

The Bill of Rights and the News

Summary

Students will examine current news stories and from them develop "BIG" questions related to individual and group rights. They will then relate their questions to the U.S. Constitution and supreme court decisions.

Enduring Understanding:

Students will understand that the Constitution is a living document and that it is applicable to situations which arise in everyday life.

Essential Questions:

What are the freedoms and rights guaranteed in the United States Constitution?

How have civil rights and liberties been changed, and how do they continue to be changed, through court decisions.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 90 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Transparency of a controversial rights-related current news story.

Copies of several other news stories from [Bill of Rights Institute Website](#) or another source

Butcher paper

Several varied-color markers

Background for Teachers

An understanding of the rights and privileges protected by the Bill of Rights and U.S. Constitution.

Familiarity with landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases and cases under current examination.

Familiarity with current events.

Student Prior Knowledge

A basic understanding of the Bill of Rights and U.S. Constitution and the workings of the Supreme Court.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will understand the freedoms and rights guaranteed in the United States Constitution.

Students will understand how civil rights and liberties have changed, and they continue to change, through Supreme Court decisions.

Instructional Procedures

Prior to giving the lesson:

Choose a rights-related news story from a local or national source.

Make a transparency of the news story to share with your class.

Choose several other rights-related news stories from the [Bill of Rights Institute Website](#) or another source. Make copies of each story for student use in groups.

Post an approximately eight-foot long piece of butcher paper on your wall. At the top of the paper write "**BIG**" Questions.

Make enough copies of the Big Questions Worksheet for your class.

Lesson procedure:

Put the transparency of the news story you have selected on your overhead projector. Ask students, from looking at the title and any pictures, to guess what the story will be about. Then ask them what they know about this issue. Have a student write the ideas that the students come up with on the board. Also have them point out confusing/unfamiliar vocabulary.

Have another student come to the board. As you read through the article as a class, model for the students good reading strategies. Stop periodically and comment on questions and related situations that come to your mind as you read. Have the student write these on the board.

Once you have finished reading the article, have your students individually write a three sentence summary of it. Have the students share their summaries in groups of three. Call on random groups to share one of their summaries with the class.

Now ask students what they think the "big" question underlying the article might be. Tell them that the "big question" has to do with individual or group rights and could apply to people in many situations, not only the one addressed in the article. Have a student write the proposed "big questions" on pieces of blank paper.

Post these piece of paper on the wall around the room. Now ask students to get up out of their seats and move to the piece of paper that reflects what they think is the most important "big question". Discuss their choices and come to a consensus as to what is the most important question. Write this question on the "BIG Questions" butcher paper.

Now divide the students into groups of three to five students. Give each group copies of a different rights-related news story. Tell the groups to read through the story as a group, following the same process that we did as a class. Have them write the questions/comments that come into their minds as they read on the margins of one copy of the story. Then have them decide, as a group, how they would summarize the story and what they think that the "Big Question" raised by the story might be.

Have a spokesman for each group share a summary of their story with the rest of the class.

Have them also share their "Big Question" and then write it on the butcher paper on the wall.

Repeat this activity on a daily or weekly basis during a unit on the U.S. Constitution and/or civil rights.

Towards the end of the unit have the students re-visit the butcher paper list. Have them select five of the "big questions" and identify, individually or in groups, which amendment(s) deal with each issue on the "Big Questions" Worksheet. Have them fill in the requested information, using their textbook, the Internet, or other sources.

Discuss their answers as a class. Correct any misconceptions that may exist.

As a follow-up:

Continue following the news stories examined in class. As new court decisions come down, share them with the class. Keep the "Big Questions" butcher paper on your wall. As you proceed through other units, refer back to the list as connections arise.

Assessment Plan

Student performance will be assessed through their news article notes, oral presentation, and Big Question Worksheet.

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