

First and Fourth Amendment Rights

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Students will explore limitations on First and Fourth Amendment rights during times of national crisis.

Objectives:

1. Students will research the Alien and Sedition Acts (1798), the Espionage and Sedition Acts (1917-1918), and the Patriot Act.
2. Students will create their own political cartoons illustrating First and Fourth Amendment issues after analyzing cartoons relating to the acts referenced above.
3. Students will participate in an online simulation from the Bill of Rights institute.

Time Frame: Two class periods

Standards:

USHC-1.5 Explain how the fundamental principle of limited government is protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, including democracy, republicanism, federalism, the separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, and individual rights.

8-3.3 Explain the basic principles of government as established in the United States Constitution.

Materials and Resources:

1. Legal-sized paper
2. Color pencils
3. "We the People: The Citizen & The Constitution" (if available)
4. Websites with political cartoons
5. Copies of the First and Fourth Amendments that students will refer to for activities
6. Internet access and computers for students

Essential Question: Should First and Fourth Amendment rights be restricted during times of national crisis?

Procedures:

1. Warm-up: Put a controversial statement on the board, such as "I can text anything I want to anyone I want anytime I want." Students will individually come to the board and write succinct responses to the statement or other students' comments. (10 minutes)
2. Distribute the text of the First and Fourth Amendments. Students will read the text and discuss its meaning. If the "We the People" book is available, students can learn more about the amendments (optional). (10 minutes)
3. Working in groups, students will use the internet to research one of the following laws: Alien and Sedition Acts, Espionage and Sedition Acts, and the Patriot Act. They should answer these questions about their act: (1) What was the act about? (2) What event related to the passage of the act? (3) How were the First and/or Fourth Amendments affected by the act? (40 minutes)
4. On Day 2, students will present their research findings to the class. (15 minutes)
5. Direct students to go to the Bill of Rights Institute website. They will participate in the games. (15 minutes)
6. Show examples of political cartoons relating to the acts from the internet. Discuss the meaning of the cartoons. (15 minutes)
7. Students will begin producing their own political cartoons related to the theme of the lesson. They can finish their cartoons at home. (15 minutes)

EVALUATION: The political cartoons will be the final evaluation.