

## Week Seven: First Amendment

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**Weekly Focus:** Comprehension  
**Weekly Skill:** Determining the  
Meaning of Symbols, Words,  
Phrases

**Lesson Summary:** Today students will work to use context to determine meaning. They will closely examine the First Amendment and research current event issues relating to its content.

**Materials Needed:** Projector and Internet, computers, Paper and Pencils, dictionaries, Using Context to Determine Meaning, The First Amendment

**Objectives: Students will be able to...**

- Comprehend and think critically about the First Amendment
- Use context and resources to determine word meaning
- Paraphrase the First Amendment to demonstrate content comprehension
- Summarize and reflect upon a current event

**Common Core Standards Addressed:**

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### Activities:

Activity 1: Using Context to Determine Meaning	Time: 50 minutes
<p><b>Introduction:</b> <b>1)</b> Hand out First Amendment text. Ask students what they know about the amendments already, and then provide a brief background. Next, read through the text of the first amendment together as a class. <b>2)</b> Explain to students that the first amendment is a primary source, a document that was written in the time period in which the event occurred. Because the First Amendment was written when our government was first being formed, it was written for a different audience. This means that some of the words can be hard to understand. This is often the case with primary sources, but students will see many of these on the GED test, especially early documents from the United States government. Being able to figure out the meaning of complex words from context will be an important skill in comprehending these and other complex passages. <b>3)</b> Hand out the Using Context worksheet. <b>4)</b> Read through the First Amendment again. Then, ask the class to identify the words that they don't know. Write these on the board. Together as a class, model the Using Context worksheet to figure out one word.</p>	
<p><b>Group Work:</b> Break students into groups. Have them continue using the Context worksheet to figure out the meaning of the rest of the words. Finally, after they understand all of the words, have them rewrite the First Amendment in their own words in a way that would be easier to understand for today's audience. Have each group pair-share with another.</p>	
<p><b>Break: 10 minutes</b></p>	

Activity 2: Research	Time: 45 minutes
<p>Have the class work in pairs. Each pair should research to find one (short) current event article that relates to a First Amendment issue. They should then use their new inference skills to figure out any difficult passages in the text. Finally, have students prepare a one paragraph summary of the information. In the summary make sure that students include 1) What is the news story about. AND 2) How does the story relate to the First Amendment.</p>	
<p>If groups finish early, have them consider this question: What responsibilities come with political independence?</p>	

Wrap-Up: Presentation	Time: 15 minutes
<p>Have each pair present the article summary on which they worked. If groups had time to consider the extra question, they should share this as well.</p>	

Extra Work/Homework:
<p>Have students write a response to the discussion question: What responsibilities come with political independence?</p>

Differentiated Instruction/ELL Accommodation Suggestions	Activity
<p>Have First Amendment articles already printed and available for lower-level students.</p>	<p>Research</p>

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### **Online Resources:**

- 1) [Bill of Rights](#)
- 2) [First Amendment Center \(news articles, etc.\)](#)

### **Suggested Teacher Readings: TBA**

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### USING CONTEXT TO DETERMINE MEANING

#### Wait! I don't know that word....

There are many times when you are studying or taking a test that you will come across a word or an idea that you don't know. Being able to use context as well as your resources to determine what this word or idea means is a very valuable comprehension skill. But how do you do this? See the example below for some steps that you can follow:

1. **Using Prior Knowledge:** *What do you already know about the word?* Ask yourself in what form you may have seen the word or idea before. Maybe you've only seen part of the word. What did it mean then?
2. **Questioning:** *Ask yourself questions about the word and the context in which it was found.* Is the word in a document about a specific subject? Based on the content of the article and the sentence, what might the word be about? If you took the word out and substituted another in the sentence, what might that word be? What part of speech is the word?
3. **Visualizing:** *Try to picture the situation or idea that the passage overall is describing.* Where is the event taking place? In what time period? Seeing the big picture can often help you understand the word.
4. **Inferring:** *What do you understand from reading the passage that is not already on the page?* For example, based on the questions that you've already asked yourself, what do you know that the passage is about? What might the particular word you're struggling with be about based on the overall content of the passage.
5. **Using Your Resources:** It's true that when you are taking an official test, you won't have as many resources available to you as when you're studying alone. However, this makes it all the more important for you to **use your resources available to you** as you study. Do you have a dictionary available? Look the word up. Are you in a classroom with peers? Ask them if they have an idea. The more you can learn NOW, the more you'll know when you take the test.
6. **Summarizing/Synthesizing:** This last step is perhaps the most important step of all. When you have learned a new word or idea, **be sure to put the definition into your own words and relate it to your own life.** This will make sure that the knowledge you have gained will stay with you past today.

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**NEW WORD OR IDEA** \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Using Prior Knowledge</b>          What do you already know about the topic?</p>	
<p><b>Questioning</b>          What part of speech is the word? In what context does it occur?</p>	
<p><b>Visualizing</b>          What does the big picture look like?          Picture the content.</p>	
<p><b>Inferring</b>          What is not written on the page that you can use to help you understand what is?</p>	
<p><b>Using Your Resources</b>          Use your dictionary or ask you peers.</p>	
<p><b>Summarizing and Synthesizing</b>          Put it in your own words and relate it to your life</p>	

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### THE FIRST AMENDMENT

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.

#### Group Activity:

**Directions:** Use the Context Worksheet to determine the meaning of difficult words. Then, work together to rewrite the First Amendment in your own words in a way that is more understandable for today's audience.