

New Frontiers

A newsletter for ★ educators

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

– *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1.*

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration includes thirty articles which set a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, and a list of fundamental human rights to be universally protected around the world. The declaration has been translated into 500 languages, more than any other document, and has provided inspiration for over sixty human rights documents and instruments throughout the world. The three-year drafting process was a monumental task which brought together countries from Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America and representatives from various cultural, political and religious backgrounds.

After World War II, the international community recognized the atrocities and violations of rights which had taken place during the War. The United Nations vowed to protect human rights in its founding charter and formed a Commission on Human Rights in 1946, whose first order of

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A Focus on the First Amendment

Did you know? The Constitution of the United States is the world’s oldest written constitution still in use.

The National Archives and Records Administration holds this historic document, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights—collectively known as the Charters of Freedom—in trust for the American people and displays them in the Rotunda of the National Archives in Washington, DC for all to see. These documents continue to inspire people throughout the world, and their history, although not without criticism and controversy, helps to tell the story of our country.

Exploring these foundational records through the lens of historical examples that have contemporary resonance not only engages students with the past but also helps them to make connections and grasp their relevance in today’s world. Young people begin to see that they are not merely historic documents on display or reproductions in history books, but importantly, the touchstones of American democracy.

This issue provides a focus on the Bill of Rights, specifically the First Amendment to the Constitution. The featured primary source material drawn from the Kennedy Library Archives and related lesson plans highlighting examples from John F. Kennedy’s administration can be used throughout the year to enrich students’ understanding of First Amendment issues and their relevance to current events. *Every day can be Constitution Day!*

For more information about the Charters of Freedom at the National Archives, visit museum.archives.gov/founding-documents. ★



Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom at the National Archives (NARA) in Washington, DC. Displayed here are the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the US Constitution.

PHOTO BY KELVIN KAY

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Resources from the Kennedy Library Highlighting the First Amendment

As states ratified the Constitution from 1787-1788, many of the ratifying conventions proposed amendments that would more strictly outline the rights of citizens and assuage any fears people might have that this new government could grow too powerful. James Madison who previously had resisted the need for a bill of rights, changed his mind in response to this popular demand and, as an elected representative to the First Congress, took charge of writing and advocating for the amendments. Ten of the twelve original amendments proposed from Madison's June 8, 1789 list were approved and ratified in 1791,

officially becoming part of the Constitution and referred to as the Bill of Rights. Throughout history, other Amendments have been ratified and added to the Constitution, some of which explicitly strengthen protections for all citizens. There are a total of twenty-seven.

The First Amendment of the Constitution states that, "*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.*"

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..."

The First Amendment begins by establishing the free exercise of religion for all and states that the government should not be involved in either restricting or promoting any religion.

When Senator John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960, the United States had never elected a Catholic president. Throughout his campaign, voters questioned whether the country could trust a Catholic President to lead the nation without undue influence of the Catholic Church and the Pope. Kennedy countered this fear by reinforcing his personal commitment to the separation of church and state, reminding the American public of the Constitution's promise of religious tolerance enshrined in the First Amendment. In your

classroom, this example can serve as an entry point for examining the meaning of freedom of religion and exploring how it is interpreted today through the lens of contemporary issues.

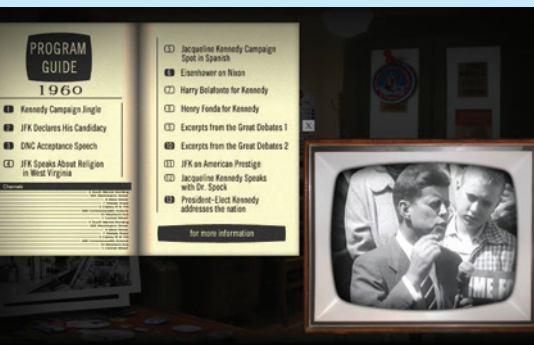
First Amendment in response to a voter's question, "You would be divided between two loyalties, to your church and to your state, if you were to be elected president?"

"Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech ..."



First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's Fourth Musical Program for Youth at the White House, Washington, DC, August 6, 1962.

Freedom of speech is an important American value and a protection guaranteed by the First Amendment. As a writer and supporter of the arts, John F. Kennedy maintained a high appreciation for the role uncensored artistic expression played in American society. He encouraged politicians to cherish and promote the role of authors and artists in the world to freely express any dissent without any fear of consequences from the government. In his remarks at the National Book Award Dinner in 1956, then Senator Kennedy made a plea to both politicians and authors to "...recall the political courage and literary ability of their common ancestors." He remarked that, "The American politician and the American literary man operate within a common framework — a framework we call liberty. Freedom of expression is not divisible



Visit microsites.jfklibrary.org/presidentsdesk.

- Visit jfklibrary.org/JFKandReligion for more information on the topic.
- Visit microsites.jfklibrary.org/presidentsdesk and click on the Campaign Button to watch John F. Kennedy cite the

into political expression and literary expression. The First Amendment to the Constitution makes no distinction of the guarantee accorded to free speech and a free press.”

- Visit jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/new-york-ny-19560207, and explore *Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the National Book Award Dinner* (New York, NY, February 7, 1956) with your students.
- Listen to clips of President Kennedy’s speeches in support of the arts and freedom of expression at jfkcentennial.org/legacy/arts.

★ **“Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom ... of the press ...”**

JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM. PHOTO BY ABBIE ROWE.



President John F. Kennedy addresses reporters at a press conference in the State Department Auditorium, Washington, DC, August 10, 1961.

Freedom of the press is one of the hallmarks of the First Amendment. President Kennedy understood the importance of communicating with journalists. He was the first president to effectively use the new medium of television to speak

directly to the American people, holding live televised press conferences on average of one every 16 days.

In a December 1962 radio and television interview with the three major networks, President Kennedy said, “...there isn’t any doubt that [my Administration] could not do the job at all in a free society without a very, very active press.” In “The Press Office” lesson, students act as members of President Kennedy’s Press Office with an assignment to prepare a briefing for the president on topics that may come up in a specific press conference. They explore both primary and secondary sources on the Kennedy Library website, and in a culminating activity, participate in a simulated press conference.

- Visit jfklibrary.org/PressConferenceLesson, to download “The Press Office: A Presidential News Conference Simulation” Lesson Plan (Grades 9-12).

★ **“Congress shall make no law ... abridging ... the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”**

The right of people to join together, and demand change or justice from their government remained a primary concern for the framers of the Constitution. This right to peaceful assembly was a central strategy of civil rights leaders in the 1950s and 1960s. During President Kennedy’s administration,

everyday citizens participated in organized nonviolent actions to demand an end to violence, segregation and discrimination towards African American citizens. Boycotts, nonviolent protests and demonstrations were among the many efforts organized by civil rights leaders to capture the nation’s attention and helped to galvanize the introduction of new civil rights legislation, eventually leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Kennedy Library’s microsite, *1963: The Struggle for Civil Rights*, provides a complete package for your classroom to help students contextualize examples in today’s world of how people continue to exercise their right to assemble and demand government action.

- Visit civilrights.jfklibrary.org, for a fully immersive multimedia experience, curated content, and lesson plans that make this tumultuous year in civil rights history accessible to students. Lesson plans include:
 - “Youth in Action: The Role of Young People in the Civil Rights Movement” (Grades 4-6)
 - “The 1963 March on Washington: A Montage of the Civil Rights Movement” (Grades 7-8)
 - “Let Our Voices Be Heard: The 1963 Struggle for Voting Rights in Mississippi” (Grades 9-12) ★



The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington, DC, August 28, 1963.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

LESSON PLAN ★ Elementary and Middle School “What if Laws are Unjust?”

Introducing Citizen Activism through the Civil Rights Movement

Meaningful civic education helps students understand not just how government works, but also how citizens can work together to make improvements at the local, state, and federal level. By examining past social movements, such as the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, students can learn how to be engaged citizens and make positive changes to their schools, communities, and government.

Following decades of widespread segregation, humiliating discrimination, and violence, civil rights groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) planned large-scale marches, sit-ins, boycotts and other forms of non-violent direct action to address racial injustice. This lesson focuses on the spring of 1963, when SCLC leaders including the Reverends Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy, and Wyatt Tee Walker launched Project C (for confrontation), a campaign of non-violent direct action to end Birmingham, Alabama’s discriminatory segregation ordinances. Having been arrested on April 12, 1963, at one of Project C’s early protests, King wrote “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” in which he articulated a rationale for challenging unjust laws. In the weeks following King’s arrest, throngs of young people joined Project C’s protests. The police department, under Eugene “Bull” Connor’s direction, responded brutally to suppress the demonstrators and thousands of young people were arrested. The city eventually repealed Birmingham’s segregation ordinances.

In this lesson plan, students explore the history of Project C and consider the question, “How have citizens challenged unjust laws through non-violent actions?” Through a series of activities that integrate civics, history, and language arts, students consider the impact of discriminatory laws and discover the techniques young people (and others) used to challenge them. Students review the US Constitution to see how the First and Fourteenth Amendments support challenging unjust laws.

The full lesson plan has six activities which take three to five class periods to complete. Each activity can stand alone but, ideally, could be implemented in sequence in order to delve deeply into the essential question, “What if Laws are Unjust?” A description of the first activity follows.

The lesson plan begins with an introductory discussion during which students consider what “a government of laws” means at the local level and how citizens might respond to laws and regulations they find to be objectionable or unfair.

Introductory Discussion



A drinking fountain on the county courthouse lawn in Halifax, North Carolina, April 1938.

Goal

Students consider the concept of an unjust law and learn how in a democracy citizens have the right to challenge discriminatory policies.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe who makes laws in their city or town.
- Cite examples of laws that some people might find objectionable.
- Identify sections of the Constitution that give people the right to challenge unfair laws.

Materials

- Information describing the legislative process in a city or town (optional)
- Text of the First Amendment and the Fourteenth Amendment (Section 1)
 - First Amendment: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights>
 - Fourteenth Amendment: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/amendments-11-27>

“A government of laws and not of men”

Procedure

Suggested Ice Breaker:

“A government of laws and not of men”

As a prompt, write the above quote on the board. This phrase was included by John Adams in the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Part I, Article 30) which he helped to write in 1779 and which served as a model for the US Constitution.

Question: *What do these words mean to you and how do they relate to the kind of government we have in the United States?*

Record students’ responses. They should be able to connect Adams’ words with their knowledge of America’s war for independence and the colonists’ sense of outrage at the unjust, arbitrary rule of the King. They should also be able to draw connections with the concept of checks and balances and separation of powers.

1. Briefly review with students how legislative power is exercised at federal and state levels before focusing in on the local level.

Questions:

- *Who makes the laws in [name of your city or town]?*
- *Can you name some parts of the community for which these local elected officials are responsible for making the rules and laws for (e.g., schools, traffic, parks)? Give an example of a law or regulation for each area.*
- *Can you think of any local law or regulation that some people might find to be annoying or objectionable? Should they still obey it?*
- *If a majority of local elected officials happened to be biased against, or in favor of, a particular group within the community and passed laws reflecting that bias—what might concerned citizens do? Which sections of the US Constitution could they cite to challenge the discriminatory laws?*

2. To follow up on the last question, have students review the First Amendment and the Fourteenth Amendment (Section 1) of the US Constitution. Ask them to copy down the passages they think are most relevant to challenging unjust

laws, and explain why. Text of both Amendments can be found on the National Archives website:

www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html

www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html

This preliminary discussion sets the stage for students to begin their case study of Project C in which citizen’s challenged Birmingham’s discriminatory segregation ordinances. In the activities that follow the initial discussion, students examine the ordinances and related photographs and, for homework, read and summarize a background essay on the Project C protest campaign. They then examine primary source materials to learn about young people’s participation in the protests. The lesson ends with a culminating writing activity that can be used as an assessment.



People waiting for a bus at the Greyhound bus terminal in Memphis, Tennessee, September 1943.

Extension

Have students identify local, state, or federal laws that are “unjust” in their eyes. What makes them discriminatory? How are people responding to the laws? What techniques might they use to change the law in question?

For the complete lesson plan including detailed common core and national standards, objectives, materials, procedures for all six activities, a bibliography, and related resources, visit <https://bit.ly/2RTHLMp>. ★

2018 Profile in Courage Essay Contest Winner Highlights Historic Vote for Women's Suffrage

Jeffrey Seaman, a senior from Short Hills, New Jersey, placed first in the 2018 Profile in Courage Essay Contest with his winning essay, "Harry T. Burn: A Vote for Women." Seaman's winning essay profiles Harry T. Burn, a Republican State Representative in Tennessee who, in 1920, cast the deciding vote to ratify the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote. The winning essay describes how 24-year-old Burn voted his conscience, resisting pressure from constituents, local political leaders and crowds of anti-suffragists who had descended on Tennessee to protest ratification. Defying popular sentiment among his constituents and political pressure from local political leaders, Burn ultimately followed the advice of his mother, "college-educated and civic minded" Febb Burn, who had urged him to approve the amendment. As Seaman describes in the essay, Burn endured intense harassment as a result of his courageous vote but managed to win his seat in the next election. You can read the winning essay at jfklibrary.org/EssayContest.

Jeffrey Seaman was honored during the Profile in Courage Award ceremony on May 20, 2018 at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, and received a \$10,000 award. His nominating teacher, David Seaman, received a John F. Kennedy Public Service grant of \$500 to encourage student leadership and civic engagement. Mr. Seaman



Jeffrey Seaman with former US Representative (D-MD) Donna Edwards, member of the Profile in Courage Award Committee.

awarded the grant to the social studies department at Bernards High School in Bernardsville, New Jersey, for a civic engagement project.

Seaman reported that his greatest challenge was "trying to convey what truly happened and do justice to Harry Burn." He explained, "Researching Harry Burn for my essay was great practice in learning how to become



2018 Winner Jeffrey Seaman is honored at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. From left to right: Jack Schlossberg (grandson of John F. Kennedy), Kathy Seaman, Jeffrey Seaman, Ambassador Caroline Kennedy, David Seaman (nominating teacher), and Al Hunt (Chair of the Profile in Courage Award Committee).

an online sleuth. I learned that any historical event shrouded by almost a hundred years of history generates numerous conflicting accounts, and it was interesting to have to sort through discrepant sources to find the ones that told the most accurate story of Harry Burn's decisive vote. The research was itself rewarding because I gained a better understanding of how history is recorded and how facts quickly blend with legend as time passes."

The *John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Essay Contest for High School Students* is sponsored by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation and generously supported by John Hancock. This national competition invites high school students from across the country to write an essay on the political courage of a US elected official. This year, 1,989 students in forty-eight states and Washington, D.C. submitted essays.

Write the next profile in courage.

The 2019 Profile in Courage Essay Contest is open for submissions. The contest deadline is January 18, 2019. To access contest information, past winning essays, related standards, and curriculum materials, visit jfklibrary.org/EssayContest. ★

Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *continued*

business was to draft an international bill of rights. The Commission, which would eventually draft the declaration, unanimously elected former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt as its chairwoman. Following President Franklin Roosevelt's death in 1945, then President Harry Truman offered the former first lady a position in the first United States delegation to the United Nations. Eleanor Roosevelt, who had worked tirelessly for social and economic justice, gladly accepted the post and became the driving force behind the Declaration.

On December 10, 1949, just one year after the United Nations adopted the Declaration, President Truman issued a Proclamation stating that United Nations Human Rights Day would be celebrated every year on this date. Each president following Truman continued to make the annual proclamation. On December 9, 1961, President Kennedy issued a proclamation extending the celebration period to Human Rights Week, December 10-17, 1961, which continues today.

In a speech President Kennedy noted the anniversaries of two important documents: the thirteenth anniversary of the Declaration and the 170th anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights to the US Constitution. He said, "I call upon the citizens of the United States to honor our heritage by study of

these great documents and thereby gain new strength for the long struggle against the forces of terror that threaten the freedoms which give meaning to human existence." President John F. Kennedy, Proclamation 3442—Human Rights Week, December 9, 1961.


Using the suggested questions and discussion points below, have students explore the contents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its relevance in today's world.

Examining the Declaration with Guiding Questions

1. Before exploring the Declaration, ask students for their definition of human rights. Brainstorm what rights, in their opinion, may or may not be human rights.
2. Then look at the full Declaration, the Preamble, or select a few articles to examine as a group. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>
 - What are your initial thoughts as you read this document? What do you notice about the language, the scope, and the specific groups mentioned?
 - Do you agree with the Articles in the document? Would you add or subtract any rights? Is this document still relevant today? Why or why not?
 - Eleanor Roosevelt wanted a Declaration that could be "readily understood by the ordinary man or woman." Do you think the document achieves this goal? Why or why not?
 - Compare the Declaration to the Bill of Rights of the US Constitution. What similar words or phrases stand out? Make a note of uncommon words you may want to look up. How are they similar? How are they different?
 - At the United Nations on March 27, 1958, Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Where, after all, do human rights begin? In small places, close to home...Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere." What examples can you find of human rights violations and/or protections "close to home"? Consider local, state, and national concerns. For example: Is education a human right? What about clean air and water?
3. Have students work in groups to research a set of the articles. They can address the guiding questions above and prepare a presentation of their findings through poster exhibits or artwork. ★



Eleanor Roosevelt holding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lake Success, New York, November 1949.

 In recognition of Eleanor Roosevelt's work as a champion of the rights of people all over the world, President John F. Kennedy established the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Foundation on April 23, 1963, saying "Mrs. Roosevelt lived in the White House longer than any other woman. She also made her experience in the White House a vivid one in that her influence spread far beyond its walls to all parts of the country and her identification was constant, her concern was permanent, for the great causes which were identified with her husband's life and which we identify with the best of America, concern for her fellow citizens, particularly those less fortunate."

According to the first director of the Foundation, Hyman Bookbinder, "This is an unusual honor for an individual. There have been other foundations chartered, like the American Red Cross. Some of the health foundations are chartered by the Congress. But this is the first foundation that we know of chartered as a memorial for an individual" (Bookbinder oral history, jfklibrary.org). ★

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📍 JFK/UMass
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www.jfklibrary.org

*The Kennedy Library
Department of Education and
Public Programs offers free
museum passes to teachers
considering a field trip to the
Library. Please call 617.514.1600.*

Museum Hours

Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ♿
Closed Thanksgiving,
Christmas, and New Year's Day

The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum will be hosting special events in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Moon landing.

President Kennedy challenged the nation to reach for the impossible and land a man on the Moon before the end of the decade.

"We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win..."

—John F. Kennedy, Address at Rice University in Houston, Texas on the Nation's Space Effort, September 12, 1962.



Su Curley, Space Electrical Engineer at NASA.



On Saturday, July 20, 2019, the Library will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Moon landing with special activities and guest speaker presentations for visitors of all ages. Families, teachers, and student groups are invited to an enriching day celebrating the accomplishment of President Kennedy's challenge. The Kennedy Library Foundation is pleased to announce the Raytheon Company as lead sponsor for the events and programs on this day.

Visit jfklibrary.org, for more information about related programs throughout the year. ★

Additional support for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum's history and civic education programs is provided by Kenneth R. Feinberg & Camille S. Biros, of The Law Offices of Kenneth R. Feinberg, PC and:

