

Title: *Battle for the Bill of Rights*

Instructor: Leila Leoncavallo

Students will go back in time to learn about one of the biggest debates at the Constitutional Convention: whether basic freedoms should be included in the Constitution. They will learn about the life of George Mason, the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and the important role that Mason played in establishing the Bill of Rights. Students will learn about some of the most important rights, including recent examples of how those rights are important (and sometimes controversial!) today.

Week One

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists

Students will learn about the Philadelphia Convention of 1789 and how the Constitution was written. We will discuss one of the biggest arguments at the Convention: whether or not rights should be included in the Constitution. The class will be divided into Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Each side will be challenged to come up with their best arguments for or against including rights in the Constitution.

Week Two

GEORGE MASON

Father of the Bill of Rights

Students will learn about the life of George Mason. We will discuss Mason's role at the Constitutional Convention, and why he refused to sign the Constitution. Students will learn about Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights and its influence on the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

Week Three

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE PRESS

Students will be challenged to define the terms "speech" and the "press." We will discuss the importance of these freedoms in a democracy, and ponder why they were included in the Bill of Rights. We will also consider instances when these freedoms might be restricted.

Week Four

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

We will discuss a brief history of peoples' quest for religious freedom and consider why

this was so important. We will discuss Thomas Jefferson's *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, why freedom of religion was included in the Bill of Rights, and what it means to us today.

Week Five

RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED

Students will learn the importance of constitutional rights when suspected or accused of a crime as we discuss the role of juries, search warrants, the "right to remain silent," and the prohibition against "cruel and unusual" punishment.

Week Six

TRANSLATING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

We will read and translate the Bill of Rights together as a class. Students will be challenged to memorize some of the key provisions of each amendment.

Week Seven

REVIEW

The class will conclude with a review of the Bill of Rights through class discussion and interactive games.