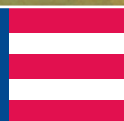




# **FREEDOM DAY**

## **LESSON PLAN**

**NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER**



**MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL**

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**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- ▶ What is the meaning of *freedom*? How do we define *freedom*?
- ▶ What is the relationship between *freedom* and *responsibility*?
- ▶ What are your basic *freedoms*? How are they protected?
- ▶ How do we exercise *freedom* in our homes, at school, in our communities?
- ▶ What are your Constitutional rights? How are they protected?

**OBJECTIVES****STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...****5-8TH GRADE**

- ▶ Explore ideas about the meaning of freedom and responsibility in students' lives.
- ▶ Analyze excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- ▶ Understand how freedom is defined by the Declaration, Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- ▶ Understand how the Constitution limits government, supports the rule of law, and protects individual rights.
- ▶ Research and debate issues of freedom in the Bill of Rights.

**9-12TH GRADE**

- ▶ Analyze the tension in the role of government to provide security for the nation while also protecting individual freedoms.
- ▶ Develop a social understanding of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights and their relevance to economic, political, and social development of the United States.
- ▶ Identify and compare natural rights and rights granted by custom or common law.
- ▶ Research and debate the role of freedom in our modern society politically, socially, and economically.

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## **LESSON 1: THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOM**

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

In this lesson, students will examine the Bill of Rights in order to understand how the Constitution protects individual freedoms. Based on their analysis of the original text and Constitutional scholars' essays, students will debate the issues involving different freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights. The ultimate goal will be to write a persuasive essay in which students argue that their chosen Amendment protects the most fundamental freedom in the U.S.

### **INQUIRY QUESTIONS**

- ▶ What are the most important freedoms guaranteed to American citizens?
- ▶ How does the Constitution create a government that protects and limits freedom?
- ▶ What responsibilities come with freedom?
- ▶ Does the Bill of Rights guarantee our freedom?

### **FOCUSING ACTIVITY**

What is the most fundamental freedom that you enjoy as a citizen of the United States? Describe one right that you think is your most precious right. Why is this right so important to you? What would life be like without it?

### **THINK AND WRITE**

Students can answer this daily writing prompt in the first five minutes of class.

### **SHARE AND COLLABORATE**

Students share their responses with a partner. They will give each other feedback. For example, they can write if they agree or disagree and why? Students will discuss their responses for a few minutes and then share out with the class.

### **LIST**

The teacher will list the ideas on the board – fundamental rights and asks students to rank them by a show of hands. Hopefully there will be about five different freedoms listed on the board.

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**CLASS ACTIVITY: LET'S INTERACT WITH THE CONSTITUTION!**

In today's lesson, students will conduct research on the freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights. They will utilize the National Constitution Center's Interactive Constitution to learn about the different historical, philosophical, and legal perspectives on the first ten amendments. The goal is to make an argument on why the amendment you chose to research protects the most fundamental freedom.

**TASKS**

1. Find a partner.
2. Choose one of the first ten amendments to explore. It may be connected with your fundamental freedom from the focusing activity, but it is not necessary.
3. Conduct research on the amendment using the interactive constitution.
4. As you read about the amendment, take notes on the arguments presented by the scholars who contributed the essays. Each amendment is set-up to have a base explainer that the scholars agree upon and then a section called Matters of Debate, which shows where their views on the interpretation differ. The amount of information available depends on the amendment chosen by the student.
5. Collect textual evidence from both the Constitution and the scholars' essays to support your argument for why this freedom is the most fundamental freedom in the U.S.
6. Using your research, write a persuasive argument for why this freedom is the most fundamental freedom.
7. Students will share their essays with the class and vote on which freedom they believe is the most fundamental.

## LESSON 2: SYMBOLS OF FREEDOM

### LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will examine the symbols connected to the different amendments in the Interactive Constitution in order to understand the meaning and interpretations of the amendments. Students will analyze the symbols based on reading the text of the amendments in the Constitution and the interpretations written by scholars.

### OBJECTIVES

#### STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...

- ▶ Explore ideas about the meaning of freedom and responsibility in the amendments to the Constitution.
- ▶ Analyze symbols and excerpts from the Bill of Rights.
- ▶ Understand how freedom is defined by the Bill of Rights.

### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- ▶ What is a symbol? How can a symbol represent our rights?
- ▶ Which civil rights are protected by the Bill of Rights?

### FOCUSING ACTIVITY

What is a symbol? Draw an image of symbol you know and describe what it represents in a few sentences.

- ▶ For example, common symbols used in Math class are **+**, **=**, **x**.
  - + This symbol means *addition* in Math class. It can also mean *positive*.

### SHARE AND COLLABORATE

Students share their responses with a partner. They will give each other feedback. For example, they can write if they agree or disagree and why? Or they may describe other meanings represented by the symbol. Students will discuss their responses for a few minutes and then share with the class. Volunteers can draw their symbols on the board.

### CLASS DEFINITION

After students share their symbols, create a class definition for symbol.

- ▶ For example, *symbol* – a picture or object that represents, stands for, or means an idea.



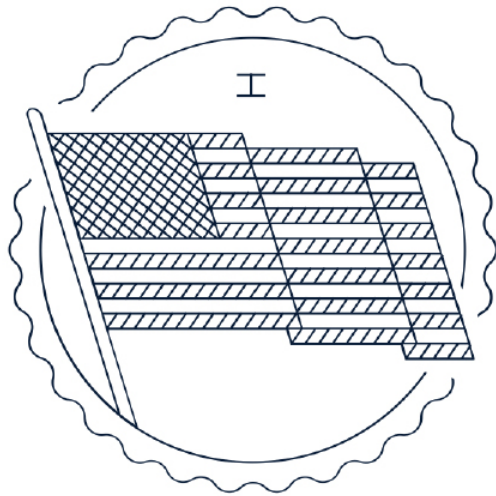
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**CLASS ACTIVITY: LET'S INTERACT WITH THE CONSTITUTION!**

In today's lesson, students will examine symbols and conduct research on the freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights. They will utilize the National Constitution Center's Interactive Constitution to learn about the different historical, philosophical, and legal perspectives on the first ten amendments. The goal is to create an original symbol that represents one of the first ten amendments.

**TASKS**

1. Examine the symbols that represent the different amendments in the Bill of Rights on the Interactive Constitution. Choose one of the first ten amendments to explore.
2. Conduct research on the amendment using the interactive constitution.
3. As you read about the amendment, take notes on the arguments presented by the scholars who contributed essays to the site. Some of the amendments will have a section titled Matters of Debate, others will only have an essay about how the amendment is applicable today, and still others may have clauses in which the scholars have also debated the issue. The amount of information available depends on the Amendment chosen by the student.
4. Collect textual evidence from both the Constitution and the scholars' essays to support your interpretation of the symbol that represents this amendment.
5. Using your research, describe how the symbol represents the message and ideas in the amendment.
6. Now create a new symbol that represents the amendment. Describe how this new symbol represents the amendment. Be prepared to share your symbol with the other students.

**INTERACTIVE CONSTITUTION SYMBOL****TEXTUAL EVIDENCE**

Amendment I

Freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**MY INTERPRETATION**

This symbol includes the flag of the United States within a seal like you might find on the top of an award ribbon or a seal of approval on a product. Above the flag is the Roman numeral I. This represents the first amendment because the five freedoms protected by the first amendment are the foundation to the rights of people in our nation. The freedom of speech is believed by many to be the most fundamental right of citizens in the United States. The flag represents this idea that the first amendment is central to everything our country represents. Also, it is contained in a seal because these rights are approved by the government and guaranteed by the government.

*NOTE: This interpretation is very basic. Students can write a more nuanced interpretation that demonstrates the complexity of the amendment by reading the scholars' essays.*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



### **INTERACTIVE CONSTITUTION SYMBOL**

*In this space, students will create their own symbol that represents the ideas and meaning in the amendment they chose to analyze.*

### **TEXTUAL EVIDENCE**

*Students can include more textual evidence from the scholars' essays.*

### **MY INTERPRETATION**

*In this space, students can describe how their symbol represents that ideas and meaning in the amendment and the scholars' essays. An alternative idea is to have students present their symbols to each other and ask their partners to write an interpretation based on the textual evidence. This allows the student who created the symbol to see if others share in their interpretation or have new and different ideas.*

