

**TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT**  
***Lesson Title -The Bill of Rights***  
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**Grade –7**

**Length of class period –Two 42 minute periods**

**Inquiry**

1. Was the Bill of Rights a necessary addition to the Constitution?
2. How does the Bill of Rights protect individuals today? Are the 10 amendments comprising the Bill of Rights too broad or not specific enough?

**Objectives**

1. Students will recognize the protections given individuals via the Bill of Rights.
2. Students will demonstrate comprehension of the Bill of Rights by applying the rights to actual cases and discussing the decisions.

**Materials (The first two are attached)**

1. Copy of the Bill of Rights
2. Situation Sheet
3. Sets of laminated papers or cards displaying the Bill of Rights (1 set for each group of students)

**Activities**

1. This lesson ideally occurs towards the end of a unit on the Constitution. Ask students to review the reasons for adding a Bill of Rights to the Constitution and emphasize that some states insisted on a Bill of Rights in order to protect individual and state rights.
2. Post the Bill of Rights on a Smartboard or poster in the classroom. Introduce each of the 10 amendments to ascertain that students understand them. Students should be aware of limitations on rights such as yelling, "Fire" in a crowded stadium in regard to the freedom of speech or federal and state laws affecting the right to bear arms. Cover new vocabulary terms of libel, slander, double jeopardy, due process, eminent domain, search warrant, probable cause, and bail. Try to use concrete examples including famous cases such as *Mapp v. Ohio* to examine search and seizure rights or *Morse v. Frederick* to analyze the limitations on free speech. Also use examples more relevant to the student environment such as expressing an opinion in the school newspaper or the P.T.O. gathering in front of Town Hall to support a candidate.
3. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Each group will receive a situation from the list of situations as well as 10 laminated papers; each displaying one of the first ten amendments. Students must read the situations and then decide

which amendment might protect them in such a situation. A spokesperson for each group will read the situation to the entire class and hold up the amendment that applies to the situation. The class will then debate each dilemma. Each of the situations is based on an actual Supreme Court Case; all of which are identified on the second page of the attached Situation Sheet. An extension of this lesson might include having students read arguments in one or more of the cases.

4. Question the students as to how these cases made it to the Supreme Court. Review appellate jurisdiction and the right of the Supreme Court to hear cases involving constitutional rights. Have students reflect on whether the Bill of Rights is specific enough, and if the process of reviewing and supporting such rights is effective and just.

**How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?**

Constant monitoring of cooperative group work and a Bill of Rights quiz.

**Connecticut Framework Performance Standards**

- 2.2 Explain why one would use a primary or secondary source in a specific context.
- 2.4 State and defend points of view using relevant evidence.