



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1995 Volume III: The Constitution and Criminal Justice

Understanding the Significance of the Nationalization of the Bill of Rights

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.03.02
by Gary Highsmith

This unit is designed for Social Studies or History classes in grades 7-11. The unit provides a detailed overview of the most important areas concerning the nationalization of the Bill of Rights and seeks to provide teachers with the fundamental concepts of the United States Constitution in regard to the administration of criminal justice.

Further, this unit seeks to develop in students an appreciation and understanding of Constitutional law. The unit also seeks to make the Constitution relevant to the everyday lives of students. In short, this unit seeks to advance the idea that all people, irrespective of their station in life, deserve civil liberties that are beyond abuse by government authorities.

Additionally, the subject of crime generally, and the rights of the criminally accused, are addressed in this unit. Today, crime is considered by many as the most important social issue facing those who live in America, especially in urban America. This unit seeks to discuss and debate crime and the criminal justice system in a way that fosters understanding and solutions. Presently, discussions of crime almost always end up as debates as to who is responsible. While this is important, it is not the sum total of this provocative issue.

Finally, this unit seeks, above all else, to instill in students the ability and desire to think critically and analytically about social issues and to ultimately develop long-term strategies for effecting true change in the area of criminal justice.

(Recommended for American Government and History grades 9-12, Social Studies grades 7-12, and Law/Constitutional Law grades 11-12)

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