

Name: _____

Let's Understand the Bill of Rights

By Anita Kim Venegas



The Constitution of the United States was ratified, or approved, by nine of the thirteen colonies on June 21, 1788. The citizens wanted a list of personal freedoms added to the Constitution, but the writers were unable to come to an agreement in the summer of 1787. By December of 1790, all colonies had approved the Constitution. James Madison drafted the document based on

Virginia's Bill of Rights. In December of 1791, the states approved the first ten amendments to the Constitution, also known as the Bill of Rights. Let's learn about the personal freedoms guaranteed by these ten amendments.

The First Amendment extends freedom to individuals to express their ideas and beliefs through speech, writing, and practice of religion. In addition, it allows citizens to gather together with others for a common purpose.

The Second Amendment provides the right to keep and bear arms. Even before the Revolutionary War, gun ownership was well established. In fact, more citizens owned guns than books. While the purposes for gun ownership have changed throughout our history, the Supreme Court defends an individual's right to own firearms for their own protection. The debate over the meaning of "keep and bear arms" continues today.

The Third Amendment prevents the government from requiring Americans to shelter soldiers in their homes during war. Before Americans won the Revolutionary War, Britain established laws that if British soldiers needed shelter or medical support, Americans would be forced to offer a room or even their house to enemy soldiers.

The Fourth Amendment requires a warrant before police officers can search your home

or remove any of your property. The warrant must be issued by a judge with reasonable suspicion of lawbreaking. With a warrant, the police officer has the legal right to enter your home and seize, or take, personal property that is outlined in the warrant.

The Fifth Amendment allows an individual to stay silent when questioned by an officer of the court. Citizens accused of a crime have the right to a fair trial in court with a judge or jury. A person cannot be charged or punished twice for the same crime. For example, for an individual younger than 18 years of age, the outcome of their trial is final, whether innocent or guilty. They cannot be charged as an adult for the same crime.

The Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Amendments work together to provide rights to a speedy trial, the right to an attorney to help them with their case, and the right to be informed of the crime they are accused of. Also, the accused has the right to choose a jury trial instead of a decision by the judge when there is a dispute between two people. In addition, people have the right to have their bail set at a reasonable amount of money. The payment of bail money to the court assures the court that the accused will return to court when necessary.

The Ninth Amendment provides for additional rights that are not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. For example, people generally believe they have the right to clean drinking water. It is your freedom to drink clean water, but this freedom is not mentioned in the Constitution.

The Tenth Amendment gives power to the individual states to make decisions for their citizens. Federal laws apply to everyone in every state. State governments decide local laws about taxes, family matters, and other topics. Sometimes federal laws and state laws will contradict one another. Depending on the situation, the federal or state law will triumph over the other.

The Constitution, written in 1787, was the beginning of a new republic. The Bill of Rights ensures the freedoms our country fought for in the Revolutionary War.

About the Author

Anita Kim Venegas is the author of [The Adventures of Peanut and Dutch](#).

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1. Based on the information in the article, what is the Bill of Rights?
 - a. The Bill of Rights is another name for the U.S. Constitution.
 - b. The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
 - c. The Bill of Rights is a list of personal freedoms the colonists demanded from Britain.
 - d. The Bill of Rights is a personal essay written by James Madison.

2. Which amendment to the Constitution protects your right to gather in a group of people who share the same ideas and values as you?

3. Which amendment to the Constitution gives authority to the U.S. states?

4. What personal freedom does the Fourth Amendment provide?

5. What event or circumstance prompted the inclusion of the Third Amendment?

6. The Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Amendments work together to protect the rights of which group of people?

- a. immigrants
- b. soldiers
- c. people accused of a crime
- d. the poor

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

_____ 1. amendment

a. approved or endorsed

_____ 2. guaranteed

b. a document that gives police officers permission to arrest someone or search their property

_____ 3. ratified

c. a lawyer

_____ 4. protection

d. the temporary release of someone accused of a crime before a trial

_____ 5. warrant

e. an article added to the U.S. Constitution

_____ 6. republic

f. deny the truth of a statement by asserting that the opposite is true

_____ 7. attorney

g. the provision of safety or defense

_____ 8. dispute

h. formally assured

_____ 9. bail

i. a government in which the power is held by the people and their elected representatives

_____ 10. contradict

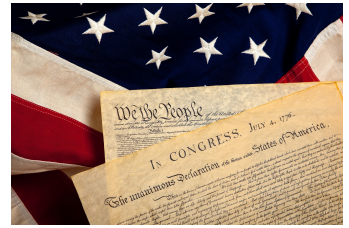
j. argument or disagreement

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In the article, "Let's Understand the Bill of Rights" you learned that the Bill of Rights was added to the U.S. Constitution in order to guarantee personal freedoms to citizens of the United States.



Which of the ten amendments you learned about in the article do you think is the most important? Explain your reasoning.

ANSWER KEY

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- Based on the information in the article, what is the Bill of Rights? **b**
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 - The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.**
 - The Bill of Rights is a list of personal freedoms the colonists demanded from Britain.
 - The Bill of Rights is a personal essay written by James Madison.
- Which amendment to the Constitution protects your right to gather in a group of people who share the same ideas and values as you?
First Amendment
- Which amendment to the Constitution gives authority to the U.S. states?
Tenth Amendment
- What personal freedom does the Fourth Amendment provide?
The Fourth Amendment requires police to obtain a warrant before they enter your home or seize your property.
- What event or circumstance prompted the inclusion of the Third Amendment?
American colonists were forced to house British soldiers before they won the Revolutionary War.
- The Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Amendments work together to protect the rights of which group of people? **c**
 - immigrants
 - soldiers
 - people accused of a crime**
 - the poor

ANSWER KEY

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------|-----------|---|
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| a | 3. ratified | c. | a lawyer |
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| b | 5. warrant | e. | an article added to the U.S. Constitution |
| i | 6. republic | f. | deny the truth of a statement by asserting that the opposite is true |
| c | 7. attorney | g. | the provision of safety or defense |
| j | 8. dispute | h. | formally assured |
| d | 9. bail | i. | a government in which the power is held by the people and their elected representatives |
| f | 10. contradict | j. | argument or disagreement |