

NOTES FOR FIRST AMENDMENT SUMMER INSTITUTE 2010

Freedom of Religion

Free to Believe (Faces of Freedom p. 17)

Overview of lesson:

Critical Engagement Question: How does the first amendment protect freedom of religion?
(Add these and other questions as appropriate throughout the lesson:

Why is freedom of religion important?

How and when is it protected?

Why is religious freedom controversial?

How are controversies over freedom of religion resolved within the US system of government?

Does freedom of religion also mean freedom **from** religion?

Are there any limits on freedom of religion?)

Background/Homework/Warm-up:

- Consider discussing the quotes on the first page of the lesson even before the warm-up
- Be sure that the younger students understand the difference between the establishment clause and the free exercise clause on handout A
- Emphasize the importance of symbols as a means of communication in many areas of life (for good, bad and neutral purposes)
- For handout B, consider letting students answer questions individually first so that they have an opportunity to think about the issues without any influence from other students

Activity I:

- Connects FREEDOM OF RELIGION to the BILL OF RIGHTS
- Younger students may need some guided reading questions for the articles in handout C.
- Older students will not need to cut and paste the statements in handout D
- In part B, consider adding some questions about how the individual students in your class might have felt if they were in the shoes of Gobitas or Mergens

Activity II:

- For the role play activity, you may need to have the students actually write a script to help them stay focused (see part B under homework).
- For part C, you may need to do some small group discussions first.
- Try to connect freedom of religion to some issues in your own school environment.

Homework, Extensions, and Real Life Portal:

In addition to the activities listed in the lesson, some of these suggestions may work for your class:

Reflect and take a stand on the issues of freedom of religion by:

- Writing a short essay on what would happen in our society if religious freedom was not protected by the Bill of Rights
- Keep a journal for 24 hours or longer noting the times and instances when students used or saw religious expression
- Interview school administration regarding current school policy on freedom of religion
- Conduct a survey on attitudes towards religious expression in the public arena
- Write a letter to an elected official or newspaper editor regarding this topic
- Court Cases: Use various court cases to show how conflicts over freedom of religion can be resolved through the court system. Emphasize rule of law. See handouts for court case briefings.
- Collect contemporary newspaper articles and blogs about the topic of freedom of religion.
- Compare and contrast policies about religious expression in the US with policies in other countries.
- Take a look at the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discuss the provisions regarding religious freedom.
- Make a visual (poster, power point, etc.) regarding religious freedom and expression

Be careful not to lose track of the critical engagement questions. They could be used later as essay questions on an exam or quiz.

BRIEFING A SUPREME COURT CASE

In this assignment you will have the opportunity to analyze a Supreme Court Decision, analyze its effect on U.S. citizens and culture, and then offer your own opinion on the case. The class will be divided into groups and each group will assume the role of the Supreme Court. Each person in the group will be one of the justices on the court. The assignment is designed to strengthen your written and oral communication skills as well as your critical thinking skills.

Follow the directions listed below. The assignment must be typed. It is worth 25 points. Due: Please retype the question in bold print before you answer it. One group paper is required for questions 1-6. Individual answers for question #7. Staple all papers together.

1. State the title of the case (1 point).
2. State the issue of the case in question format. For example: Is voluntary prayer in public schools a violation of the First Amendment provisions for the separation of Church and State? (1 point)
3. A and B: Summarize the facts of the case. Include: who; what; when; where; and why for each side. (10 points)
4. State the decision reached by the Supreme Court. (1 point)
5. Summarize the reasoning the Supreme Court used to reach its decision. Be sure to cite specific provisions from the Constitution. (5 points)
6. List the names of the justices that supported the majority and minority opinions. (2 points)
7. Assume that you are a member of the Supreme Court that rules in this case. State your opinion on the case. Use specific provisions from the Constitution to support your argument. Be sure to write in the third person. (5 points) Individual grade for this part of the assignment only. Group shares the grade for the rest of the project.
8. When you have completed the assignment, staple this paper to your work.

Court Cases: list of topics and cases will be given depending on interest of the class and current events

Web sites:

<http://supct.law.cornell.edu.supct/>

<http://www.oyez.com>

www.billofrightsinstitute.org (Landmark Supreme Court Cases)

American Government Group Assignment Bill of Rights

As we continue our study of the **Bill of Rights**, each group will have a chance to explore the significance of the provisions of the Bill of Rights in contemporary society.

Directions:

For **each** of the ten amendments do the following:

1. Type the words of each amendment.
2. Briefly explain why each amendment is significant for us today.
3. Draw a picture or a symbol for any 5 of the amendments.
4. Find a news article that is related to some aspect of the 5 of the amendments for which you did not draw a picture or symbol. Cite the source MLA format.

Assemble this in **booklet form**. Put the amendments in order. Type numbers 1 and 2 on the same page. Place the news article or drawing after the typed page for each amendment.

Type a table of contents which lists each amendment number and the names of each student who worked on that amendment and what he/she did.

Amendment Number

Wording (name of student)

Significance (name of student)

Drawing or article (name of student)

The project is worth 20 points. Divide the work evenly. The group shares the grade.

Due:

This project may be modified to focus only on the 1st Amendment freedoms.

1. Type the words of the 1st Amendment.
2. Briefly explain why each part of the amendment is significant for us today.
3. Draw a picture or a symbol for each of the 5 freedoms.
4. Find a news article that is related to each aspect of the 5 freedoms. Cite the source MLA format.
5. Type a table of contents (indicate who did each section).
6. Assemble in booklet form.

