



THE FIRST AMENDMENT'S 5 FREEDOMS

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students explore the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment. After examining and analyzing the First Amendment's protection of free religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition, students will understand ways those rights can be exercised, assess potential violations of those rights, and appreciate the importance of those protections in their daily lives. This lesson also introduces and prepares students to participate in the Bill of Rights Institute's First Amendment Video Contest, *First 5 In My Life*.



CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT QUESTION

How and why do the First Amendment's five freedoms matter in your life?

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand the First Amendment's protection of freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.
- Understand that the First Amendment only protects against government actions.
- Analyze the interdependence of the five freedoms.
- Identify and analyze potential First Amendment issues in their local community.
- Appreciate the importance of free religion, speech, press, assembly and petition in a free society.

MATERIALS**Handout A:** What Are the Five Freedoms?**Handout B:** Violation or No Violation?*Optional***Handout C:** Take A Stand (Planning Your Video)**Handout D:** Director's Notes**Handout E:** Entry Form**RECOMMENDED TIME**

One 50-minute class period

GRADE LEVEL

Appropriate for grades 7-12

BACKGROUND/HOMEWORK

[10 minutes the day before]

Have students use the Bill of Rights in the News section of the Bill of Rights Institute's Web site, updated every day at www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Headlines to find a news story with a First Amendment focus. Have students summarize the article's contents and be ready to discuss it in class next time.

WARM-UP

[10 minutes]

- Post signs around the room with the phrases "Freedom of Religion," "Freedom of Speech," "Freedom of the Press," "Freedom of Assembly," and "Freedom of Petition" written in large print.
- Call on individual students to share their news stories by subject, beginning with religion and proceeding through all five freedoms. (You may wish to print a few articles ahead of time to ensure all five freedoms are represented.) As students share their topics, ask them to post them by the corresponding sign.

ACTIVITY I

[15 minutes]

- Distribute or put up an overhead of **Handout A: What Are the Five Freedoms?** Having students work in pairs or leading the class as a large group, complete the chart.
- In addition to the ideas students generate for the 3rd column, you may wish to add the following, noting that as minors, they must have their parent's permission for many of these actions:
 - **Religion:** going to their house of worship; following their conscience while acting within the law; sharing their beliefs with others; wearing religious symbols or garments outside their homes.
 - **Speech:** peacefully sharing their views with others; displaying buttons or bumper stickers; putting up political signs.
 - **Press:** working on a school newspaper or literary magazine; publishing political cartoons; writing letters to the editor; writing a blog.
 - **Assembly:** holding or attending a club meeting; playing or attending organized sports; marching in a parade; attending a political demonstration.
 - **Petition:** circulating or signing a petition on a government issue.

ACTIVITY II

[15 minutes]

- Put up an overhead of **Handout B: Violation or No Violation?** Reveal one statement at a time under Section I, asking for a show of hands if the scenario depicts a violation of the First Amendment. (None do.) Ask students what they all have in common.

- B. Move on to Section 2, again asking for a show of hands if the scenario depicts a violation of the First Amendment. (All do.) Ask students what they all have in common, and how they differ from the scenarios in Section 1. (The scenarios in Section 1 have no government actor and the First Amendment only protects against government action.)
- C. Move on to Section 3, and once again ask for a show of hands for each. (The scenarios in Section 3 all come from Supreme Court cases in which the Court has applied the First Amendment to specific situations, in some cases limiting government action, and in other cases marking out limits on rights. For more information on these cases, visit www.billofrightsinstitute.org/teach/freeresources/landmarksupremecourtcases)

Note: Teachers of older or advanced students may wish to try this variation: Divide the class into pairs or trios. Cut the scenarios on Handout B into individual slips, and give a random sampling of slips to each group. Have students report on their scenarios to the class, as well as their conclusion as to whether a violation has taken place.

WRAP - UP

[10 minutes]

Ask students to look once again at the news stories they brought in for homework, keeping in mind the day's discussion. Allow a few moments for students to walk around the room, view the news stories, and ponder the issues. Then reconvene the class and discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think the five freedoms are sometimes called “freedom of expression?”
- Do any of the rights in the First Amendment depend on each other? Explain.
- What responsibilities accompany these rights? For example, does freedom of speech mean you should say whatever comes to mind at any time? Explain.
- The First Amendment does not list rights; instead it lists things the government cannot do. Why is this important?
- Would it be possible to be free without the rights protected by the First Amendment? Why or why not?

HOMEWORK/EXTENSION OPTIONS

- A. Have students select a LOCAL First Amendment issue on which to focus their 2-minute video entry for the *First 5 in My Life* Video Contest. They should use **Handout C: Take A Stand** to plan their video, and should complete **Handout D: Director's Notes**. Finally, **Handout E: Entry Form** must accompany their submission.
- B. Have students focus a 2-minute video entry on a NATIONAL First Amendment issue featured at www.doyouhavetheright.org/First5 for the *First 5 in My Life* Video Contest. They can use **Handout C: Take A Stand** to plan their video, and should complete **Handout D: Director's Notes**. Finally, **Handout E: Entry Form** must accompany their submission.
- C. Students who do not wish to actually film a video could create a story-board or two-column script explaining their First Amendment issue, accompanying visuals, interviews, their opinion on the issue, as well as any other elements they wish to include.

For complete information on the First 5 In My Life Video Contest (including official rules and information on submitting your video), visit: www.doyouhavetheright.org/First5.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE FREEDOMS?

Directions: Read the information and then answer the questions.

| FREEDOM | DEFINITION | WAYS I EXERCISE THIS RIGHT | HOW WOULD LIFE BE DIFFERENT WITHOUT THIS RIGHT? |
|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| Congress* shall make no law....respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof... | The government cannot set up an official religion, or stop you from believing what you choose. | | |
| ...or abridging the freedom of speech... | The government cannot stop you from expressing your thoughts using words or what is often called “symbolic speech” (e.g. certain expressive actions, or pictures). | | |
| ...or of the press... | The government cannot prevent the news media from reporting, or punish journalists for publishing true statements (or even false statements they honestly believed to be true.) | | |
| ...or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble.... | The government cannot stop you from holding or attending meetings in places where you have the right to be (though it can require you to get a permit in some cases, and you have no right to trespass.) | | |
| ...and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. | The government cannot stop you from circulating or signing letters expressing your views on a government matter. | | |

*The Bill of Rights (1791) was written to apply to the national government only. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was passed which said states could not infringe on citizens' due process rights. The Supreme Court has ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment applies some Bill of Rights protections against state and local governments as well as the national government.

VIOLATION OR NO VIOLATION?

Directions: *Read each statement and decide if it describes a First Amendment violation.*

SECTION 1

1. John's parents make him go to church with them, even though he doesn't want to go.
2. Chris's friends stop inviting him out with them because all he ever does is argue about politics.
3. Melissa's editor won't let her publish a political cartoon because the cartoon mocks the President and the editor supports the President's policies.
4. Miguel's neighbor won't let Miguel's "Young Democrats" group meet on his property.
5. The principal at Aliya's private school will not allow students to gather signatures for a petition during school hours.

SECTION 2

1. John is arrested for not attending church on Sunday, as required by state law.
2. Chris gets fined for expressing political views not approved by the government.
3. Melissa gets thrown in jail for publishing a political cartoon that mocks the President.
4. Miguel is arrested for belonging to the "Young Democrats" group.
5. Aliya is arrested for attempting to circulate a petition around her neighborhood.

SECTION 3

1. Students in a public school want to have a Bible Club after school, but administrators turn down their request, even though other student groups meet after school.
2. A public middle school student is suspended for wearing a black armband in protest of a war.
3. The national government tries to stop the publication of papers that show it misled the public on an important matter.
4. A town refuses to grant a parade permit to the Ku Klux Klan.
5. A state passes a law making it illegal for groups to hire people to circulate petitions.



TAKE A STAND (PLANNING YOUR VIDEO)

Possible topic: _____

Facts of the situation: _____

What is the First Amendment question? _____

What is your point of view on the question now? _____

Who could you interview for a video on this topic? (list several people) _____

List 5 questions (and follow up questions) for each interview subject

Where will you film the video? _____

What graphic elements (titles, setting, documents, etc.) will you include? _____

DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Name(s): _____

Title of Entry: _____

Note: *Please limit your responses to 200 words each.*

BEFORE: Why did you choose this topic? Explain why your topic is a First Amendment issue.

DURING: Describe the process of making your video. (You might discuss some/all of the following: concept, interviews, script, storyboard, editing, etc.)

AFTER: Did your views on the First Amendment question change as a result of the video process? Explain.



VIDEO CONTEST ENTRY FORM

Student Information (For group entries, complete one form per group member – maximum group size of three students)

Student Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Title of Entry (that you used when uploading your video): _____

School Name: _____

Home Address: _____
ADDRESS CITY / STATE ZIP

Home Phone: _____

Parent / Guardian Information

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Home Address: _____
ADDRESS CITY / STATE ZIP

SAME AS STUDENT

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

By entering the Bill of Rights Institute's *First 5 In My Life* Video Contest, I give permission for the Bill of Rights Institute to use this work as it wishes, including (but not limited to) display, promotion, reproduction, and distribution in all media and the right to create, perform, display, and distribute derivative works. I also give the Institute the right to use the entrant's name, likeness, and biographical material in connection with the work.

I release the Bill of Rights Institute and its service providers, officers, directors, employees, licensees, and successors from any liability or claimed liability in connection with this entry. I acknowledge that I have read this consent and release prior to signing it and that I understand its contents. I warrant that I / my child has created the Video.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

TEACHER SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

Teacher Name: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

School Phone: _____

I have reviewed the Video and verify that it reflects the above-named student's original work or collaboration as a group.

SIGNATURE OF TEACHER

DATE

Deadline for receipt of entries is March 15, 2010. Timely submission of BOTH video (online) and text (via mail or email) is essential if you would like your entry to be considered for a prize. All group entries must be submitted together, including an entry form for each group member. For complete Contest information, visit www.doyouhavetheright.org/First5.

Submit your *Entry Form* and *Director's Notes* to:

Email First5@BillOfRightsInstitute.org

Mail *First 5 In My Life* Video Contest
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