

Subject: Civics and Government

Grade Level: 6, 7, and 8

Standards:

Standard 1: Students identify, define, compare, and contrast ideas regarding the nature of government, politics and civic life, and explain how these ideas have influenced contemporary political and legal systems. Students also explain the importance of government, politics and civic engagement in a democratic republic, and demonstrate how citizens participate in civic and political life in their own communities.

USG.1.1 Define civic life, political life, and private life and describe the activities of individuals in each of these spheres.

USG.1.7 Define and provide examples of constitutionalism, rule of law, limited government, and popular sovereignty in the United States Constitution and explain the relationship of these constitutional principles to the protection of the rights of individuals.

Standard 5: Students explain the idea of citizenship in the United States, describe the roles of United States citizens, and identify and explain the rights and responsibilities of United States citizens. They also examine how citizens can participate responsibly and effectively in the civic and political life of the United States.

USG.5.4 Identify and describe the civil and constitutional rights found in the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights and expanded by decisions of the United States Supreme Court; analyze and evaluate landmark cases of the United States Supreme Court concerning civil rights and liberties of individuals.

USG.5.5 Identify when it is constitutional for our government to limit the rights of individuals and explain the reasons why the government would want to do this.

USG.5.7 Explain how citizens in the United States participate in public elections as voters and supporters of candidates for public office.

USG.5.8 Describe opportunities available to individuals to contribute to the well-being of their communities and participate responsibly in the political process at local, state and national levels of government. USG.5.9 Use information from a variety of resources to describe and discuss current American political issues

Materials Needed:

Students will need access to:

LESSON PLAN – FREEDOM OF SPEECH DURING TIMES OF WAR

- A computer or laptop or a way to show video in class
- Students may need headphones
- Access to PBS Learning Media
- Access to the internet

Learning Objectives:

- Identify 2 laws that were passed to limit freedom of speech during times of war
- Identify 2 presidents that were in office when these laws were passed
- Be able to state a reason why speech was limited during times of war
- Explain how the Espionage Act allowed the internment of Japanese citizens during WWII
- Explain McCarthyism that developed during the 1950's
- Define the Patriot Act

Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees freedom of speech. The government is also obligated to protect the country, particularly in times of war. Where does free speech impinge upon safety? Does it ever? Should speech be limited to maintain safety during war times? These questions have been debated since the beginning of our country.

Body of Lesson:

- a. Have students watch the Simply Civics video on Freedom of Speech During Times of War
- b. Provide the Handout to the Students (on paper or electronically)
- c. Revolutionary War Era
 - i. Review the First Amendment to the Constitution
 - ii. Hold Class Discussion
 1. What is your interpretation of free speech?
 2. Does it mean that we can say anything we want?
 3. Can people promote violence or give away government military secrets?
 4. What did the Sedition Act of 1798 say?
- d. Civil War
 - i. Review the section in the handout on the Civil War

LESSON PLAN – FREEDOM OF SPEECH DURING TIMES OF WAR

- ii. Discussion questions
 1. Did President Lincoln do the right thing by censoring messages in and out of the White House?
 2. Did shutting down the Chicago Times violate the First Amendment?
 3. Were these actions in the best interest of the safety of the soldiers?
 4. What are your thoughts about the Ohio politician being banished to the Confederacy?
- e. World War I
 - i. Review the section in the handout on WWI and look at the link on Eugene V. Debs
 - ii. Discussion questions
 1. Describe the Espionage Act of 1917
 2. Describe the Sedition Act of 1918
 3. Do you think Eugene Debs' constitutional rights were violated by his conviction and imprisonment? Do you think it was justified due to the war?
- f. World War II
 - i. Review the information in the handout, the link, and watch the video
 - ii. Discuss the violation of rights of the Japanese
 - iii. Think about and discuss how you would feel if you were sent to a camp because of your family background (such as everyone with Irish heritage, or everyone with German heritage, etc.)
- g. McCarthyism
 - i. Review this section of the handout and the links
 - ii. Discuss how the Espionage Act contributed to the rise of McCarthyism
 - iii. Did Joe McCarthy exceed the limits of free speech?
- h. Vietnam War
 - i. Review this section of the handout and the links.
 - ii. Discuss the role of the New York Times in printing the Pentagon Papers?
 1. Did they do the right thing?
 - iii. Discuss the role of Daniel Ellsberg in the release of the Pentagon Papers
 1. Did he do the right thing?
 2. Did he risk going to prison?
- i. 9-11
 - i. Review this section of the handout and the links
 - ii. Was the Patriot Act needed to protect the safety of the country?
 - iii. Is it still needed?

Summary/Closure

Free speech is a precious commodity that should not be abused. The United States has a long history of protecting free speech and also of limiting it in times of war. The appropriateness of this limitation has been and will continue to be debated. We value free speech. We also value our safety. The correct action is not always easy to find.

Extension Activities

The Revolutionist Eugene V. Debs (57 minutes)

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-revolutionist-eugene-v-debs-odnxgt/>

Dying for McCarthy's Sins (27 minutes). A story of how Senator Joe McCarthy's pursuit of communists led to the suicide of a Senator from Wyoming.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/wyoming-chronicle-politics-fear/>

Julian Bond – The legal case deciding whether Julian Bond could be removed as a congressman for his criticism of the Vietnam War

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/385/116>

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