

Bill of Rights Lesson

Unit	1 Foundations of American Democracy
Content	1.3 Government Powers and Individual Rights
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Definition/Classification/analysis
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bill of Rights Backgrounder ● Visualizing The Bill of Rights ● ☰ Foundational Documents Graphic Organizer ● Completed Foundational Documents Graphic Organizer - U.S. Constitution ● Bill of Rights Practice - Google Form
Big ?s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What rights do we have guaranteed in the Constitution? ● Where did these rights come from?
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Starter: Have the students write down their definition of <i>Rights</i>. Then ask them to answer the following on a scrap sheet of paper: Where do those rights come from? What is the Bill of Rights? List anything you know about the Bill of Rights. List as many of them as they can recall. Briefly discuss. 2. Read or share the Bill of Rights Backgrounder with students. If students have a copy of the Bill of Rights Backgrounder, have them underline or highlight their favorite fact, otherwise students should write down their favorite fun fact on their starter or separate sheet of paper. Survey the class to see which fun fact was the most popular. 3. Give each student Visualizing The Bill of Rights. Students should read the first page of the Bill of Rights worksheet and make sure they understand the directions. Students turn their Bill of Rights into Emojis or symbols. Students may use phones, computers, textbooks, etc. 4. In teams of up to three have students compare their Visualizing The Bill of Rights and then have teams rank the 10 rights in order of importance to the current U.S. political system. Share and discuss. 5. Have students complete the Bill of Rights Practice - Google Form 6. Have students fill in ☰ Foundational Documents Graphic Organizer for the Constitution and Bill of Rights in class (if time allows) or for Homework. 7. Make sure students' rubrics for the U.S. Constitution are consistent with Completed Foundational Document Graphic Organizer - U.S. Constitution.

Bill of Rights Backgrounder

"[A] bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse." - Thomas Jefferson, December 20, 1787

1. The Bill of Rights was inspired by the Virginia Declaration of Rights.

Politician George Mason wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776. The document solidified certain rights, stating that "all men are by nature equally free and independent," and that "government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security, of the people, nation, or community."

2. The Bill of Rights was also inspired by an English law of the same name.

The English Bill of Rights, which was passed in 1689, limited the power of the monarchy by giving more power to Parliament, and outlined individual rights such as freedom of speech.

3. We didn't always have a Bill of Rights.

On June 21, 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution, with the assurance that a Bill of Rights would be added. It was subsequently agreed that government under the U.S. Constitution would begin on March 4, 1789. The Bill of Rights was not approved until it was ratified by Virginia's legislature on December 15, 1791.

4. James Madison was the author.

Madison wrote a lot more amendments in his first draft of the Bill of Rights than ended up being ratified.

His

list got cut down first to 17 by the House, and then 12 by the Senate. It was finalized with just 10 amendments in 1791 — three months after his original proposition.

5. Some of the original copies were probably destroyed.

During his first term, President Washington and Congress had 14 official handwritten replicas of the Bill of Rights made. At present, two are conspicuously unaccounted for. One copy was retained by the federal government while the rest were sent off to the 11 states as well as Rhode Island and North Carolina, who had yet to ratify the Constitution. Subsequently, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and Georgia all [lost theirs](#). It's believed that the Empire State's was burned in a 1911 fire while Georgia's likely went up in smoke during the Civil War. In 1945, a long-lost original copy—experts aren't sure which—was gifted to the Library of Congress. Forty-nine years earlier, the New York Public Library obtained another copy. It's widely believed that this one originally belonged to Pennsylvania, therefore the document is being shared between the Keystone State and the NYPL. New York has it for 60 percent of the time and Pennsylvania for the rest.

6. The Bill of Rights' least litigated amendment is the Third.

Thanks to the Third Amendment, soldiers cannot legally be [quartered](#) inside your home without your consent. Since colonial Americans had lived in fear of being suddenly forced to house and feed British troops, the amendment was warmly received during the late 1700s. Today, however, it's rarely invoked, and the American Bar Association once called this amendment the "runt piglet" of the constitution.

7. North Carolina's copy may have been stolen by a Civil War soldier.

That's my home state!!!! During the spring of 1865, Raleigh was firmly under the control of pro-Union troops. According to a statement released by the U.S. Attorney's office in that city, "Sometime during the occupation, a soldier in Gen. William Sherman's army allegedly took North Carolina's copy of the Bill of rights [from the state capitol] and carried it away." Afterward, it changed hands several times and eventually came into antique dealer Wayne Pratt's possession. When the FBI learned of his plan to sell the priceless parchment, operatives seized it. In 2007, the copy went on a well-publicized tour of North Carolina before returning to Raleigh—hopefully for good.

8. Three states didn't ratify the Bill of Rights until 1939.

To celebrate the Constitution's 150th anniversary, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Georgia formally gave the Bill of Rights the approval they'd withheld for well over a century.

9. Bill of Rights Day dates back to 1941.

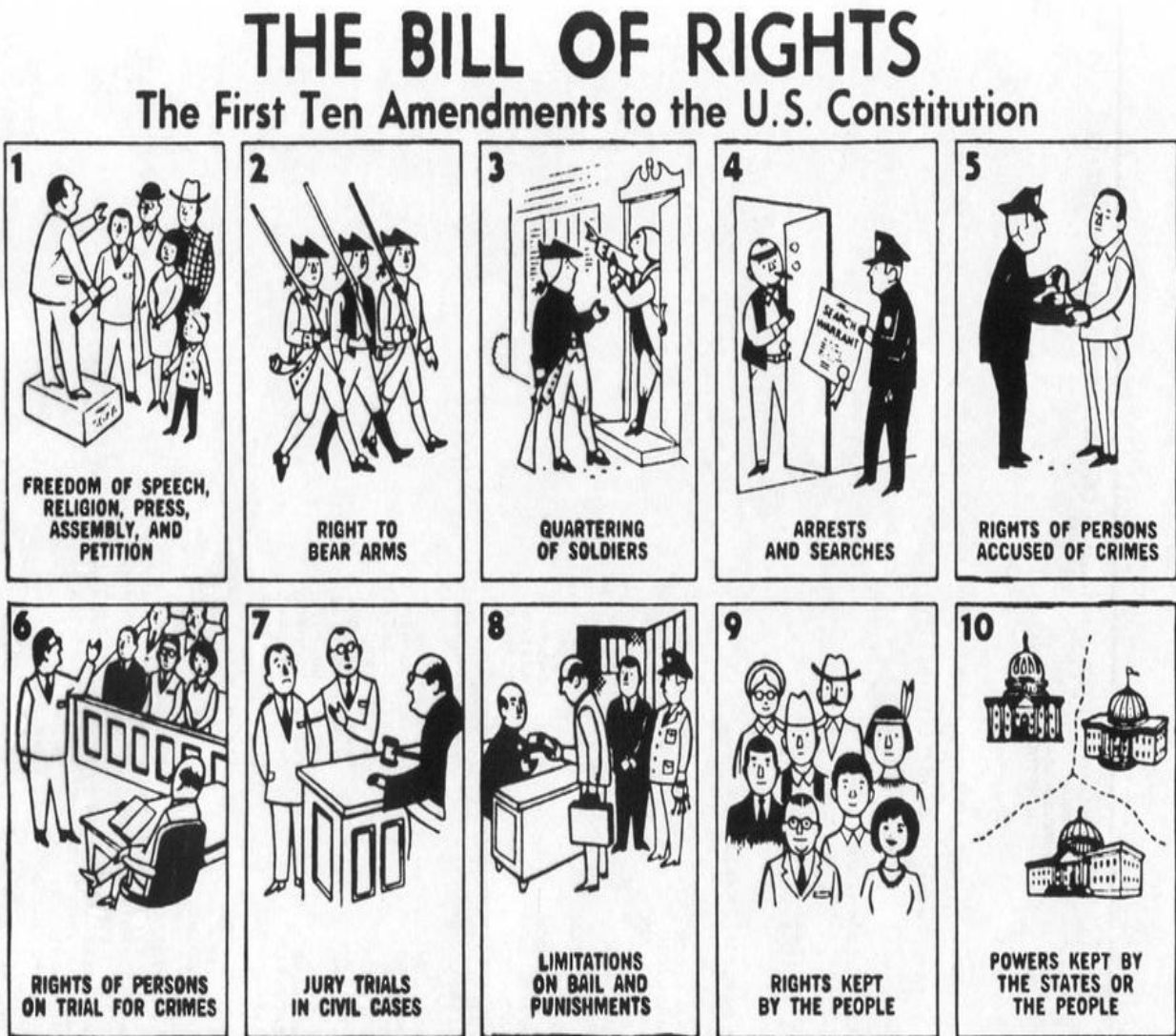
On November 27, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt urged America's citizenry to celebrate December 15 as "Bill of Rights Day" in honor of its anniversary: "I call upon the officials of the Government, and upon the people of the United States, to observe the day by displaying the flag of the United States on public buildings and by meeting together for such prayers and such ceremonies as may seem to them appropriate. It is especially fitting," he [added](#), "that this anniversary should be remembered and observed by those institutions of a democratic people which owe their very existence to the guarantees of the Bill of Rights: the free schools, the free churches, the labor unions, the religious and educational and civic organizations of all kinds which, without the guarantee of the Bill of Rights, could never have existed; which sicken and disappear whenever, in any country, these rights are curtailed or withdrawn."

10. Madison first thought that the Bill of Rights would be pointless, but it ended up saving the Constitution.

At first, Madison, the 4th president of the United States, opposed a Bill of Rights, but Anti-Federalists were vying to rewrite the Constitution. By adding the Bill of Rights, he stopped Anti-Federalist from rewriting the Constitution, which is why he is known as the father of the Constitution and the father of the Bill of Rights. Jefferson told Madison, "A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on Earth, general or particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences."


Visualizing The Bill of Rights

The [Bill of Rights](#) are the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution. These amendments guarantee essential rights and civil liberties, such as the right to free speech and the right to a fair trial, as well as reserving rights to the people and the states. Take a sec and see how many of the rights from the Bill of Rights you can name:













Here's a fun video of the [Bill of Rights made into hand signs](#) and this helpful [Bill of Rights Hand Signals](#) pdf so you can remember them all.

Your job is to turn the [Bill of Rights](#) into Emojis. I've filled in Amendment One in the table below. Now your task is to fill in the rest of the table. The [National Constitution Center](#) is a great resource.





Amendment	Text	Main Idea (6 words or less)	Emoji or symbol or image This is the fun part!!!!
1	Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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.	Freedom of Speech, press, assembly, religion, & Petition.	
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			


Rank the Amendments in order of importance.
 How would the U.S. be different without the Bill of Rights?
 Describe one scenario where you exercised a right from the Bill of Rights?

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

TITLE  ALL CAPS & hyperlinked	
HEADLINE  In a sentence, what is it?	
AUTHOR(S) 	
YEAR 	
MAIN POINT  Summary of the document	
ARGUMENT  In a sentence, what claim does the document make?	
CLAIM  Make a claim about the document's impact on U.S. political history	
REMEMBER  Use a mnemonic to help you remember it	
QUOTE  Write an important Quote from the document	
CONNECTIONS  to other foundational documents , GoPo units , topics, or essential GoPo knowledge	

FOUNDATIONAL DOCS COMPLETED GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

<p>TITLE </p> <p>ALL CAPS & hyperlinked</p>	<p><u>U.S. Constitution</u> and <u>Bill of Rights</u></p>
<p>HEADLINE </p> <p>In a sentence, what is it?</p>	<p>The Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the United States of America. It superseded the Articles of Confederation, the nation's first constitution, in 1789. Originally comprising seven articles, it delineates the national frame and constraints of government. There have been 27 amendments to the Constitution, beginning with the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments.</p>
<p>AUTHOR(S) </p>	<p>Short answer: James Madison</p> <p>Long answer: James Madison is known as the Father of the Constitution because of his pivotal role in the document's drafting as well as its ratification. Madison also drafted the first 10 amendments -- the Bill of Rights. But Madison did not write the Constitution alone. In fact, it was written by the many delegates to the Constitutional Convention over a long period of time. A "Committee of Style and Arrangement"—Alexander Hamilton (New York), William Samuel Johnson (Connecticut), Rufus King (Massachusetts), James Madison (Virginia), and Gouverneur Morris (Pennsylvania)—was appointed to distill a final draft constitution from the work of the convention.</p>
<p>YEAR </p>	<p>Short version: Constitution signed on September 17, 1787, and ratified on June 21, 1788. Bill of Rights ratified on December 15, 1791.</p> <p>Long version: the drafting of the Constitution, referred to as its framing, was completed at the Constitutional Convention that took place in Philadelphia in 1787 from late May through September 17, 1787. The States proceeded to begin ratification, with some debating more intensely than others. Delaware was the first State to ratify, on December 7, 1787. After New Hampshire became the ninth State to ratify, on June 22, 1788, the Confederation Congress established March 9, 1789 as the date to begin operating under the Constitution. Since the Constitution was ratified in 1789, it has been amended 27 times. The first ten amendments, known collectively as the Bill of Rights, offer specific protections of individual liberty and justice and place restrictions on the powers of government within the U.S. states. On December 15, 1791, three-fourths of the existing State legislatures ratified the first 10 Amendments of the Constitution—the Bill of Rights.</p>

MAIN POINT 
Summary of the document

Written in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in operation since 1789, the United States Constitution is the world's longest surviving written charter of government. Its first three words – “We The People” – affirm that the government of the United States exists to serve its citizens. The supremacy of the people through their elected representatives is recognized in Article I, which creates a Congress consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The positioning of Congress at the beginning of the Constitution affirms its status as the “First Branch” of the federal government.

The Constitution assigned to Congress responsibility for organizing the executive and judicial branches, raising revenue, declaring war, and making all laws necessary for executing these powers. The president is permitted to veto specific legislative acts, but Congress has the authority to override presidential vetoes by two-thirds majorities of both houses. The Constitution also provides that the Senate advise and consent on key executive and judicial appointments and on the approval for ratification of treaties.

For over two centuries the Constitution has remained in force because its framers successfully separated and balanced governmental powers to safeguard the interests of majority rule and minority rights, of liberty and equality, and of the federal and state governments. More a concise statement of national principles than a detailed plan of governmental operation, the Constitution has evolved to meet the changing needs of a modern society profoundly different from the eighteenth-century world in which its creators lived. To date, the Constitution has been amended 27 times, most recently in 1992. The first ten amendments constitute the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights is the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution. It spells out Americans' rights in relation to their government. It guarantees civil rights and liberties to the individual—like freedom of speech, press, and religion. It sets rules for due process of law and reserves all powers not delegated to the Federal Government to the people or the States. And it specifies that “the enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

ARGUMENT 

In a sentence, what claim does the document make?

Let's lay out the framework for a strong central government to keep us safe, but let's also constrain it to keep us free. Let's also list all rights people have to guard against tyranny and government overreach.

CLAIM 

Make a claim about the document's impact on U.S. political history

The Constitution introduced novel governmental doctrine and practices such as checks and balances, separating powers between branches, and defining said powers. The amendment process also made the Constitution a living document that could be changed with enough support from the people and ratification by the states. The U.S. Constitution is at the foundation of every single law in America. It's at the heart of how we think, act, and govern as Americans. It is currently the longest lasting written constitution in the world, and has influenced constitutions and governments around the world.

REMEMBER 

Use a [mnemonic](#) to help you remember it

Strong but not too strong. Constrained by the Rights of the people.

Currently

Organized

National

Standards to stop

Tyranny and

Increase

The

Unity and

The

Integration of the

Organization of the American people, states, and

Nation

QUOTE 

Write an important Quote from the document

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. - The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

CONNECTIONS 

to other [foundational documents](#), [GoPo units](#), topics, or essential GoPo knowledge

All the laws and the governance of the United States flows from the U.S. Constitution. The entire structure of government that we learn about in unit 2 is derived from the Constitution. The political process from unit 5 must work around the constraints set up by the Constitution. The U.S. Constitution is the center of gravity for U.S. government and politics.

 9 Required Foundational Documents