

# VISITOR FROM OUTER SPACE

## Our Rights & Freedoms

### Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students decide which of the rights included in the Constitution's Bill of Rights they value the most. First, students discuss the basic rights of all Americans. Next, they read a short story about a hypothetical alien creature that takes over the world. The creature is not totally hostile and will allow humans to keep five rights. Finally students work in small groups to prioritize the five basic rights they find important and report back their findings.

### Materials Checklist

- Easel pad, markers, masking tape.
- *Handout A* (one per student).
- Sheet of chart paper listing 11 fundamental rights.

### Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that the Bill of Rights is a part of the United States Constitution.
- Discuss with their peers what rights are most important to them.
- Work as a team to reach consensus.

### Focus Discussion

Ask students:

- Can you name a few basic rights that all Americans have?
- In what historical document can these rights be found?

Inform students that today they are going to form groups to evaluate which rights and freedoms they consider to be the most important.

### Focus Activity

- Ask students to form groups of 3–5 each.

- Distribute *Handout A* (one per student).
- Read **RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS** introduction.
- Ask a volunteer to read and role-play **VISITOR FROM OUTER SPACE**.
- Review **ACTIVITY** (briefly answer any questions).
- Make sure groups understand that they must select the five most important rights and that their decision must be unanimous. **TIP:** This is a good opportunity to explain the difference between unanimous and majority-rule decision-making. Unanimous decisions require negotiating and consensus building, whereas majority decisions, although much speedier, do not reflect the opinions of all.
- Provide groups with set amount of time (10 mins).
- Remind groups that they must complete their choices within that timeframe or they will lose all their rights (provide periodic time-checks).
- Ask each group to designate a Reporter to share back their choices.

### **Shareback**

- Post fundamental rights display where everyone can see it.
- Ask Reporters to share back group selections; tally responses by placing a check next to selected right on fundamental rights display.
- After each group has shared back, take a class vote to eliminate all but top five choices; majority rules.

### **Debrief**

Ask groups the following questions:

- Was it difficult to reach a unanimous decision? What are the pros and cons of reaching a unanimous decision versus a majority vote?
- Would our society be different if we were limited to the five rights you chose? Why or why not?

## RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

As a U.S. citizen, you have individual freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution's *Bill of Rights*. What would life be like if somebody took away your rights? Are some rights more important than others? How would you decide which rights were the most important? Think about these questions while you read the following scenario.

### VISITOR FROM OUTER SPACE

It is the year 2050 and you are watching your wall-sized television monitor when a special news bulletin comes on. A strange, alien-like creature appears on the screen and informs you that he has taken over the United States. You rapidly flick through every channel, but find he is on every one:

“ATTENTION”, he begins, “I am Sthgir from planet Noitutitsnoc. Just as I have taken over television, I will take over your lives but I come in peace. I realize that individual freedom means a great deal to American citizens. Consequently, I will not take away all of your rights; you have a choice. From a list of fundamental rights, you may pick five to keep. Think carefully before you vote, as all your rights as citizens will terminate except for the ones you select. You must decide as a group on your interactive televisions and your decision must be unanimous! Failure to make a unanimous decision will result in the termination of all rights. The list of choices will now appear on your television screen. Remember, you may only choose five from the following list of rights to keep:

1. Right to have a state militia and bear arms.
2. Right to freedom of speech.
3. Right to a lawyer.
4. Right to protection from cruel and unusual punishment.
5. Right to freedom of the press.
6. Right to a jury trial.
7. Right to freedom of religion.
8. Right to peacefully assemble.
9. Right to privacy.
10. Protection from self-incrimination.
11. Right to equal protection of the laws.

### Activity

In small groups, unanimously decide on the five most important rights. Keep in mind that:

- Rights affect our lives on both a personal and societal level; and
- Some rights have a broader scope than others. Think about which rights might include other rights.