

Topic: American Government: The Roots of Democracy.

Level B1-C1

Thinking Skills: evaluating, analysing, selecting, inferring, concluding, justifying

Language focus: language of politics (branches of government, the Supreme Court, legislative, Executive, Judicial powers, enforce laws, amendment), legal language (court, case, precedent, laws, rights, attorney, lawyer, defendant, legal/illegal, asylum, protection, mistreatment, equal/unequal)

Language skills: speaking, writing, listening, reading

Timing: 45 min

Aims: to revise the basic concepts of American democracy: The bill of rights, the role of the Supreme Court and its cases.

Warm up

1. a) American values: what values – do you think – Americans believe in?
b) How do American values mirror their idea of government?

Answers:

- a) freedom, equality, individualism, pragmatism, religious freedom, independence, the right to carry arms, etc
- b) the three branches of government, the bill of rights: amendments 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 13, etc.

Lead-in

2. Which words do you associate with American politics?
Students write their ideas on pieces of paper and stick them to the board. (branches of government, veto, legislative, executive, judiciary, precedents, amendment, etc.
3. Students match the concepts and their definitions. (Handout 1)

Presentation

4. Teacher demonstrates the image (handout 2) of the bill of rights in order to revise the numbers and the right the bill gives in each amendment. Alternatively, Teacher can distribute the excerpt from The American Constitution and the Bill of Rights and other Amendments (Handout 3).

Practice

5. Students work in groups and analyse the amendments to do complete the questions “which amendment...?” (handout 4) Ss not only find a suitable amendment but they also justify their choice.

Answers:

Constitution- Which amendment ?

- | | | |
|--------|-------|----------|
| 1- 15 | 5- 13 | 9- 18-21 |
| 2- 5/6 | 6 – 1 | 10 - 1 |

3 – 1

7 - 19

4 -2

8- 14

6. Teacher shows the branches of American Government (see below):

Which branch is responsible for protecting American Constitutional and declaring which bill/law is constitutional or unconstitutional?

Answer : Judiciary and the Supreme Court.



7. Teacher distributes handouts with the Supreme Court cases (handout 5) for students to read. Teachers asks “fat” and “skinny” questions:

- Which case deals with women? How does it protect women?
- Which case refers to Native people? How?
- Which case protects the rights of an individual ? Justify. etc

8. In groups, students read the given situations discussing the reasons why would the Supreme Court declare the cases unconstitutional. (Handout 6) and match their justifications with the appropriate case. (handout 5)

Answers:

- Plyer vs Doe
- Brown vs Board of education in Topeka
- Women’s rights
- INS vs Cordoba Fonseca
- Miranda vs Arizona
- Gibbons vs Ogden

- Gideon vs Wainwright
- Rotsker vs Goldberg
- Worchester vs Georgia
- Roe vs Wade
- Poor migrants

Homework

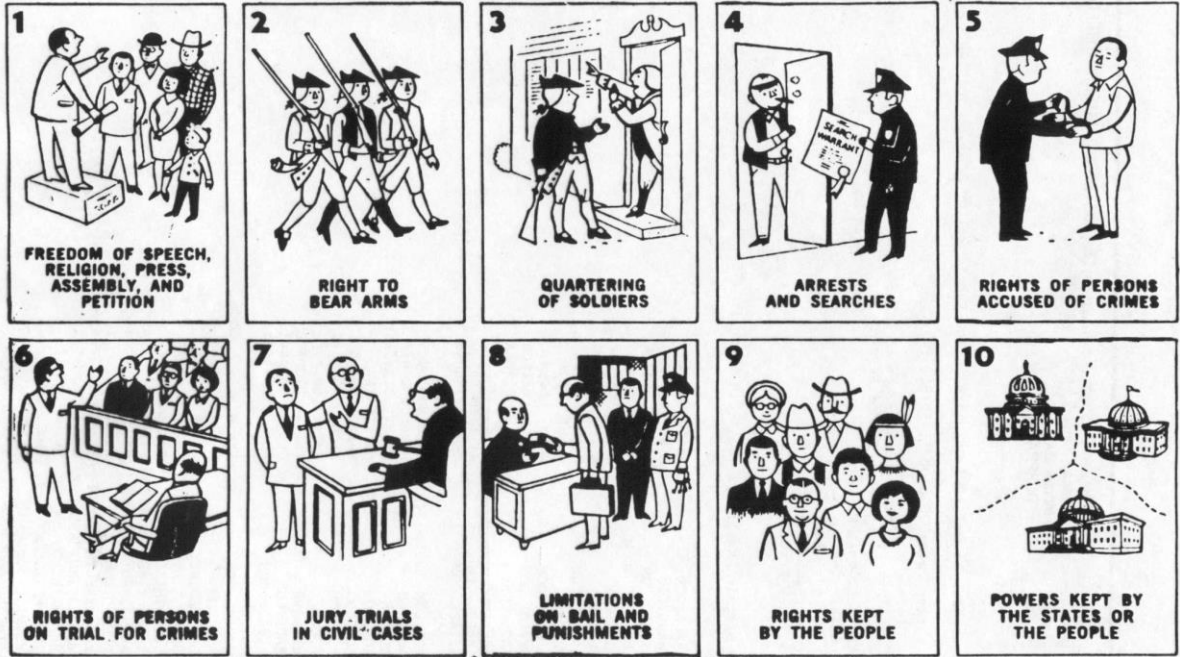
9. Home assignment: Write two paragraphs on: *why is that crucial to know Basic Rights and Freedoms and how knowledge of precedence can help individuals.*

Handout 1

The Bill of Rights	legal permission to search.
Prohibition	enforces the law.
Supreme Court	changes the Constitution.
Legislative	controls each branch.
Veto	makes laws.
Impeachment	outlaws the sales and distribution of alcohol.
Executive	states the rights of the arrested e.g. to remain silent.
checks and balances system	is an accusation of a crime.
Amendment	is the ten first amendments.
Representative	removes an official from office.
Bicameral system	means to reject something.
Testify	consists of nine judges.
Miranda's card	is the money paid to guarantee that someone freed from jail will return to the trial.
Charge (noun)	is a government which consists of two houses.
Search warrant	means to give evidence.
Bail	is a member of the House.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The First Ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution



Handout 4

Which amendment :

1. gives African Americans the right to vote?
2. protects the right of the accused?
3. gives people the right to assemble and petition the government?
4. regulates the right to bear arms?
5. makes slavery illegal?
6. guarantees the freedom of speech?
7. gives women the right to vote?
8. gives African Americans the American citizenship?
9. makes liquor illegal, and which makes it legal again?
10. guarantees the freedom of religion?

Handout 5

Supreme Court decisions which set precedents and as such serve as examples in law making processes and further decisions in lower court cases.

1803 *The Supreme Court has the right to interpret Constitution and laws and judge if they are/are not constitutional.*

(Marbury vs Medison)

1824 *Congress regulates trade between states.* **(Gibson vs Ogden)**

1832 *Single states are not allowed to control Indian Land.* **(Worchester vs Georgia)**

1941 *It is unconstitutional for state governments to stop people from migrating from one state to another.* **(Poor Migrants)**

1954 *It is unconstitutional to segregate schools* **(Brown vs The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.)**

1963 *The government must provide a lawyer to a defendant who cannot afford one.* **(Gideon vs Wainwright)**

1966 *The police must inform an arrested person about their right to remain silent and to have an attorney present when questioned.* **(Miranda vs Arizona)**

1971 *Unequal treatment based on sex is unconstitutional.* **(Women's Rights)**

1973 *States cannot make abortion illegal, except in the later stage of pregnancy.* **(Roe vs Wade)**

1981 *Congress may draft only men into the armed forces.* **(Rotsker vs Goldberg)**

1982 *Illegal immigrants are persons under the Constitution and have the same protections under the law as citizens and residents.* **(Player vs Doe)**

1987 *The US government can give asylum to refugees if they have reason to fear death or mistreatment in their native country. Immigrants do not have to prove their lives are threatened.* **(INS vs Cardoza-Fonseca)**

Handout 6

In groups, read each situation and answer this question: why would the Supreme Court disapprove of the situation? Write the name of amendment which applies in each case

1. Arizona keeps the children of illegal immigrants out of its public schools.

2. A university refuses to admit a student because she is not white.

3. You are a qualified candidate for the Fire brigade but the city won't give you the job because you are a woman.

4. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) sends an Afghan woman, who was a political activist, home because she cannot prove that her government would take her life.

5. The police arrest a man and tell him to confess his crime on video tape in a room with no one else present.

6. Florida taxes goods from Georgia.

7. The police send a woman to prison for drunk driving but do not give her an attorney because she cannot afford one.

8. A young man refuses to join the US Army at war because his sister does not have to serve in the armed forces.

9. Without permission, Oklahoma takes land from a Native reservation to build a state hospital.

10. Texas sent a woman to prison because she went to a doctor to abort a two-month old fetus.

11. New York refuses to let a family from Oregon move there because they have no home and little money.
