You’ve Got Rights!

We Defeated the British... Now What?

The year is 1791. After a bloody war against the British, the American colonists have won their independence. The new Americans are excited, but some people are afraid about what rights they’ll have under a new government. They’ve already suffered under the heavy hand of the British king. Now, some American leaders want to create a list of rights to define what rights American citizens will have.

Leaders of the new United States of America have already written a Constitution that explains exactly how the new government will work. The only problem? It can’t take effect until it’s approved by the new states. And there are some state leaders who don’t like it. Known as the Anti-Federalists, these people don’t even like the Constitution. They fear a strong central government, and they are demanding that the Constitution include a list of citizens’ rights. Without such a list, they warn the national government will violate people’s rights. They’re threatening to stop the Constitution from being approved unless a list is added.

But another group, known as the Federalists, insists the Constitution alone is enough to protect citizens’ rights. They warn that it’s impossible to list every single right that citizens should have. But once rights are written, the government could take advantage by violating rights that aren’t on the list.

Both sides are convinced they’re right. To move forward, they hammer out a compromise: The Bill of Rights. Instead of including a list of rights in the main part of the Constitution, they add it as the first ten amendments, or changes, to the Constitution. One of these amendments assures that the rights listed are not the only rights citizens have.

There are three main categories of rights: individual freedoms, protections against government abuse and power, and rights of people accused of crimes. In a few minutes, you’ll read the actual text of the Bill of Rights and compare it to the Pamphlet of Protections you created.

More and More Rights

As time went on, later amendments added more rights to the Constitution. Amending the Constitution is not an easy process—and it’s not supposed to be. But the difficult process has meant that important rights were slow to evolve. After the bloody Civil War was fought between the northern and southern states, African Americans who had been enslaved in the United States gained their freedom. In the 1860s and 70s, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments added rights for former slaves and people of color. In the 20th century, the 19th and 26th Amendments added voting rights for women and citizens as young as 18. Even today, people are campaigning to amend the constitution to add rights for groups that are still disadvantaged.
You’ve Got Rights!

Amendment 1
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.

Amendment 2
A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment 3
No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner . . .

Amendment 4
The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment 5
No person shall . . . be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment 6
In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury . . . and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Amendment 7
In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

*Please read over this Bill of Rights (and the additional amendments listed at the end) BEFORE answering the questions on the last page.

This is homework for Monday - finish reading the first three pages and answer the questions on the last “review” page as homework for Monday, March 9th.
**Amendment 8**
Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

**Amendment 9**
The *enumeration* in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be *construed* to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

**Amendment 10**
The powers not *delegated* to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

**Other Important Amendments**

**Amendment 13**  1865
Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

**Amendment 14**  1868
All persons born or *naturalized* in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the *privileges* or *immunities* of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

**Amendment 15**  1870
The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

**Amendment 19**  1920
The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

**Amendment 26**  1971
The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age.
A. Categorize. Below is a list of rights found in the Constitutional amendments. Complete the graphic organizer writing the number of each right beneath the category it best belongs to.

**BILL OF RIGHTS**

- **INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS**
- **PROTECTION FROM GOVERNMENT POWER**
- **RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED**

1a. Freedom of speech.
1b. Right to assemble peacefully.
2. Right to keep and bear arms.
4. No unreasonable searches and seizures by the government.
5a. The government can’t take a person’s life, liberty, or property without due process of law.
5b. No person can be tried twice for the same crime.
5c. The government can’t take private property without compensation.
6a. The right to a speedy trial.
6b. People accused of a crime have the right to a lawyer.
8. No cruel and unusual punishments.
9. Rights listed in the Constitution are not the only rights people have.
13. Slavery shall not exist in the United States.
15. People have the right to vote regardless of race.
19. Women cannot be denied the right to vote.

B. Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist. Decide whether each statement describes Federalists, Anti-Federalists, or both. Write the letter in the correct area of the Venn diagram below.

A. Feared a strong central government.
B. Thought the Constitution was enough to protect citizens’ rights.
C. Agreed to the Bill of Rights as a compromise.
D. Worried a list of rights might be seen as the ONLY rights people had.
E. Thought the Constitution needed a list of protected rights.
F. Opposed the Constitution as-is.
G. Believed citizens had rights that should be protected.
H. Wanted the Constitution to be approved as-is.
I. Believed in American independence and freedom.

C. No Rights for You! Use your imagination to describe the *worst possible thing* that might happen if each of these amendments were missing from the Constitution:

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