

A Visitor From Outer Space

Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will review the rights guaranteed to the people through the Bill of Rights and later Constitutional Amendments. Then, working in small groups, they will determine which rights are most important in preserving personal freedom. Through this lesson, students will enhance their understanding of individual rights and their influence on daily life in the United States.

Topics: U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, free expression, justice, equality

Materials

- Handout: Rights and Freedoms (see page 3)
- [Video: Visitor from Outer Space](#)
- [Teacher Presentation](#)

Objectives

- Evaluate the specific rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights.
- Assess the relevance of the Bill of Rights in contemporary society.
- Work as a team to reach a consensus.

Procedure

I. Introduction to the Bill of Rights

- Show [Slide 2](#). Remind students that the Constitution established the purpose and powers of the federal government.
- Show [Slides 3-6](#) to explain the history and reasoning behind the adoption of the Bill of Rights. Explain that the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were divided on whether to list specific rights within the Constitution. Several states refused to ratify the Constitution without amendments establishing individual rights, and the Virginia Compromise established that a Bill of Rights would be added to the Constitution.
- Show [Slides 7-21](#). Each slide explains one or more of the rights granted in the Bill of Rights (and later amendments). Check for understanding and allow students to ask clarifying questions, as they will use this information in their next activity.

II. Activity: A Visitor From Outer Space

- Explain to your students that now that they know what freedoms are granted in the Bill of Rights, they will determine which rights are most essential to American citizens.
- Play the video: "[A Visitor From Outer Space](#)." After playing the video, divide students into small groups of four or five students. Give each student a copy of **Handout: Rights and Freedoms** (see page3). Tell your students that within their groups, they must choose which five rights should be retained to best protect our freedoms. Let them know they will have 15 minutes to decide, at which point they will present their choices to the class.

- C. While students work on their lists, display the rights from the activity on the board or on the slides.
- D. When the groups have finished choosing their five rights, call on a representative from each group to share which five rights they chose. As they share, mark the chosen rights with a tally.
- E. After all groups have shared back, count the tallies for each right and announce the top five rights they selected as a class. For this step, the majority rules. If there is a tie that leaves you with more than five rights, hold a tie-breaking vote to eliminate any extra selection(s).

III. Closure: Exit Ticket

- A. Show [slide 22](#). Debrief the lesson by having students conduct a think-write-pair-share on the following questions:
 - How would the U.S. look today without one or more of these freedoms?
 - If you could have chosen one more right to add to your selection, what would it have been and why?
 - Which, if any, of your five choices were about free expression, due process, or equal protection?
- B. Provide students with sufficient time to respond to the questions. Then, have students share with a partner, small groups, or the whole class.

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.

A Visitor from Outer Space

It is the year 2080, 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 of them: "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," he continues, "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 choose them, 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 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.
12. Right to vote.

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.