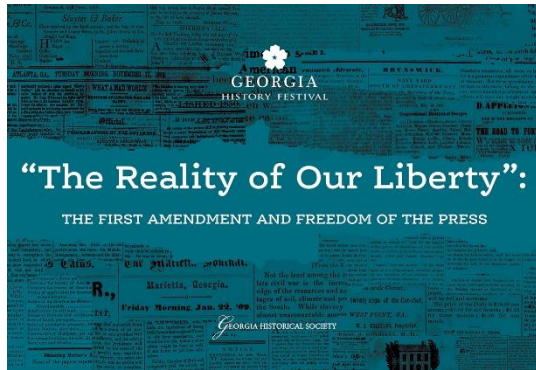


An Historical Investigation of the First Amendment for Elementary Students



Each year, the Georgia Historical Society creates new educational materials and resources for students and educators to participate in the *Georgia History Festival*.

The 2024-2025 *Georgia History Festival* theme is “The Reality of Our Liberty:” The First Amendment and Freedom of the Press.” Through educational resources and primary sources, educators and students will explore the role that a free press has historically played in informing the American people.

Using the book, *Free for You and Me* by Christy Mihaly, elementary teachers and students will investigate the First Amendment to the United States Constitution to learn how it impacts them personally.

Opening activity:

Write “It’s a free country” on the board and ask students what the statement means.

Discuss the following questions:

- What is the difference between a “right” and a “responsibility”?
- Who decides what our rights are?
- What document outlines our rights as United States citizens?



Historical Overview:

Using the “About the First Amendment” section of *Free for You and Me* (end of the book), lead the class in a conversation about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Founders were concerned that the states would not ratify (approve) the new Constitution without listing specific rights of the states and the American people. The first ten amendments (changes or additions) to the Constitution are called the “Bill of Rights” and they outline rights that are guaranteed to all U.S. citizens.

The First Amendment is the foundation for all the others and is focused on what we can say and write.

Reading the book:

Read the book through once with the class. Write down words/phrases that students do not understand, as well as things they think are important.

Read the book a second time, focusing on each of the five freedoms:

1. Freedom of religion;
2. Freedom of speech;
3. Freedom of the press;
4. Freedom of assembly;
5. Freedom to petition the government.

Ask students for examples in addition to the ones provided in the book. How do they see these rights in their daily lives? Have students illustrate each of the freedoms.



Primary Source Investigations

Free for You and Me is a secondary source – a source created after the fact by people who were not present at the original time of study. A primary source is the “stuff of history” – the materials that were created at the time of study.

Let’s take a look at some of the primary sources from Georgia history connected to the First Amendment.

1. [Abraham Baldwin’s annotated draft of the Constitution](#)
2. [The *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper at the Library of Congress](#)
3. [Photograph of a civil rights protest march in Savannah in 1960](#)

Investigate these primary sources using the [Document](#) and [Photograph](#) analysis worksheets from the National Archives. Divide the class into groups of three (3) to explore the documents, one per group. It’s okay to have multiple groups exploring the same source. After working in the small groups, reconvene and discuss their observations and questions as a whole group.

As a concluding activity, have students revisit the book and discuss how each of the primary sources connect to the story.



Georgia Standards of Excellence

Information Processing Skills K-12

- SSIPSI - 17

Social Studies

- Elementary
 - SS2HI – Describe the lives and contributions of historical figures in Georgia history.
 - SS2CG3 - Give examples of how the historical figures in SS2HI demonstrate positive citizenship traits such as: honesty, dependability, trustworthiness, honor, civility, good sportsmanship, patience, and compassion.
 - SS4H2 - Analyze the challenges faced by the framers of the Constitution.
 - SS4CG2 - Explain the importance of freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
 - SS5CG1 Explain how a citizen's rights are protected under the U.S. Constitution.
 - SS5CG2 Explain the process by which amendments to the U.S. Constitution are made.
 - SS5CG3 Explain how amendments to the U. S. Constitution have maintained a representative democracy/republic.

Additional Resources

[2024-2025 Georgia History Festival Educational Materials](#)

[Bill of Rights Institute](#)

[Free for You and Me – Storytime Videos – Educational Children’s Books](#)

[Media Smarts – Reporter for a Day lesson plan](#)