

The Five Freedoms Lesson Plan

1. Quick review of the five freedoms (info on second page—each adult working with groups should have a copy of the info for groups to check as they work).
2. Split into groups based on the last book club groups—adult lists the five freedoms on the board in each room for reference.
3. Each group creates a skit that either follows the given scenario or relates to something from their last book club book.
4. Each group performs their skit and the audience has to guess which freedom the skit is depicting.

Post-Skit Questions

1. When Congress ratified the first amendment, who was giving power and who was getting it? What kind of power was it?
2. If the five freedoms were taken away, who would have the power?
3. How would our country be different if we didn't have the five freedoms?

The Five Freedoms of the First Amendment Stuff Congress Can't Make Laws To Stop

*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 religion

The First Amendment prevents the government from establishing an official religion. Citizens have freedom to attend a church, synagogue, temple or mosque of their choice — or not to attend at all. The First Amendment allows us to practice our religion the way we want to.

Freedom of speech

The First Amendment keeps the government from making laws that might stop us from saying what we think. People have the right to criticize the government and to share their opinions with others.

Freedom of the press

A free press means we can get information from many different sources. The government cannot control what is printed in newspapers and books, broadcast on TV or radio or offered online. Citizens can request time on television to respond to views with which they disagree; they may write letters to newspaper editors and hope those letters will be printed for others to see. They can pass out leaflets that give their opinions. They can have their own Web pages and offer their opinions to others through the many means made available by the Internet.

Freedom of assembly

Citizens can come together in public and private gatherings. They can join groups for political, religious, social or recreational purposes. By organizing to accomplish a common goal, citizens can spread their ideas more effectively.

Right to petition

“To petition the government for a redress of grievances” means that citizens can ask for changes in the government. They can do this by collecting signatures and sending them to their elected representatives; they can write, call or e-mail their elected representatives; they can support groups that lobby the government.

Freedom of Religion—Pick One

Choice A: Create a freedom of religion skit based in the time period of your last book club book. Were all religions tolerated in that place and time?

Choice B: A student in your school wants to read religious texts during IDR. Other students feel that if a student can read religious texts at school then that means the school is favoring particular religions. What can the school community do?

Freedom of Speech—Pick One

Choice A: Create a freedom of speech skit based in the time period of your last book club book. Were there any circumstances where it might be difficult to say what you please at that time?

Choice B: A friend of yours has created a new, meaningless word that makes you both laugh. You decide to use your new word whenever possible and to get it printed on t-shirts. Some students in your school don't like your new word and want to have it banned at school. What now?

Freedom of the Press—Pick One

Choice A: Create a freedom of the press skit based in the time period of your last book club book. Were there things that the public should know but that some people might not want shared? What could the news media of the day (newspapers, radio, television, internet) do?

Choice B: A reporter in a war zone has learned information that might endanger the soldiers because their location would be revealed to the enemy if he or she puts it in the next news story. This same information is also critical for voters to know before an upcoming election. Should the reporter send in the story as it is, modify it somehow, or not send it in at all? How will he or she decide?

Freedom of Assembly—Pick One

Choice A: Create a freedom of assembly skit based in the time period of your last book club book. What kinds of gatherings took place then? Were any of them controversial?

Choice B: A new club in town wants to meet in one of the public library conference rooms to discuss the merits of eating uncooked spaghetti. Other citizens think that's gross. They worry that the youth of the city will be corrupted by consuming crunchy pasta, not to mention the mess of pasta particles all over the place. These concerned citizens decide such a group shouldn't be allowed to meet in a public space because what they want to do is just plain wrong to them. What should we do?

Right to Petition—Pick One

Choice A: Create a right to petition skit based in the time period of your last book club book. What things were happening during that time period that citizens might want to change?

Choice B: Bloomington City Council has passed a law that only hybrid electric cars may park on city streets during the week. This law was passed in order to ease up congestion and keep the air clean. A group of concerned citizens thinks this is unfair. Not everyone can afford a fancy electric car. What can these concerned citizens do to voice their opinion?