

A Grade 5 Common Core Exemplar: Teaching about the Bill of Rights

Michelle Herczog

A notable feature of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts is the attention given to the teaching of reading and writing in history/social studies, science and technical subjects. According to these standards, students are best served when subject areas are not taught in isolation but are integrated in meaningful ways to help them acquire high levels of subject matter knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills and become successful and responsible citizens of the twenty-first century.

It is important to note that the primary intent of including history/social studies, science and technical subjects in the Common Core State Standards is not to supplant the content, knowledge and skills identified in existing social studies standards but to emphasize the need to utilize the social studies as a meaningful context for students to become proficient readers, writers, and speakers in the twenty-first century. Acquisition of English-language arts skills is dependent upon the constructs of content and a knowledge-based curriculum. In the words of E.D. Hirsch. “Reading proficiency isn’t in and of itself the magic key to competence. It’s what reading enables us to learn and to do that is critical.”¹

Likewise, Sam Wineburg and Daisy Martin remind us that for social studies education:

Literacy is the key word here, because the teaching of history should have reading and writing at its core. Working through successive drafts of the cause-and-effect essay—making sure that paragraphs reflect a logical pro-

cession of ideas and that assertions are backed by evidence—is hard and inglorious work, but there are no shortcuts.... Skits and posters may be engaging, but leaving students there—engaged but illiterate—amounts to an incomplete lesson that forfeits our claim as educators.... This means teaching students to be informed readers, writers, and thinkers about the past as well as the present (is) a goal all parties should be able to embrace. Our democracy’s vitality depends on it.²

The compelling need for students to understand and address complex problems in the twenty-first century calls for an examination of current instructional practices. Achievethecore.org describes the Common Core shifts for English Language Arts/Literacy and the need for:

1. **Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction**

2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in **evidence from text**, both literary and informational
3. Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic language**.³

The authors of the standards point out that the students who meet the standards “habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally.”⁴ The Standards for Reading Informational Text that are included in the Common Core State Standards require students to read texts in depth, understand their principal ideas, identify their purpose and point of view, and trace and evaluate their main arguments. These requirements are also among the objectives of social studies education.

In recent years, the analysis of documents has been an important focus of social studies. Important historical documents can be a good starting point for social studies instruction that aims to advance the Common Core State Standards. This article presents a document-based approach to implementing both the NCSS national social studies standards and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. It introduces the Bill of Rights to students in a way that takes them deeply into the text, and leads them to

Common Core Reading Standards for Informational Text

This close reading exemplar was adapted from achievethecore.org⁵ and the work of Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Diane Lapp.⁶ It introduces the Bill of Rights to students in a way that takes them deeply into the text, and leads them to a greater understanding of the content and purposes of the Bill of Rights by engaging them in civic learning practices to create a “Bill of Rights” for their school. The lesson presented is aligned to the Grade 5 Reading Standards for Informational Text in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, but can be easily adapted for other grade levels.

Grade 5 Students:

Key Ideas and Details

1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
2. Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

Craft and Structure

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*.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (Middle Grades, including Grade 5)

2 TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE

Knowledge:

Learners will understand...
The history of democratic ideals and principles, and how they are reflected in documents....

6 POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE

Questions for Exploration

What is power, and under what circumstances is the exercise of power acceptable?

How are individual rights protected in the context of majority rule?

Processes

Learners will be able to...
Examine persistent issues involving the rights of individuals and groups in relation to the general welfare.

10 CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

Question for Exploration:

What documents describe and support civic ideals and practices in a democratic republic?

Knowledge:

Learners will understand...
Key documents and excerpts from key sources that define and support democratic ideals and practices.

Sources: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), 14; National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Silver Spring, Md.: NCSS, 2010), 31 (Time, Continuity, and Change); 46, 48 (Power, Authority, and Governance); 62–63 (Civic Ideals and Practices).

a greater understanding of the content and purposes of the Bill of Rights. It promotes objectives drawn from both the Common Core Reading Standards for Informational Text and the national social studies standards, especially the themes for 2 TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE 6 POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE, 10 AND CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES.

Learning Objective

The goal of this exemplar is to demonstrate to teachers how students can build the reading, writing, listening and speaking, and language skills they’ve been practicing on a regular basis to understand the concepts and principles of our nation’s founding documents and how they are still important and meaningful in today’s society. By reading the Bill of Rights as a primary source, and as informational text, they will strengthen their content knowledge of the powers of the federal government in our American democracy, as well as the rights and responsibilities of citizens. By practicing writing, listening and speaking, and language skills, students will deepen and apply their knowledge of democratic principles to be able to impact public policy and achieve the goals of a civil society.

It is the responsibility of the government to create public policies that achieve the common good while at the same time protect and defend the rights of individuals and clarify the responsibilities of citizenship. Likewise, citizens in a democracy have a responsibility to abide by the rules and laws established by government, but they also have the right to have their views heard and addressed by the elected officials who represent them. Utilizing the Common Core State Standards with attention to building critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills will enable students to grasp and practice these democratic constructs in preparation for effective citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Reading Informational Text

One of the instructional shifts of the

Common Core State Standards is not to help students *get through the text* but to help them *go deeply into text* to seek out information, acquire key concepts, and employ strategies, automatically and invisibly as independent readers. To accomplish this, it is important to take the time to provide several passes of the text, allowing students to read and reread passages closely and interact with text through a series of questions, discussions, and writing activities.

There is an abundance of informational text available to build students' knowledge of the series of events that led to the writing and ratification of the Bill of Rights. The Common Core State Standards call for teachers to guide students through close reading techniques to gain information directly from text. They also call for close reading of primary sources. This exemplar demonstrates techniques for helping students read and reread primary and secondary sources closely. By focusing their reading through a series of text dependent questions and discussion about the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, students will understand the explicit and implicit ideas regarding the purpose of government and rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

The increased attention to rigor and comprehension of complex text presents a number of challenges for proficient readers and even more challenges for English Learners (ELs), struggling readers, and students with learning disabilities. For all students to be successful, it is essential to provide adequate support, structures, and scaffolding for students at different levels of proficiency. Accessing and/or building prior knowledge plays an important role in learning, particularly for English Learners. Include a number of visuals, references to prior background, and culturally relevant connections to help

ELs set the purpose for their reading.

Procedures

The featured lesson is based on the following procedures, which are presented in detail in this section.

1. The Teacher Establishes the Purpose for Students
2. Students Read the Text Independently
3. Students Pair-Share to Dialogue About the Text
4. The Teacher Conducts a “Think Aloud” to Model Literacy Strategies
5. Students Re-Read and Paraphrase the Text Through Dialogue and Writing
6. The Teacher Leads Discussion Using Text-Dependent Questions
7. Students Produce Expository Writing
8. Application of Knowledge in a Real World Setting.

The Table (pp. 318–319) accompanying this article presents the text of the Bill of Rights, offers vocabulary assistance, and suggests text-dependent questions for the class.

Instructional Guidance for Teachers

1. *The Teacher Establishes the Purpose for Students*

Remind students that the U.S. Constitution, adopted on September 17, 1787, was considered to be the supreme law of the land. The Preamble of the Constitution is a brief introductory statement that defines the Constitution's fundamental purposes and guiding principles. The seven Articles of the Constitution describe the purpose and functions of the government but they do not describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The Bill of Rights does so.

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Table: **Introducing the Bill of Rights**

Text Passage Under Discussion: The Bill of Rights	Vocabulary Assistance	Text-Dependent Questions
<p>Amendment I</p> <p>Congress shall make no law respecting an <i>establishment</i> of religion,</p> <hr/> <p>or <i>prohibiting</i> the free exercise thereof;</p> <hr/> <p>or <i>abridging</i> the freedom of speech, or of the press;</p> <hr/> <p>or the right of the people peaceably to <i>assemble</i>,</p> <hr/> <p>and to <i>petition</i> the government for a redress of grievances.</p>	<p><i>To set up something.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>To forbid or not allow.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>To shorten or restrict.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>To gather together.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>To demand action about a problem.</i></p>	<p>1. The First Amendment describes a number of rights for American citizens known as the Five Freedoms. What are the five things it says that the government <i>cannot</i> stop people from doing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. believing in whatever religion they want; b. expressing their opinion through speech; c. expressing their opinion in print d. assembling or getting together with any group of people they want; or e. circulating a petition against the government if they have a complaint.
<p>Amendment II</p> <p>A well regulated <i>militia</i>, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people</p> <hr/> <p>to keep and <i>bear arms</i>,</p> <hr/> <p>shall not be <i>infringed</i>.</p>	<p><i>A military force.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Carry weapons.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Disregarded or taken away.</i></p>	<p>2. What does the Second Amendment say about owning guns?</p> <p>American citizens have the right to keep and use guns to protect themselves.</p>
<p>Amendment III</p> <p>No soldier shall, in time of peace be <i>quartered</i> in any house,</p> <hr/> <p>without the <i>consent</i> of the owner, nor in time of war,</p> <hr/> <p>but in a manner to be <i>prescribed</i> by law.</p>	<p><i>Given a place to live.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Permission.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Dictated or required.</i></p>	<p>3. What does the Third Amendment say about taking care of soldiers in your home?</p> <p>American citizens cannot be forced to take care of soldiers in their homes. But if there is a war, Congress can make a law to force people to let them in their homes.</p>
<p>Amendment IV</p> <p>The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches</p> <hr/> <p>and <i>seizures</i>, shall not be violated,</p> <hr/> <p>and no <i>warrants</i> shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched,</p> <hr/> <p>and the persons or things to be <i>seized</i>.</p>	<p><i>To take things away by force.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Written permission.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Taken away</i></p>	<p>4. Amendment IV is about citizens' rights to privacy. What does it say the government can and cannot do with the things you own?</p> <p>The Fourth Amendment says that the government cannot search or take your home, your body, or your belongings without your permission unless they have a very good reason to think you have committed a crime.</p>
<p>Amendment V</p> <p>No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime,</p> <hr/> <p>unless on a <i>presentment</i> or <i>indictment</i> of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval</p> <hr/> <p>forces, or in the <i>militia</i>, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be</p> <hr/> <p><i>subject</i> for the same offense to be twice</p> <hr/> <p>put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be <i>deprived</i> of life, liberty, or property,</p> <hr/> <p>without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just <i>compensation</i>.</p>	<p><i>A statement that accuses someone of something.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>A military force.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Be forced to do something.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Not allowed to have.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Money to pay for their loss.</i></p>	<p>5. The Fifth Amendment is about the treatment of people who are accused of committing crimes. If someone is accused of committing a crime, what are his or her rights?</p> <p>People accused of committing serious crimes cannot be tried unless a Grand Jury meets to decide whether there's enough evidence or proof for a trial. If the jury decides the person is innocent, the government has to set the person free and cannot try the person again with another jury. The Fifth Amendment also says that people accused of committing crimes do not have to say anything at their trial. They can't be killed, or put in jail, or fined unless convicted by a jury. The government can't take away a person's house or farm or anything they own unless the government pays for it.</p>

Text Passage Under Discussion: The Bill of Rights	Vocabulary Assistance	Text-Dependent Questions
<p>Amendment VI In all criminal prosecutions, the <i>accused</i> shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been <i>committed</i>, which district shall have been previously <i>ascertained</i> by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be <i>confronted</i> with the witnesses against him; to have <i>compulsory</i> process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of <i>counsel</i> for his <i>defense</i>.</p>	<p><i>Blamed for doing something.</i></p> <p><i>Done or acted.</i></p> <p><i>Discovered or determined.</i></p> <p><i>To meet up with and challenge.</i></p> <p><i>Necessary or required.</i></p> <p><i>A lawyer to give advice or assistance.</i></p> <p><i>Protection.</i></p>	<p>6. Amendment VI describes additional rights for people accused of committing crimes. What are these other rights?</p> <p>People arrested for crimes have the right to have their trial pretty soon. The government cannot keep people in jail without giving them a trial that is public, so everyone knows what is happening. The case has to be decided by a jury of ordinary people from their community. They have the right to know what they are accused of, to see and hear the people who are witnesses against them, to have the government help them get witnesses on their side, and the right to have a lawyer to help them.</p>
<p>Amendment VII In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall <i>exceed</i> twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be <i>preserved</i>, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.</p>	<p><i>Be more than.</i></p> <p><i>Kept the same or made safe.</i></p>	<p>7. The Seventh Amendment describes the rights of individuals who are involved in a case against another person rather than a case against the government. What are those rights?</p> <p>People involved in a case against another person are allowed to have a trial by jury where the jury will decide the outcome.</p>
<p>Amendment VIII <i>Excessive bail</i> shall not be required, nor <i>excessive fines</i> <i>imposed</i>, nor cruel and unusual punishments <i>inflicted</i>.</p>	<p><i>Be forced to pay too much money.</i></p> <p><i>Forced upon someone.</i></p>	<p>8. What does the Eighth Amendment say about punishing criminals?</p> <p>When arrested for a crime, the government cannot force people to pay too much money in bail or in fines. Also, the government can't order you to have cruel or unusual punishments (like torture) even if you are convicted of a crime.</p>
<p>Amendment IX The <i>enumeration</i> in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be <i>construed</i> to <i>deny</i> or <i>disparage</i> others retained by the people.</p>	<p><i>Listing or description.</i></p> <p><i>Interpreted or thought of.</i></p> <p><i>Not allow other rights.</i></p>	<p>9. What does the Ninth Amendment say about rights?</p> <p>The Ninth Amendment says that besides the rights listed in the Constitution, citizens have other rights too.</p>
<p>Amendment X The powers not <i>delegated</i> to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.</p>	<p><i>Given to.</i></p>	<p>10. What is the Tenth Amendment about?</p> <p>According to the Tenth Amendment, any of the powers not included in the Constitution should be left up to the states or to the people to decide.</p>

* In the first column of this table, academic vocabulary that is bolded is worthy of lengthy discussion. It is often abstract, but is critical to the understanding of concepts.

COMMON CORE EXEMPLAR

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Accessing and/or building on prior knowledge play an important role in learning, particularly for English Learners. Though prior knowledge about the Constitution and Bill of Rights is important, resist the temptation to provide a multitude of details of the ideas and concepts defined within the documents that may, as a result, diminish the need to gain information directly from the text. However, allowing students to use graphic organizers and other literacy strategies while reading will help support and guide struggling readers.

2. Students Read the Text Independently

Ask students to read a summary of the Bill of Rights independently. Remind them that if they come to an unfamiliar word, they should look inside the word or surrounding words in the text for clues to figure out the meaning. English Learners should be encouraged to look at cognates to aid in understanding. As students read, watch closely for signs of difficulty and provide assistance as needed. Encourage all students to interact with the text by circling or underlining words, phrases, or sentences that are unclear to them. Provide a graphic organizer to help them capture key ideas. It is important to allow all students to interact with challenging text on their own as frequently and independently as possible.

3. Students Pair-Share to Dialogue About the Text

After the first independent reading exercise, ask students to talk to a partner to share something they learned from the text using a language frames:
I did not know that [fill in the blank]!

What does the *Bill of Rights* describe?

As students engage in conversation, circle the room to check students' under-

standing. Are they comprehending the text? Are there particular vocabulary words, passages, or concepts that are difficult for students to understand? This information will inform the content of the Think Aloud you will conduct with the entire class. Allow English Learners to use their primary language in their discussions.

4. The Teacher Conducts A "Think Aloud" to Model Literacy Strategies

The Think Aloud provides an opportunity for teachers to model effective strategies for students to utilize when they encounter challenging text passages on their own. Explain to students that you will be reading the Bill of Rights aloud to them and explaining your thinking as you come across difficult words and passages. Invite them to follow along silently with their own copy of the text. Model reading strategies to unlock the meaning of unknown vocabulary words, challenging syntax, structure, and context to help them understand the democratic principles of our Constitution.

Below is an example for you to consider:

The Bill of Rights

Amendment I

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;” This sounds a little confusing so I am going to read it over slowly in sections. ‘Congress shall make no law’ must mean that Congress will not make a law that... ‘respecting an establishment of religion’ The word *establishment* sounds like *establish*, which means starting something or setting something up. *Establishment of religion* must mean starting a religion or setting a religion up as the religion of the country. *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion* must mean that Congress cannot make a law that creates a religion or sets up and supports one religion over another. “Then it says ‘or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;’ *Prohibit* or *prohibiting*

means prevent. *Free exercise* has to do with practicing something for free. So when it says *or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*; it must mean that Congress cannot prevent anyone from practicing their religion; people have the freedom to follow any religion they want—the government cannot make them follow one religion or another.

“The rest of the sentence says ‘or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.’ The word ‘abridging’ or ‘abridge’ means to cut short or restrict. So this part must mean that Congress cannot restrict people’s speech (what they say) or the press (what they write in newspapers or books). ‘The right of the people peaceably to assemble’: the word *assemble* reminds me of a school assembly when the whole school gets together in the same room. So this must mean that the government cannot stop people from assembling or getting together with whomever they want. It then goes on to say ‘and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.’ A petition is like a letter—something that people sign that has a statement they agree with. Last week at the supermarket a woman asked me to sign a petition asking the government to pass a law that would require school buses to have seat belts for all passengers. Let me look at the word *grievances*. That word reminds me of the word *grieve* which means to be upset. So if people wanted to start a petition about things they didn’t like, they would be allowed to do that. Congress could not stop them.

“So this First Amendment seems to describe a lot of the freedoms that citizens in our country are allowed to have—freedom of religion, to practice the religion in which you believe; freedom of speech, to say what you want; freedom of the press, to write what you want; freedom to assemble, to be with the people you want; and freedom to petition, to be able to send their complaints to the government and ask them to make changes in the laws.”

Vocabulary Task: The Common Core State Standards compels students to discover the meaning of words directly from the text whenever possible. Most of the vocabulary words in this exemplar can be discovered by students carefully reading the surrounding words or context in which they appear. Teacher-led Think Alouds are extremely helpful in modeling the use of contextual clues to encourage students to engage in this practice on a regular basis. The accompanying Table presents the text of the Bill of Rights, identifying vocabulary that might be difficult for students. Italicized words are defined briefly for students to the right of the text in a separate column whenever the original text is reproduced. Academic vocabulary that is often abstract and critical to the understanding of concepts is worthy of lengthy discussion. They are bolded in the text exemplar.

For English Learners, provide ample opportunities for students to engage in academic conversations using new vocabulary. Encourage them to look for cognates from their native language to bring meaning to new words.

For Special Education students, consider the following strategy from Universal Design of Learning: Have students make up their own visual vocabulary cards of the words or concepts for each amendment. Why UDL? This technique goes beyond a single text definition to increase depth of word knowledge by also supplying visual representations. More information about UDL can be found at www.cast.org/udl/.

Upon completion of the Teacher-Led Think Aloud, transition students to a discussion using text-dependent questions.

5. *Students Re-Read and Paraphrase the Text Through Dialogue and Writing*

This is the second independent activ-

ity in which students attempt to understand the text on their own. The aim is not for students to summarize the text, but to paraphrase, by explaining the content in their own words. Allow students time to discuss and paraphrase the text with each other verbally. This will foster confidence and reinforce skills acquired from the Teacher-led Think Aloud. It also promotes oral language development of English Learners. The goal is to train students to reread text to acquire knowledge, develop fluency and reinforce their use of text evidence whenever possible.

Ask students to paraphrase their understanding through focused and independent writing. The aim is not to have them ask questions but to do what they can on their own.

6. *The Teacher Leads Discussion Using Text-Dependent Questions*

Asking students to respond to concise text-dependent questions compels students to extract information directly from the text to help them understand important concepts and develop high-level critical thinking and problem solving skills. It also models the need and process of returning to text in order to absorb all it has to offer. Examples of text-dependent questions are included in the Table. They are designed to encourage in-depth understanding of the Bill of Rights (in contrast to questions that are text-dependent but trivial, such as: How many amendments are there in the Bill of Rights? Or, How many amendments are there about the rights of the accused?)

When creating text-dependent questions, keep in mind the goal of guiding students to use text to support answers, deepen comprehension of information, and practice strategic thinking and reasoning to extend and apply learning to real world scenarios. These important skills will serve students well in preparation for college, career, and citizenship in the twenty-first century.

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7. Students Produce Expository Writing

It has become increasingly evident that reading and writing are inherently connected. Used together, they generate ideas, are logically organized, and call upon students to think critically to visit and revisit text to make meaning. Done well, they are both active processes that cause students to interact with text to comprehend, remember, and apply learning. It is widely believed that good readers tend to be good writers and good writers tend to be good readers.

After discussion of the text-dependent questions, ask students to write an informal explanatory essay utilizing the writing prompts provided below. This activity provides another opportunity for students to revisit text and draw upon classroom discussions to synthesize information and express ideas through writing. Allow students time to revise essays after receiving teacher feedback or participating in further discussions.

Directions to Students:

Using the information and ideas from our discussions, your reading, and notes, respond to the writing prompt below in the form of an essay. Be sure to clearly cite evidence from the text in your answer.

Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States according to the Bill of Rights in the following areas:

- a. Expression of ideas
- b. Practicing of religion
- c. Assembling in groups with other people
- d. Owning and carrying firearms
- e. Quartering of soldiers
- f. Protection of private property
- g. Due process when accused of a crime
- h. Punishment of criminals.

For Special Education students, consider the following strategy from Universal Design of Learning (see www.cast.org/udl/):

Have students do this in a sketch format to be acted out or in tableau. Film the writing, direction, and acting out of their understanding of each amendment. Or have the students form a tableau and have one person describe the scene as it illustrates the amendment.

8. Application of Knowledge in a Real World Setting

Once grounded in the historical foundations of democratic principles and the role and responsibility of government and the role and responsibilities of citizens, students can apply their knowledge to understand how democratic systems and structures are necessary for achieving the goals of a civil society today. Young people need to understand that the governance of a family, school, and country protects and defends the rights of its members, and yet, there are consequences to bending or breaking rules and laws of a society. Working together for the common good is a primary goal of a democratic nation.

The following reading, writing, listening and speaking instructional practices can also be utilized to foster the 4Cs identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills Initiative (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation) as students apply their knowledge to become actively engaged citizens today.

Create a Student Bill of Rights for the School

Allow students to share information collected through research to have a discussion about the structures and systems in place that define the role and responsibility of their school, their teacher, and students. Through a teacher-led discussion, ask students to reach consensus to establish a Bill of Rights for students. This can help to meet Reading, Speaking and Listening Standards outlined in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

The following activities can help to

meet Writing Standards outlined in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts:

Describe in writing why and how the Student Bill of Rights was created.

- Post the Student Bill of Rights in the classroom, and ask students to write informative/explanatory text that conveys the process, purpose, rationale and ideas behind the creation of their documents.
- Publish the document in the school/classroom newsletter and ask students to write opinion pieces that provide pro and con arguments for their content.
- Ask students to conduct a poll among administrators, teachers and students at their school to get their reaction to the document. Ask students to use the information to write a narrative of their experience.
- Provide opportunities for students to continue to write on this subject in a “Constitutional Journal.” Vary the timeframes, range of tasks, purposes and audiences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Invite students, with the guidance and support from adults, to review and strengthen their writing by revising and editing using a variety of digital tools.
- Compile the writings of all students to publish a classroom book: “Our School’s Bill of Rights.”

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- Allow students opportunities to present their knowledge and ideas about the rights and responsibilities of citizens through a variety of vehicles (i.e., drawings, visuals, graphics, audio recordings). Experiment with different formats including informative/explanatory, narra-

tive presentations and/or opinionated speeches that provide logical evidence and rationale for the benefits and challenges to fulfilling the rights and responsibilities of government and its citizens. Encourage innovative approaches for students to present their Student Bill of Rights to the school community, using technology and the arts.

Conclusion

A profound reading of the text of the Bill of Rights provides students with a solid foundation for asking and answering the questions about its causes and effects that develop their analytical skills. A thorough knowledge of the document prepares students to investigate important questions that are not text-dependent, such as:

1. Why did the Framers think it was important to establish the Bill of Rights separate from the Constitution?
2. The Bill of Rights is made up of 10 amendments. Have more amendments been added since these were written?
3. Are these Bill of Rights still important today?

The Bill of Rights is both a historical foundation of U.S. democracy and a living document that continues to be at the center of vital contemporary decisions made by the Supreme Court. Teachers who bring it to life and make it understandable in class can ensure that it will become part of their students' enduring historic and civic knowledge. 📖

Notes

1. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).
2. Sam Wineburg and Daisy Martin, "Reading and Rewriting History," *Educational Leadership* (September 2004), 42-45.
3. See www.achievethecore.org.
4. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), 3.
5. See www.achievethecore.org.
6. Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Diane Lapp, *Text Complicity: Raising Rigor in Reading* (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 2012).

MICHELLE HERCZOG is the History-Social Science Consultant for the Los Angeles County Office of Education, Downey, California. She is Vice President of National Council for the Social Studies and Vice Chair of the California Instructional Quality Commission.

MAPS FOR THE CLASSROOM

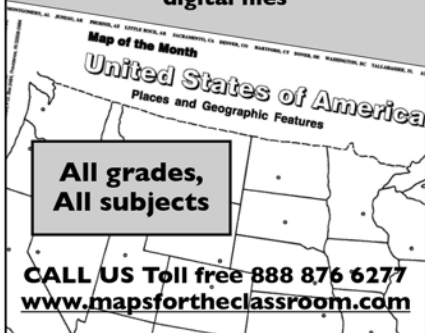
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