



## The Price of Freedom

Curriculum Unit 16.03.01

by Gwendolyn Ferguson-McLean

### Introduction

---

History matters. Almost everyone living in the United States is originally from another part of the world. Our ideal is for the people to come together and form a wonderful country, land of the free and home of the brave. But have we always measured up to this ideal? Do we today? These are just a few questions that will be answered in this unit as we discuss the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and several amendments that have helped to bring our country closer to that ideal.

The goal of this unit is to teach students about the benefits and burdens of citizenship. A common phrase we hear at school is 'being a productive citizen.' But what does that really mean? Citizenship is not something that begins when you are an adult. It starts in the home, when children are responsible for cleaning their rooms, taking out the trash, or watching younger siblings. Those habits carry over into school where students become members of the community by obeying rules, helping classmates solve problems, sharing supplies with someone who is in need, cleaning up after a project, and maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are familiar with most of these activities or attitudes, but they do not make the connection between these important habits and the needs of the world around them. Some students have the idea that they do not have to do anything for their larger community but still expect that community to provide for their needs. We should worry about young people having this sense of entitlement. By making the connection between giving and receiving, I hope to help our students establish a sense of belonging and encourage them to grow up to become productive citizens.

History is a tough topic for students, especially younger ones. In order to explore the complex topic of citizenships, we will focus on the rights the Constitution confers and the duties that go with those rights. This unit will provide them with the background needed to tackle government topics and curriculum they will encounter in the following year, 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Students will not be expected to remember dates and people, but they will be expected to be able to (1) explain what the Constitution is and why it is necessary; (2) explain what the Bill of Rights is and what an amendment is; and (3) recall events that led to their existence. Because this unit is written for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, some as young as 7 at the beginning of the year, keeping the information concise, almost in story form, will help them to follow along and understand the impact of the information included. For this same reason projects that are produced during this unit will consist of separate works to cover a myriad of curricular assignments (research, narrative writing, reading, literary response, etc).

## Background

---

The unit was built for the students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at King Robinson Inter-district Magnet: an IB World School. The school curriculum is that of the New Haven Public School system, but with a twist. In addition to the standard curriculum, teacher-developed units are taught under six different themes: Who We Are, Where We Are In Place and Time, How The World Works, How We Express Ourselves, Sharing the Planet, and How We Organize Ourselves. The units are taught in different sequences to ensure alignment with the standard curriculum. As a school (prek-8) we begin the year with Who We Are. The school represents a wide variety of cultures. This unit, across grade levels, teaches students about cultural differences and tolerance. Because of the diverse population, stories are shared from either students or parents about their journey to the United States, their reasons for coming, and their quest for citizenship.

## Rationale

---

The rationale for this unit is to provide background knowledge for younger students regarding the benefits and burdens of citizenship generally and, more specifically, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Having also taught 4<sup>th</sup> grade, where government is introduced in depth, I know that my young students are not well-prepared to tackle the information on the level at which it is offered. The main problem is that they lack adequate background knowledge. This unit will provide them with the necessary reference points and should deepen their understanding of how important their roles as citizens are to the entire process. Students are also not aware of their rights as citizens and how collective action can bring about the changes for themselves and the people in their communities. As mentioned before, the age group of the students starts at 7 years old. Much of the information contained in this unit/lessons would be familiar to adults, but has been scaled back to make it comprehensible for the intended audience.

## Content

---

### Citizenship

The process of becoming a citizen is not an easy one. For most of us, the right to citizenship was given to us at birth. Being born in the United States or abroad to parents who have citizenship automatically makes you a citizen. However, for persons coming to the United States from another country, it is quite different. The naturalization process is a lengthy one. A person must establish permanent residency for up to 5 years prior to applying. During that time, a person is required to learn to read, write, and speak English and acquire an understanding of U.S. history and government. Once someone has done so, he or she can apply for citizenship by completing the necessary paperwork and passing a required assessment. Once this has been completed, a person is granted full citizenship. This process also benefits their children under the age of 18. If a parent goes through the naturalization process, his or her qualifying children automatically become United States citizens and are afforded the same rights and privileges as their parents.

This is the way our system works today for establishing citizenship, but it was not always the case. African-Americans were not seen as citizens, even those born in the United States. Originally being brought from Africa as slaves, they were not afforded the rights outlined in the Constitution. They were deemed property and were treated as such. When the Founders were constructing the Constitution, they granted the vote to persons who they felt could aid in the running of the new country. This did not include blacks or women. The rights and citizenship for both would come much later by way of amendments to the Constitution through wars, protests, and debate.

## Civil Rights

Danielle Allen states that, “If the Declaration can stake a claim to freedom, it is only because it is so clear-eyed about the fact that the people’s strength resides in its equality.”<sup>1</sup> But during that time the Declaration was written, people were not viewed as equal. African Americans (men and women) were not considered persons but property and treated accordingly. Perhaps the most infamous example of this treatment would be Dred Scott, who was a slave from Missouri but moved to a free territory, Wisconsin, in 1857 with his slave owner. He believed that he should be free since they now lived in a free territory, but the Supreme Court ruled that slaves were not citizens with constitutional rights. The decision only fueled the deep tension that already existed between the Northern and Southern States over slavery. With the election of Abraham Lincoln, who was against slavery, the Southern states feared its end. In 1861, those Southern states united to form the Confederate States of America in hopes of preserving the institution of slavery against the ideals of the federal union. This brought about the Civil War, which was fought from 1861 to 1865. The South was defeated and the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the South. The end of the war brought with it three amendments to the Constitution regarding the rights of African-Americans. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, approved in 1865, put an end to slavery across the United States. The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which was approved in 1868, gave all citizens the same protection under the law as outlined in the Constitution. Finally, the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, approved in 1870, gave African-American men the right to vote.<sup>2</sup>

The promise of the Reconstruction Amendments was not fulfilled until a century later. During the Civil Rights Movement, young people joined the fight for equality. Students as young as 7<sup>th</sup> graders wanted to be part of the effort to end legalized segregation. They participated in peaceful sit-ins or stand-ins at white-only establishments and marched outside of movie theaters, where blacks were not allowed, in order to show their disapproval. One participant in the demonstrations tells of her experience when she was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Kansas City in 1957. When asked if anyone was allowed to participate in the peaceful protest, she responded, “No. we had to learn how to protest. We went down on Saturdays to the YWCA, and we did training to be protesters. It was funny. We’d get all dressed up in little skirts and sweaters because they made a big deal out of what you wore. We had to look nice. We’d get into separate lines in the gymnasium of the Y. And one group would be the white people, and we’d be ourselves, and we’d practice marching back and forth, holding up our signs, and just being quiet. And they would practice trying to get us upset. They’d come up to try to push you into what was supposed to be a wall, try to trip you. They’d yell, “Hey, nigger! Hey, coon!” – all the bad things they expected the white people were going to call us – and they would try to snatch the signs out of our hands. And they even spat on us.” She goes on to explain that the training prepared them for the inevitable. These things were bound to happen. “We were practicing self-control. Because the idea was that we were going to be quiet, we were going to stand there and take it no matter what. And if you weren’t able to, if you didn’t pass the practice, then you couldn’t go.”<sup>3</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment protected these actions because it protects “freedom of speech.” Children then were aware of injustices in the world and chose to take part, peacefully, to attempt to change things. They were aware of the consequences of their actions as

well as their rights. Being aware, or informed, of your rights as a citizen is a way of protecting yourself and fellow citizens. The willingness of people to stand up for what they believe in is what has brought about the necessary changes to bring us closer to a society where people are viewed as equals.

## Voting

The 15<sup>th</sup> amendment was to protect black suffrage. It stated that federal or state governments could not deny a citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or former slave status. But the voting right was only extended to black men. Black women, as well as white women, remained unrecognized. Women rights activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony established leagues to gather signatures in support of the Amendment to show their backing and their active role in politics. Although they supported and fought for the abolishment of slavery, their cause was not included in the Amendment. White women took offense to this. They felt that the Amendment should include women as well, some for racist reasons. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the National Women's Suffrage Association in hopes of obtaining voting rights for woman. It was not enough to say that women were also considered 'citizens' and therefore should be included in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments. This was Susan B. Anthony's argument when she and a group of women voted in the 1872 election. This act led to her being arrested and fined for voting illegally. Though now a labeled a criminal, she continued to fight for women's rights. The aim was to change the federal law. This change took place in 1920 in the form of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Thanks to all of the petitioning and lobbying, voting is now considered a voluntary right granted to all citizens. It is a way to participate in the election of officials who will assist in governing the country in which we live.

Jury duty, on the other hand, is the responsibility of all citizens. As one commentator explained, "[j]ury service stands as a *mandatory*, government sponsored political institution. It is the one area where ordinary citizens are required to exercise state power as individuals. Some overlook the jury because it is mandatory, yet, with millions of participants each year, the jury may serve a more powerful role in promoting democracy and citizenship than any voluntary association." <sup>4</sup> This mandatory duty allows for an accused person to be tried by a jury of his or her peers and allows the jurors an active role in upholding the law. Juries are chosen randomly from lists of registered voters, persons with driver's licenses, or with state-issued identification cards.

It is interesting to think about the relationship between the right to vote and the duty to serve on a jury. Although voting is a privilege, not all persons are *active* voters. As educators, we should think about why people do not take advantage of that right and how to encourage our students to do better. For instance, there is evidence that civic participation results in more civic participation. As one study showed, people who take part in the jury, a mandatory duty, are more likely to vote, a voluntary right. That jury study, conducted in eight counties across the country, found an increase in voter turnout by people who had served on juries where deliberation actually took place. These people were not committed voters at the onset. But taking part in the civic duty of jury service increased average turnout between 4 - 7%. <sup>5</sup> As the studies author wrote, "[t]he only time you are a part of direct democracy in American is when you serve as a juror and the only time you really feel a part of direct democracy in America is when you deliberate." <sup>6</sup> As we seek information about our history to make sense of what our futures can potentially hold, it remains important to gather the facts, understand the information encountered, and discuss our findings with one another. It is apparent in this study, that through discussion and participation, people are able to make more informed decisions and learn the value of participating.

You can also see why jury service matters as a civic duty on its own. No one person has all of the answers,

but through collaboration and discussion, problems can be solved. Allowing a jury of one's peers to decide a case is one of our constitutional rights. People present different perspectives and contribute knowledge based on their own experiences. Serving on a jury was found to provide an education on democratic citizenship, affording people the opportunity to experience the justice system as a living, breathing entity while administering justice on the state's behalf, and not just words on a page. As citizens, it is our right and responsibility to take an active position in how our government is run.

**Introduction for Lesson 1** - Students are aware that the Pilgrims came over on the Mayflower in search of a new life, but they are not sure why the Pilgrims left England or how they established the new country that was to be their home. "Schoolhouse Rock" is an excellent resource to use to explain this to younger students. The 'No More Kings' segment does a great job explaining the colonization of the New World. The story is set to music. It explains why people left England and describes their relationship with the King in the time immediately following. A questions and answer/comment session can take place to make sure students understand the how and why of colonization, which can be charted for visual learners. This introduction can be given the day before or just before the lesson's hook to get the students thinking about the topic. ("Fireworks" is an alternative segment)

## Lesson 1-The Constitution

---

**Rationale** : The Constitution is a weighty concept for young children. The language is difficult to understand, and the text is extremely long. The best strategy is to teach students about its content and purpose so they can understand why it is such an important document and how it protects our freedom.

**Learning Goal:** Today we are learning to use information in order to understand the rules that run our country by using the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

**Standards:** 3RL1, 3RL6, 3SL3, 3SL2, 3W10

**Materials:** journals, chart paper, markers, pencils, Schoolhouse Rock video "Preamble to the Constitution"

**Hook** : During the transition into Social Studies, create a lull, a period when students have no direction. Students will either sit quietly, start to talk, or fool around. After a few minutes, stop the class and ask them what they noticed. Responses may be that they aren't doing anything, they didn't know what to do, or they were allowed to do what they wanted. Question whether they feel school would be a productive environment if they were allowed to do whatever they wanted. This conversation will serve as the basis for the first entry in the students' dialogical notebooks. Have them explain their reasoning (why or why not). Have students switch journals to share their responses with a partner, who will in turn write a response to their thoughts in the journal. Have a few students share both responses, reinforcing the idea that any environment without rules, laws, or guidelines for expected behavior is not a conducive one for growth and productivity. Advise the students that this discussion will serve as the foundation for discussing why we have a Constitution in the first place. Read the learning goal/objective as it is written on the board.

**Procedures:**

**\*\*Note: review the Founding of the United States or the lesson introduction prior to teaching this**

**lesson. This lesson can be done in 2 parts, one for the Constitution and one for the Bill of Rights, discussing the meaning of each amendment and why it was important to include at the time.**

1. Display a copy of the Constitution. Advise students of its purpose as given in the introduction.
2. Explain that the Constitution was written for the sole purpose of making sure that the people agreed on the power the government (President, Congress, and Supreme Court) should have. Once the framers wrote the Constitution, it had to be ratified by the states.
3. The main reservation people had about the Constitution they ratified was that rights were not mentioned, which left them unprotected. This concern led to the creation of the Bill of Rights. (display and discuss the Bill of Rights)

**Closure:** Have a few students share what they have learned about the purpose of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in their own words (point of view). Students will keep their journals for the next lesson.

**Evaluation/Assessment:** We will know we've got it when we can explain the purpose of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

**Essential Question:** How does developing your own point of view help you to better understand the purpose of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

Possible people to research include our early leaders and the Framers of the Constitution: John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Washington, and James Monroe.

## Lesson 2-Equality

---

**Rationale-** The previous lesson left students with the impression that everyone was treated equally, regardless of gender or ethnicity. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the differences that separated people during that time period and what has happened since the Founding to bring about a more inclusive community. This lesson will discuss the abolishment of slavery and what it meant for the rights of African Americans.

**Learning Objective/Goal-** Today we are learning how changes were made to the Constitution in order to understand the fight for equality by using amendments 13, 14, 15, and 19.

**Standards-** 3SL1, 3SL6, 3L1

**Hook-** Review the prior lesson regarding the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and their purpose. Call up several white males in the class for the demonstration. Explain to the students there were 55 total delegates who took part in drafting the Constitution, but for the sake of the demonstration, we will only use a few. Have these students begin to make the rules for the classroom. Students may attempt to volunteer to give suggestions, but encourage the chosen students to keep working. After a predetermined amount of time, pose two questions: 1) How did it feel not to have a say in the rules that were made for the class? 2) How did it feel to make the rules without checking with the class? In both cases, did you feel that it was fair? Why or why not? Have students date and respond in their dialogical notebooks. Students will share their responses

which will start the discussion on equality.

**Materials-** journals, chart paper, Bill of Rights and Constitution from previous lesson

**Procedures:**

- Ask the students to identify the process they witnessed for establishing rules or laws in the classroom. Write their responses on chart paper for future reference, clarifying any misconceptions during the discussion.
- Question the students about whom the process excluded. This question should lead the students to notice that girls and students of color were excluded. Explain this information if your current population does not address it, or borrow students from another class prior to the start of the lesson.
- Explain to students that as times changed, changes had to be made to the Constitution in order to ensure everyone had a voice. These changes are called Amendments. Explain the 13, 14, 15, and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments as they relate to the lesson. To make it more meaningful for the students, use your class agreement and make changes to it. Explain changes are normally needed when something changes in the classroom. It works the same in the communities and world in which we live. Those changes are made possible by the people or citizens who use their 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment right to speak up for them.

**Closure** - In their own words, have students explain what an amendment is and its importance.

**Evaluation/Assessment-** We will know we've got it when we can explain what an amendment is and how it helps the citizens of the U.S.

**Essential Question-** Why is it important for a learner to explain their own understanding and ideas during a discussion?

Possible people to research:

Charles Houston, Thurgood Marshall, Lyndon B. Johnson, Frederick Douglas, Nat Turner

## Lesson 3-Women's rights

---

The 19<sup>th</sup> amendment gave women the right to vote which allowed them to share in the rights and responsibilities that have been afforded to men for centuries as citizens. After discussion about the events leading up to this amendment, pose an issue for students to vote on. The issue should be generic and not gender based. The ballots should have a box for the students identify their gender. When sorting the ballots, make 4 piles, two on each side, keeping the girls votes separate. After tallying the votes, identify the winning side. Discuss what would be different if girls (women) were not allowed to vote. How would this have changed the outcome? Would this have been fair? Have students write a journal entry to voice their feelings on the topic and share their journal with a partner who will give a response to their entry.

Possible research persons:

Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Angela Davis, Sojourner Truth

## Take Action activity:

Part of our philosophy at King Robinson is that students should be able to apply what they learn through their actions in the community. These actions take the form of community service, with the students volunteering in a myriad of ways. Following a discussion about citizenship and what the students can do to show they are productive citizens, students will decide on an activity they can do and present it to the class. Their means of presentation will be left up to them. Some suggestions could be a short video (phone recorded), poster, skit, or report. The objective is for students to show an act of good citizenship and discuss how it made them feel to perform it. Possible tasks could be:

1. Helping someone with their homework
2. Helping a neighbor with groceries/yardwork
3. Helping to clean the kitchen
4. Taking out the trash
5. Cleaning their room
6. Helping with the laundry
7. Compromising to solve a problem
8. Helping someone solve a problem
9. Following rules in school or the community
10. Respecting the rights of others

Providing a few examples will ensure that all students understand what they are to accomplish.

\*\* Connect student activities to those of adult responsibilities in the community\*\*

## Appendix A

---

### Implementing District Standards

This unit will include several standards which are required for students to achieve mastery in specific subject areas according to the Common Core State Standards ([corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org)).

Standard 3RL1 requires students to ask and answer questions that show understanding of a text, referring just to the text for the answers.

Standard 3RL6 requires students to distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters. Students will support their point of view using information from the text (3W1.A).

Standard 3W3.B allows students to write a narrative to develop an imagined experience using descriptive details and a clear event sequence using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to show the response of characters to situations.

Standard 3W7 requires students to conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Standard 3W10 requires students to write routinely (extended or short time frames) for a range of disciplines-specific tasks, purpose, and audiences.



Standard 3SL1 requires students to engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly; (b) follow agreed-upon rules for discussion (gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and text under discussion)

Standard 3SL3 requires students to ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

Standard 3SL4 requires students to report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details. They should speak clearly at an understandable pace, and speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification (3SL6).

Standard 3L1 requires students to demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing (3L2).

### **Student Resources**

The resources listed for students are a range of reading material from easy readers to advanced level. This will provide information that can be presented to a variety of learners, allowing for differentiation. Students are given an overview of what it means to be a good citizen in *Good Citizenship Counts*. *The American Revolution* is a little more advanced, providing students with information about the founding of the United States. It discusses wars that were fought and the reasoning behind them. It explains the difficult choices made by black men and Native Americans when choosing which side to fight for, the British or the Americans. There is a great deal of history involved here, but the information will lead to rich discussions for students who want to gain a deeper understanding of the actual events.

The use of video clips at this age has proven to be a strategy to hook the students prior to a lesson. The video clips used from *SchoolHouse Rock* provide a quick summary of the book, *Can't we make them behave, King George?*, which tells about a young boy coming of age to be king and how he handled the decisions that led to the creation of what is now the United States. When speaking about who is and is not a citizen, *The path to citizenship* will provide the students with information on becoming a citizen. It offers personal accounts of families who have undergone the process and what it has meant to them. This provides students with information on what it is like to be an immigrant. Students can read first-hand accounts from school aged student interviews with people who actually took part in historical events in *Oh, Freedom! Kids talk about the Civil Rights Movement with the people who made it happen*. The interviews are from people of different cultural backgrounds who tell their stories of what it was like during segregation. In *Civil rights movement of kids*, the text includes a plethora of video and book resources on a myriad of civil rights events that are appropriate for young children. The events covered are paired with activities that will deepen the understanding of the event and make it more memorable. For instance, history is presented for discussion and the activity which follows may be a reenactment or further discussion where students are required to take a stance and voice their opinion.

### **Teacher Resources**

The resources listed for the teacher provide in depth information about the topics covered in the unit. *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* explains how the same historical document can be viewed differently depending on life experiences. *The Jury Expert: How jury*

*service makes us into better citizens* is based on a study conducted which ultimately shows an increase in voter participation in citizens who served as jurors when they had to deliberate in order to reach a verdict. *Democracy in America* gives thoughts on how people interact with each other based on social status and obligation. In the text, *So what is citizenship anyway ?*, the rights and duties of citizens are broken down and discussed as they relate to individuals as well as groups living in a community.

## Student Resources

Bender, Marie, *Good citizenship counts*, Edina, Minn.; Abdo Pub., c2003.

Collier, Christopher and James Lincoln, *The American Revolution*, New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1998.

Fritz, Jean, *Can't we make them behave, King George?* New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, c1977.

Howell, Sara, *The path to citizenship*, New York: Powerkids Press, 2015.

King, Casey, *Oh, Freedom! Kids talk about the Civil Rights Movement with the people who made it happen*, New York: A.A.Knopf, c1997

Mayer, Cassie, ( *Citizenship*) *Being a leader*, Chicago, Ill.: Heinemann, Library, c2008.

Turck, Mary, *Civil rights movement for kids: a history with 21 activities*, Chicago, Ill.: Chicago Review Press, c2000.

## Teacher Resources

Allen, Danielle, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* , New York, NY, Liveright Publishing Corp, c2014

Deess, Perry and Gastil, John, *The Jury Expert: How jury service makes us into better citizens*, 2009, 21(3), 51-69.

De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*. Trans. By George Lawrence, ed. by J.P. Mayer. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday/ Anchor, 1969.

Luthringer, Chelsea, *So what is citizenship anyway ?* New York: Rosen Pub. Group/Rosen Central, c2001.

## Endnotes

---

1. Allen (2014)
2. King (1997)
3. King (1997)
4. Deess (2009)
5. Deess (2009)
6. Deess (2009)

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>