

Lesson 4: How Does the Bill of Rights Serve to Limit the Powers of Government?

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- The power of the government is limited by ten amendments to the Constitution called the Bill of Rights.
- The Bill of Rights serves to protect people's individual rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to a trial by jury.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students review the Bill of Rights and then work collaboratively to create a classroom "Student Bill of Rights" to be used in conjunction with the Preamble and the Constitution that students had created in Lesson 1. Students also begin to develop questioning techniques about the origins of the Bill of Rights and why the principle of limited government is so evident within the Preamble, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. Finally, students engage in a writing activity where they reflect on what life would be like without the principles that limit the power of government.

Content Expectations

4 - C2.0.1: Explain how the principles of popular sovereignty, rule of law, checks and balances, separation of powers, and individual rights (e.g., freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of press) serve to limit the powers of the federal government as reflected in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

RI.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI.5.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

W.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

- c. Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *in contrast*, *especially*).
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

W.5.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Key Concepts:

constitution
individual rights
limited government

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Chart paper
Markers or crayons
Overhead or projector

Student Resource

The Bill of Rights Rap. You Tube. 28 August 2012. Several websites:

- <http://vimeo.com/4803822>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KINGYf7pdJE&noredirect=1>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl6R1KD4E0>

Teacher Resource

Hart, Rachel. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 4)*. Teacher-made material. Oakland Schools, 2012.

Lesson Sequence

1. Begin this lesson by displaying Word Card #20 “Individual Rights” and activating the students’ prior knowledge of the Bill of Rights which students explored in fourth grade. As an optional activity, show a clip “Bill of Rights Rap” located on You Tube from one of the following websites:
 - <http://vimeo.com/4803822>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KINGYf7pdJE&noredirect=1>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl6R1KD4E0>
2. Display Word Card #21 “Amendment” and discuss its meaning. Pose the following question: Why do you think the writers of the Constitution provided a way to add to or change the Constitution? Discuss student ideas. Display Word Card #22 “Bill of Rights” and explain that the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution as the first ten amendments.
3. Next, divide students into groups of three to four and distribute a copy of “The Bill of Rights- Simplified Version” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 4)* to each group.

Have groups discuss the importance of each amendment. Have student groups decide which three amendments they think are most important. Instruct them to put a star next to these three amendments on their paper and to be prepared to tell why they chose those amendments.

4. Display the “Bill of Rights-Data Collection Sheet” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 4)* to the class. Have groups share their top three amendments with the entire class and support why they chose each amendment. As students share their votes, put tally marks next to the amendments for which students voted. When finished, lead a discussion of the data by having students interpret the data and draw conclusions from it.
5. Guide students to question the origins of the amendments in the Bill of Rights by doing a ‘think aloud’ using the “I wonder...” format. Draw students’ attention to amendment three and say: I wonder why people thought the government might want to make people open up their houses to soldiers. Why would they think they’d have to feed soldiers in their home? Were the times that different then?” Have students write their own ‘wonderings’ in their Social Studies Learning Log and then share their writing with a partner.
6. Display Word Card #16 from Lesson 2 on “Limited Government” and discuss its meaning. Remind students that they have been exploring this concept through the entire unit. Distribute the document “Limits on the Power of Government” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 4)* to student groups that were formed in Step 3. Have groups work together to discuss each principle and record their thoughts on how it limits the power of government on their worksheet. Students should use the following word cards while they are working.
 - Constitution – Word Card #1 from Lesson 1
 - Popular Sovereignty – Word Card #2 from Lesson 1
 - Separation of Powers – Word Card #8 from Lesson 2
 - Branches of Government – Word Card #9 from Lesson 2
 - Checks and Balances – Word Card #13 from Lesson 2
 - Limited Government – Word Card #16 from Lesson 2
 - Federalism – Word Card #17 from Lesson 3
 - Bill of Rights – Word Card #22 from Lesson 4
7. When students have finished, have them share their thinking and discuss possible answers. Guide students in coming to consensus on an answer for each principle listed on the chart. Make sure they clearly state why the principle limits the power of government not just a description of the principle. Note that you may find it useful to display the “Limits on the Power of Government” chart and write the final consensus answers on it. Note that a chart showing sample answers has been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 4)* as a reference.
8. Have students write a response to the following question: *How is our government organized to give and limit power?* in their Social Studies Learning Log. Students should address one or more of the questions below as they write their response. Encourage students to refer to the Word Cards as necessary.
 - What would life be like if there was no Constitution?
 - What if there was no Bill of Rights?

- What if federalism didn't exist in our country and the federal government had all the power?
 - What if one branch of the government had all the power?
 - What if there were no checks and balances?
 - What if there was no separation of power?
 - What if there was no such thing as popular sovereignty and people didn't have any power?
 - What if there was no rule of law and government leaders could do anything they wanted?
 - What would life be like if a government had complete power?
 - How would life be in your school, your community, your country if government had complete power?
 - Students can share their writing when finished.
9. Explain that as a final activity in this unit, students will work together to create a Bill of Rights for the classroom to go along with the Preamble and Constitution they helped to create in Lessons 1 and 2. Have students work together in their small groups to create a list of 10 rights they want included in with the classroom constitution. Distribute the document, "A Student Bill of Rights" located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 4)* and have each group write their ten recommendations on it.
10. When student groups have completed the task, have groups share their ideas and vote to adopt ten amendments. Rewrite these ten amendments on chart paper and display along with the Preamble and Constitution from previous lessons.

Assessment

The student writing sample from Step 7 can be used as an assessment.