



Lesson 18.14 “Rights Need Responsibilities”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will define what a “right” is compared to a “responsibility”
- Students will discuss how responsibilities are necessary to uphold rights
- Students will analyze a founding document to determine general responsibilities U.S. citizens have to secure their rights

Lesson Competencies

- I can identify, explain, and analyze the core civic practices and foundational principles that guide governments and communities. (Moose SS)
- I can describe how citizens participate in government. (Moose SS)
- I can analyze, interpret, evaluate, and use information delivered orally or visually. (ELA 7)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?
How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

How do people act as good citizens in a democracy?
What are people's rights and responsibilities?

Estimated Time

One 45-minute class session

Materials & Equipment

Unit 18: Learn It! “[Federalism and the Federal Government](#),” pp. 6–7
Infographic: “[The Bill of Rights](#)”
Video: “[Mason Explains: Rights and Responsibilities](#)”
One set of “Responsibilities for the Bill of Rights”



Educator Introduction & Rationale

In a democracy, the government has limited authority, but citizens also have limited rights. The government cannot simply make changes on a whim, and citizens cannot act however they please without regard for others. Citizens in a democracy do, however, enjoy many rights in exchange for having laws that protect those rights for all citizens. The balance between these rights and the responsibilities citizens have to ensure and protect those rights is an essential part of the social contract that makes democracy work.

This is the third lesson for middle school students in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. This lesson can stand alone. In this lesson, students explore the difference between doing something because it is required by law and doing something for the good of their community. Students are then split into groups to analyze three of the ten amendments present in the Bill of Rights to brainstorm what the rights and responsibilities of each amendment are. An extension activity is recommended for students who are ready to use these primary source analysis skills to look at historic photographs and documents and distinguish the rights and responsibilities that are illustrated.

Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Before the Learning Activity

Student reading and comprehension questions

What rights and responsibilities do citizens have?

Direct students to read Unit 18, Learn It! "[Federalism and the Federal Government](#)," pages 6 and 7. Project or distribute the infographic "[The Bill of Rights](#)" to take a closer look at the basic rights guaranteed to all Americans. It can be accessed on page 7.

Students could also watch "[Mason Explains: Rights and Responsibilities](#)." Access this video on page 8 of Unit 18, Learn It! "[Federalism and the Federal Government](#)."

Students should be able to answer:

1. What is a right? What is a responsibility?
2. What are some of the basic rights guaranteed to Americans as part of the Bill of Rights?

Learning Activity

Activation

What's the difference between following a law and upholding a responsibility? Students in New Hampshire have probably spent time outside, perhaps by hiking, camping, or spending time in the woods. Ask students if they are familiar with the concept of "Leave No Trace" when it comes to these activities. If students are not familiar, you could look at the [Leave No Trace website](#), or watch [this introduction video on the organization's YouTube page](#).

Ask students to think about what "Leave No Trace" looks like. Responses may include taking your trash with you when you bring lunch on a hike, only hiking and camping in designated areas, making sure fires are properly extinguished, and leaving rocks, plants, and other natural items where you find them in natural areas.

Next, ask students what the consequences of not doing these things. Will you get arrested? Go to jail? Probably not. In fact, no one may ever know if you take a cool looking rock home with you from a hike. Through discussion, students should begin to realize that small damages can add up overtime and if everyone, say, took a rock home from their hike, it can damage the environment and that hiking trail would no longer be a safe place for people to go.

Finally, ask students to identify the main parts of this scenario from their reading:

- What is the right that is being upheld? (enjoying the outdoors)
- What is the responsibility that makes the right possible? (protecting the beauty and safety of these areas)
- What happens to the right if this responsibility is ignored? (the right is no longer possible)

Direct Instruction

What rights are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights? Review with students that:

- Amendments to the U.S. Constitution generally seek to:
 - Protect individual freedoms (for example - speech, assembly [meet in groups], religion)
 - Protect people from the government becoming too powerful (for example – rights aren't just limited to what is explicitly listed)
 - Protect and promote equality because Americans say they believe that all people should be treated fairly (for example – due process, speedy and public trial)
- The government cannot infringe on these rights, unless it is to protect other people's rights (for example – protecting one person's freedom of speech does not limit someone else's freedom of speech)
- This is not just true for adults and the U.S. government – think of your school/classroom as a microcosm – what rights do students have? What responsibilities do they have that secure these rights? (e.g., students have the right to learn, but their responsibility is that they follow the classroom rules to create a learning environment that works for all students)

Guided Practice

The responsibilities for the Bill of Rights. Break students into four groups and assign each group one of the amendments to work with. Each group should receive the worksheet that corresponds to their assigned amendment. **Note:** The first amendment is split between two groups due to the number of responses it will generate.

Students should work together to circle the text that shows what rights the amendment protects. Then, they will brainstorm the responsibilities that the rights those rely on to be upheld. Finally, they should create a list of responsibilities the government has to its citizens, and a list of responsibilities the citizens have to themselves and their community to uphold this guaranteed right.

Have each group present their brainstorm results with the rest of the class. After the four groups have been presented, invite students to determine a few general responsibilities for being a U.S. citizen.

Extension

What do rights and responsibilities look like in history? Have students explore the photographs and documents on the [Unit 18 Find It! page](#) (or give them a pre-sorted selection to choose from). Prompt students to pick one of these items to use as a basis for a short writing assignment:

- What right does this source illustrate? What about the document/image tells you this?
- What responsibility do the people involved have? Which responsibilities belong to the citizens? Which responsibilities belong to the government?



Supporting Materials

Other

Resources

- U.S. Constitution, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution
- Bill of Rights, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights>

Additional resources about amending the Constitution:

- Annenberg Classroom's Our Constitution "Chapter 4 – How Has the Constitution Expanded Over Time?"
www.annenbergclassroom.org/resource/ourconstitution/constitution-chapter-4-constitution-changed-time/
- Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Stephen Breyer discuss originalism and a living Constitution in the Senate.
www.c-span.org/classroom/document/?9505 (5 minutes)



Standards

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:8:2.1)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Rights and Responsibilities (SS:CV:8:4.1)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.1.6-8, D2.Civ.3.6-8)
- ✓ Participation and Deliberation (D2.Civ.8.6-8)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details (RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure (RH.6-8.4)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge (RH.6-8.9)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration (SL.8.1a, SL.8.1b)
- ✓ Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL.8.4)



Lesson Vocabulary

amend	(verb) To revise or change
amendment	(noun) An addition to an existing document; in the U.S. Constitution, the amendments come after the original document
bill of rights	(noun) A document that contains a list of freedoms to protect; in the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments
Bill of Rights	(noun) The first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution that list the freedoms of the people and states; the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791
citizen	(noun) A member by law of a nation or group
Constitution	(noun) The document that lays out the framework for how the federal government works; written in 1787 and ratified in 1789
law	(noun) A rule that regulates the actions of members of a community
responsibilities	(noun) An action an individual takes to be accountable for something
rights	(noun) Things a person should legally or morally be able to do or get to have