

First Amendment Webquest

By Barbara A. Kane

Introduction

*After winning the American Revolution the new nation needed a government. Its first attempt at such a government was formed under The Articles of Confederation but it was not successful. The Colonists were so afraid of creating a government that would become too powerful that this new government was doomed to failure. It was too weak. The state governments remained more powerful and this allowed foreign powers to take advantage of the young nation. Many of the nation's leaders saw that a stronger central government would be necessary and ultimately the **United States Constitution*** was written.*

*This, however, was not the answer for those who still feared that the government would be too strong. These men, called antifederalists (against a strong federal government) insisted that a Bill of Rights be included. This **Bill of Rights**** was to protect the natural rights of American Citizens from being abused by a central government that might otherwise become too strong.*

**<http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.overview.html>*

***<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/billrights/billmain.html>*

The Bill of Rights contains ten amendments, each protecting various rights of the citizens. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution ensures five rights to American Citizens. This Webquest is an investigation of the First Amendment.

Assignment

Each member of your five member group will be assigned a number relative to the right that they will be researching through this webquest (in other words, #1 will work on Freedom of Speech ...). Each person will be responsible for locating the answers to a set of questions and reporting back to the rest of the members of their group. Ultimately, everyone with the help of their group will answer all questions on the handout.

- 1.) Freedom of **Speech***
- 2.) Freedom of the **Press***
- 3.) Freedom of **Religion***
- 4.) Freedom of **Petition***
- 5.) Freedom of **Assembly***

1.) Freedom of Speech questions:

- a. The term Freedom of Speech does not only refer to the things people say. What other rights are implied by the term Freedom of Speech?*
- b. How does protecting Freedom of Speech, keep the government from becoming too powerful?*
- c. Should Freedom of Speech ever be limited and if so how? Be sure to refer to the issues discussed in the articles and other issues with which you may already be familiar.*

2. Freedom of the Press

- a. Why was Freedom of the Press included in the First Amendment?*

b. If we were to censor written works what would be the greatest problem the censors would have? Refer to the list of once censored books.

c. What could happen if the rights to Freedom of the Press were not included in the Constitution?

d. Explain the case of Peter Zenger and tell how it relates to this part of the First Amendment.

3. Freedom of Religion questions:

a. What does the term Freedom of Religion mean in relationship to the United States Government?

b. List some controversies related to this section of the First Amendment.

c. What are three specific rules set out by the courts that are related to freedom of religion?

d. Some people feel that these rules protect religious freedom while others feel they inhibit religious freedom. Explain this statement.

4. Freedom of Petition questions:

a. What is the Right of Petition?

b. Why do people petition the Government?

c. Where can those who petition aim their requests?

d. What kinds of issues may petitions contain?

5. Freedom of Assembly questions:

a. What is the Right to Assembly?

b. How should those who assemble behave?

- c. *Under what circumstances are people not allowed to assemble?*
- d. *What can the government require from people who exercise their right to assemble?*
- e. *Name some issues over which people might assemble (stage a protest).*

Resources for Freedom of Speech (#1):

<http://www.aclu.org/issues/freespeech/isfs.html>

<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest117.html>

<http://www.antonnews.com/floralparkdispatch/2003/10/03/news/flag.html>

<http://www.liberator.net/articles/KKKrally.html>

<http://www.mlaforum.org/volume1/issue1/suppression.html>

Resources for Freedom of the Press (#2):

<http://www.observer.co.uk/freepress/story/0,8224,480127,00.html>

<http://earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/bookmarks/zenger/index.html>

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/banned-books.html>

http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/rcah/html/ah_033300_freedomofthe.htm

Resources for Freedom of Religion (#3):

<http://www.sunnetworks.net/~ggarman/>

http://www.aclu.org/community/calif-sd/hills_churchstate_oped.html

<http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer.html>

http://www.adl.org/religion_ps/prayer.asp

Resources for Freedom of Petition (#4):

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment01/21.html>

<http://www.illinoisfirstamendmentcenter.com/Main.asp?SectionID=34&SubSectionID=60&ArticleID=116>

<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/petition/topic.aspx?topic=sue>

<http://www.aclu.org/FreeSpeech/FreeSpeech.cfm?ID=14881&c=86>

<http://www.givemeliberty.org/RTPLawsuit/SignPetitions.htm>

Resources for Freedom of Assembly (#5):

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment01/21.html>

(Look down to fourth paragraph)

<http://consumer.pub.findlaw.com/nllg/CIVILRIGHTS/>

<http://www.cnn.com/EARTH/9710/31/pepper.spray.update/index.html>

<http://www.voteutah.org/learning/citizenship/rights.html#assemble>

http://www.nlg.org/news/statements/oakland_pr.htm

After everyone has all of the answers to the questions on their handout discuss the following questions and be prepared to report your findings to the rest of the class.

Hand-Out for First Amendment Webquest

Write your answers on loose leaf

Freedom of Speech

- a. The term Freedom of Speech does not only refer to the things people say. What other rights are implied by the term Freedom of Speech?*
- b. How does protecting Freedom of Speech keep the government from becoming too powerful?*
- c. Should Freedom of Speech ever be limited and if so how? Be sure to refer to the issues discussed in the articles and other issues with which you may already be familiar.*

Freedom of the Press

- a. Why was Freedom of the Press included in the First Amendment?*
- b. If we were to censor written works what would be the greatest problem the censors would have? Refer to the list of once censored books.*
- c. What could happen if the rights to Freedom of the Press were not included in the Constitution?*
- d. Explain the case of Peter Zenger and tell how it relates to this part of the First Amendment.*

Freedom of Religion

- a. *What does the term Freedom of Religion mean in relationship to the United States Government?*
- b. *List some controversies related to this section of the First Amendment.*
- c. *What are three specific rules set out by the courts that are related to freedom of religion?*
- d. *Some people feel that these rules protect religious freedom while others feel they inhibit religious freedom. Explain this statement.*

Freedom of Petition

- a. *What is the Right of Petition?*
- b. *Why do people petition the Government?*
- c. *Where can those who petition aim their requests?*
- d. *What kinds of issues may petitions contain?*

Freedom of Assembly

- a. *What is the Right to Assembly?*
- b. *How should those who assemble behave?*
- c. *Under what circumstances are people not allowed to assemble?*
- d. *What can the government require from people who exercise their right to assemble?*
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