

Guided Reading Level: S

Genre: Informational

Text Features: glossary, illustrations, index, photographs, captions, primary sources, table of contents

Lesson Objective: Social Studies

Students will be able to identify the purpose, meaning, and importance of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Essential Question

What rights does the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protect?

Lesson Objective: ELA

Students will understand that adding the suffix *-ing* to verbs changes the verb's tense.

Background Knowledge

Briefly discuss the U.S. Constitution, including why it was created, when it was written, why it is important, and how it has changed over time. Tier Two and Three vocabulary from the book is listed below. Consider previewing selected vocabulary based on the needs of your students before they read the text.

Vocabulary

abridging (p. 5)
amendments (p. 16)
Anti-Federalist (p. 16)
assemble (p. 35)
Bill of Rights (p. 9)
compromises (p. 15)
constitution (p. 14)
Federalists (p. 16)
libel (p. 8)
negotiation (p. 17)
petition (p. 34)
prohibits (p. 28)
ratification (p. 14)
sedition (p. 19)
suppression (p. 10)



Freedom of Speech, the Press, and Religion: The First Amendment

by: John Rokutani

Why This Text?

The U.S. Constitution established our national government and its basic laws, and the first ten amendments—known as the Bill of Rights—were added to the Constitution in 1791. This book explains what rights the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights guarantees to all citizens, why it is important, how the Supreme Court has interpreted it, and how it affects our lives today.

Preparing to Read

Explain that this is an informational text about how and when the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution came about and what rights it protects. Have a volunteer read the title of the book. Encourage students to share what they know about the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the First Amendment. Then ask students to turn to page 3 and skim the table of contents. Review with the class that the table of contents lists the chapters in a book. Remind students that the chapter titles can help them understand what the book will be about. Read the chapter titles aloud together to give students an idea about what they will learn in this book.

Reading Informational Text

Have students read the text independently. After students have finished reading the Introduction and chapter 1, guide them to summarize what they have learned and to ask any questions they may have. Point out that photos, illustrations, and other graphics in informational text help explain important information. Then have students read chapter 2, discussing what they have learned and asking questions as appropriate. Finally, have students read chapter 3 and the Conclusion, clarifying understanding if necessary.

Connect and Respond

1. *What five freedoms does the First Amendment protect?* (freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom to petition the government)
2. *Why do people often disagree about the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment?* (People often disagree because they have different interpretations about what constitutes free expression of these rights. Since the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution in 1791, the limits of these freedoms have been challenged in court. The way the First Amendment is interpreted often reflects the changing values and issues of the times.)

3. Which two freedoms under the First Amendment are most important and why? Find textual evidence to support your answer. (Possible answer: Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are the two most important freedoms. p. 18; “The protection the First Amendment guarantees for freedom of speech and freedom of the press gives essential support to other rights and freedoms. In protecting free expression, the First Amendment empowers the people and limits the control of the government.”)

Verb Tense

Direct students’ attention to the word *respecting* in the text of the First Amendment on page 5. Underline the suffix *-ing*. Explain that adding the suffix *-ing* to a verb changes its tense. Then explain that *respecting* is the progressive form of the verb *respect*. Establish that *respecting* describes a continuing action. Follow the same process with the First Amendment text verbs *prohibiting* and *abridging*. Point out that you drop the *e* when adding *-ing* to verbs ending with a silent *e*.

Language Arts Activity

Have the class stage a debate by role-playing Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Have students on each side brainstorm about either the need for a Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution (Anti-Federalists) or why a Bill of Rights is unnecessary (Federalists). Have students complete these sentence frames to make sure they understand the basis of the argument.

Federalists believed a Bill of Rights was unnecessary because _____.

Anti-Federalists believed a Bill of Rights would protect _____.

Primary Source Activity

Explain that this text includes primary source photographs related to the First Amendment. Remind students that primary sources are original sources of information, such as artifacts, documents, letters, and recordings, created at the time under study.

- Have students look at the cover photograph. This photo of people carrying signs and using a bullhorn illustrates the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly protected under the First Amendment.
- Have students refer to page 35. Explain that this is a photograph taken in 1917. Ask a volunteer to explain how this photograph illustrates the First Amendment.
- Then have students refer to page 36. Point out that this is a photograph of a march held on April 9, 2012. Have students notice the signs carried by people in the march. Ask a volunteer to identify which First Amendment rights this photo demonstrates.

Social Studies Activity

Have students work together to find examples of the First Amendment in action today. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the rights protected by the First Amendment: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of petition, or freedom of assembly. Provide students with access to print and online newspapers, and have them locate news articles, editorials, cartoons, letters to the editor, and so on that clearly demonstrate their group’s assigned right. Have groups share their findings by creating posters or adding to a class bulletin board.

Materials/Resources Needed

paper
markers
scissors
print and online newspapers
printer
bulletin board

Support English Learning

Offer realia, gestures, or photos to support the introduction of the new vocabulary.

- Explain that a constitution is a written document that explains the system of beliefs and laws of a country or state.
- Share a copy of the U.S. Constitution with learners (see link in Research Connection). Point out the Bill of Rights and explain that it was added later to the Constitution.
- Have a volunteer read the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights aloud. Guide students to understand what freedoms the First Amendment protects and how it limits the power of the federal government.
- Encourage students to discuss how the five rights in the First Amendment affect them in their daily lives.

Research Connection

U.S. Constitution at the National Archives website:

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1667751>

Bill of Rights at the National Archives website:

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1408042>