

My Bill of Rights

Grade level: 7-12

Time: 3-4 1-hour sessions

Objectives:

- Be able to explain what a right is.
- Become familiar with the Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Identify the importance and application of these rights in their daily lives.
- Use the newspaper to identify rights currently questioned/contested as well as emerging rights.
- Develop a Classroom Bill of Rights.

Curricular Connections: Civics, Language Arts

Materials: Newspapers, copies of the Bill of Rights¹, copies of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights², a copy of the [Rights Comparison Table](http://www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/RightsComparisonTable.pdf) (<http://www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/RightsComparisonTable.pdf>)
Class Bill of Rights (www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/ClassBillOfRights.pdf)

Procedure:

- 1) On the board create three columns with the headings: (1) Rights in School, (2) Rights at Home, and (3) Rights in Public.
- 2) As a class brainstorm ten rights for each column.
- 3) Hand out copies of the Bill of Rights and/or The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 4) Have students identify which rights correspond to the items on their own list by writing the number of the right next to them.
- 5) The students will locate and discuss three newspaper articles demonstrating current use of the Bill of Rights and/or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 6) Compare and contrast the rights provided by the Bill of Rights to those provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights using the comparison table.
- 7) After discussing the Bill of Rights, inform the students that they will be role-playing a Constitutional Convention that has been charged with developing the first ten amendments of a Class Bill of Rights.
- 8) The class is then given time for informal debate and discussion over the various rights proposals. At this point the large group must formally debate and vote on the individual rights they want to ratify.

Reflection:

- Have each group orally present one newspaper article to the class. Follow up with a discussion.

¹ Available online at: http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/bill_of_rights/amendments_1-10.html

² Available online at: <http://www.un.org/overview/rights.html>

- Discuss the problems and advantages of committee work.
- Have the students discuss the importance of the Bill of Rights (challenge them to explore reasons for the presence or absence of certain rights).
- Reflect on the role of government in guaranteeing rights.

Assessment:

- Test the students' ability to identify the titles and content of the Bill of Rights.
- Class Bill of Rights.
- Completion of the Rights Comparison Table.

Source: John Wright