

Bill of Rights

Primary Resource Documents - Lesson 1

Title: The Bill of Rights and the Japanese American incarceration.

Summary: This lesson introduces the Bill of Rights and how it relates to the treatment of people during WWII. Participants will evaluate the meaning within the document as it relates to the events of the WWII evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans.

Age/grade level: 8th- 12th*

Related EALR: *Check your grade level requirements and adjust as necessary to appropriate level.

Suggested materials: Copies or enlargements of the [annotated Bill of Rights](#) provided in the pdf section of this guide. If available, a copy of students' rights handbook from your school or district.



Time needed: One or two class sessions

Lesson Objective: Students will review the contents of the Bill of Rights and discuss how they apply to the events of the Japanese and Japanese American internment experience.

Presenting the Lesson

Preparation:

*The purpose of this lesson is not to develop deep background about the Bill of Rights or the US Constitution. The Omoide project suggest using it as a support piece to illustrate some of the irony and problems associated with the treatment of US citizens during WWII. Further research and instruction on the Bill of Rights can be found on the internet or in your local libraries.

1. Review the contents of the Bill of Rights, highlighting points appropriate for your grade level or group.
2. Make an overhead or copies of the modified Bill of Rights found in the pdf section of this guide.

Set/Introduction:

If you have a school or district student rights and/or privileges document, share that with students. You may also use a list of class rights. Tell students there is another document which specifies the rights to all citizens of the United States. Ask students to name the document.

Main activity:

*Depending on your group's experience with government policies and US history, introduce the Bill of Rights.

What is the Bill of Rights?

In the United States, the Bill of Rights is the name by which the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution are known. The Bill of Rights protects freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and the right to petition and keep or bear arms. It prohibits unreasonable search, seizure, cruel and unusual punishment and compelled self incrimination. It prohibits Congress from making any law respecting establishment of religion and prohibits the federal government from depriving any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.

1. With students, go over the provided Bill of Rights, Omoide pdf document. Describe the Bill of Rights. Explain why it's important to US citizens.
2. Highlight each of the amendments with annotations. Discuss these using questions such as: 1) What is the basic meaning of this amendment? Give an example. 2) How were each of the right violated with the Japanese and Japanese American WWII experiences?
3. Model the discussion format you want students to use with the first amendment.
 - a. For younger students, you may want to do this as a whole class.
 - b. For older students, consider breaking into small groups. Give each group a copy of the questions. Assign different amendments to each group for discussion. Reconvene as a large group to report.
4. Have students continue discussion through each amendment as time allows.

Secondary activity:

What is a human right?

Discuss what a "right" is and compare the Bill of Rights and human rights. Have students search for incidents of violation of rights within the Omoide stories. Suggest that some incidents may not be obvious or documented as rights but are nonetheless, violations. Encourage them to extrapolate from what they read and what they have learned about the time period. See the guided questions below for examples.

Guided questions/Potential answers:

- ❑ Who benefits from the Bill of Rights? (*United States citizens*)
- ❑ What does the Bill of Rights do for people? (*It lists and explains what people are entitled to as citizens of the United States under the laws written in the Constitution.*)
- ❑ What is the difference between a right and a privilege? (*Answers will vary, but may include references to rights being connected to basic needs and privileges accorded to varying circumstances.*)
- ❑ What justified violation of several of the Bill of Rights amendments during WWII, specifically towards people of Japanese ancestry? (*Answers may include: War time hysteria, conflicting ideas about what rights are, fear*)
- ❑ What examples have you read or heard about that you consider violations of rights? (*Answers will vary*)
- ❑ Can you think of other historical events past or recent where the Bill of Rights may have been violated? (*Answers will vary, but may include references to war time or mistreatment of groups of people, i.e., Native American reservations, African American equality issues, women's rights, Arab American biases.*)

Summary:

After the group has had the opportunity to share discussion points about the Bill of Rights and the WWII time period, record the ideas the group comes up with. As you work through the Omoide stories or other related resources refer back to these ideas for further discussion.

Assessment options:

Use the provided empathy rubric found in the pdf section of this guide to assess student understanding of the connection between the Bill of Rights and the Japanese/Japanese American internment experience.

Additional Bibliography:

More information can be found in the resources listed in the References/Bibliography section of this guide.

Notes: