Cantdo to get ideas.)

Teacher explains and assigns extended learning assignment

- Students choose one of three extended learning assignments ~



1. Students will create a “Mountain Book” (see handout for construction direction). Students will clip from a daily newspaper examples of stories or photos that deal with each of the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment: religion (church meetings, religious celebrations, religious issues, etc.); speech (speaker addressing an audience, letters to the editor, columnists, etc.); press (editorials, stories about press conferences, interviews, etc.); assembly (stories of meetings, demonstrations, parades, etc.); petition (articles dealing with citizens protesting governmental policy, with citizens criticizing government officials, with people organizing in opposition to those in authority, etc.). In addition, summarize in a sentence or two the nature of each example and analyze why it is important to be responsible with these rights and freedoms. (Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation)
2. Students will compose “I Am...” poems (see handout for format) using each protected right of the First Amendment as the basis of the poems. Then students will place the poems as the center of a collage that distinguishes the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment and illustrates the need for citizens to use First Amendment freedoms responsibility including what could happen when people are not responsible with their rights... Examples: freedom of speech ~Yell “fire” in a theater, freedom of press ~ take photos of people’s personal lives, freedom of assembly ~ riots break out during a protest, etc. (Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation)
3. Students will create a “Step Book” (see handout for construction directions) that distinguishes the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment, demonstrates how each First Amendment freedom affects everyday life, and why it is important to be responsible with these rights and freedoms. Students will illustrate and write a brief summary for each freedom. Illustrations can be student drawn and/or computer generated. (Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation)

## **Special Needs of students are considered in this lesson:**

Activities include multiple modalities of learning - verbal, non-verbal, written, creative art – that meet the needs of all learners. Extension ideas/activities can be substituted to address the needs of GATE students.

## **Extension Ideas:**

- Students create a political cartoon(s) that identifies citizens’ responsibility in using First Amendment freedoms.
- Students research and construct a PowerPoint arguing a time when people were not responsible with their rights.
- Pairs of students prepare a debate to defend one of the protected rights under the First Amendment.