

The Bill of Rights Readers Theatre Script

Developed by Dr. Rosalind Flynn with Ms. Zander's Class

Kenmore Middle School

Arlington, Virginia

1	What is a right?	All	The first amendment--Freedom of religion,
2	The correct answer!		speech, press, assembly.
3	Not being wrong!	1	The second amendment says that all states have
4	Not on the left!		the right to keep a militia.
5	No—not those kinds of right!	2	Militia?
1	Right—as in “It’s my right to have fun!”	1	A defense, like an army, navy, or National
6	Oh, that kind of right--It’s something you’re		Guard.
	entitled to,	3	Also the 2 nd amendment protects the right of the
7	Something everyone deserves,		people to bear arms
8	Something you’re allowed to do or have.	4	Bare arms and wear tube tops! Yes!
9	Like we’re allowed to wear our own clothes to	3	Not the right to <u>wear</u> bare arms. The right to
	school.		bear arms means the right to carry a weapon.
All	Right! [gesture]	4	Oh.
10	Like we can vote if we are 18 or older.	Girls	Amendment three says that like no soldier shall
All	Right! [gesture]		like in time of peace or war like be quartered in
11	Okay, now that we’ve got that right, who knows		any house like without the consent of the owner.
	what the Founding Fathers added to the	6	What the...?
	Constitution?	5	Look here, it means that soldiers and troops
2	The Declaration of Independence?		should not live in people’s houses without their
11	No! [sound effect—confused grumbling]		permission. [gesture]
1	That came before the Constitution!	6	Isn’t that just common sense? Why do they need
All	Oh yeah—The Bill of Rights! [gesture]		to put that on paper?
2	How much did it cost?	7	Remember how the colonists were put under the
12	Not that kind of Bill!		Quartering Act?
3	Bill as in Clinton?	8	When the British couldn’t afford temporary
12	No!		housing?
3	Then what kind of Bill?	6	Oh yeah—so the British made the colonists give
13	A Bill as in a Law.		their soldiers shelter.
All	The Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments to	8	Correct. So the Founding Fathers said our
	the Constitution		government doesn’t have the right to do that.
14	Guaranteeing certain basic rights and liberties	7	Excellent. On to Amendment Four which states:
	for all citizens.	All	The right of the people to be secure in their
15	Ratified in 1791, these 10 amendments are.....		persons, houses, papers, and effects against
16	The First Amendment		unreasonable searches and seizures...
17	We can follow our religion and not someone	9	[sound effect] Get on with it!
	else’s	10	What’s it mean?
18	Cool.	11	The colonists wanted the right to privacy.
19	Also, we have the freedom of speech.	12	People’s houses and the people themselves
20	What? Huh?		cannot be searched without a warrant. [gesture]
19	You can say what you want freely. [sound	10	A warrant?
	effect—all begin talking freely...]	13	A warranty?
21	Okay! [clears throat] And don’t forget the	12	A warrant--An order given by a judge. The
	freedom of the press.		police can’t come in and search your house
22	You mean we can press all the buttons we want?		unless they have one.
	[gesture]	13	I’ll remember that. It’s our right under the fourth
All	No! The freedom of the press lets us print		amendment.
	newspapers with our own thoughts and opinions.	12	It also says...
23	Totally!	11	Information or evidence of a crime that was
24	There’s also the freedom of assembly.		found by searching a person’s house without a
25	You mean we have to go to a school assembly?		search warrant cannot be used in court.
24	Kind of. It means we can meet together in	13	Next--the fifth amendment. That’s a big one.
	groups freely.		

14	No person should be held for a crime without a grand jury.	18	Probably not, but now that you've mentioned bail, that's the subject of the eighth amendment.
15	What does that mean?	14	Excessive bail shall not be required nor excessive fines imposed
13	It means that all people have the right to a trial.	20	Nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.
14	Nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb.	All	English again, please! [sound effect]
All	Now we're really confused. [gesture]	20	Officials can't charge too much for bail or fines.
14	It means that if you commit a crime and go to trial, you can't be tried again for the same crime.	21	So like, if you stole a candy bar, they can't make your bail or fine \$20,000.
All	Double Jeopardy!	22	And you couldn't be given the electric chair for stealing a TV either.
11	Isn't that a movie?	23	The 9 th amendment says that 'this enumeration in the Cons....
16	Right—but there's another part of the fifth here—Nor shall a person be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.	All	[sound effect—groans]
All	Huh?	23	Okay, okay! If there are rights that they left out of the Constitution, the people still have those rights.
16	Say you committed a crime. When the police ask you, you don't have to tell them you did it.	All	Your point is
All	We can claim the Fifth! [gesture]	23	People have other rights that might not be in the Constitution?
15	That means we don't have to testify against ourselves in a court of law!	25	Right. I guess they were afraid they might have forgotten some.
All	Talk to the palm 'cuz you ain't the bomb!	20	Good thinking. What comes next?
16	Right. And they need evidence to arrest you. They cannot arrest you just for looking suspicious.	25	The 10 th – the last one in the Bill of Rights, but there are 27 altogether.
All	Phew!	All	Holy Cow! [gesture]
17	Amendment six—in all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial....	21	The 10 th amendment protects the states and the people from powerful governments.
All	Okay, okay...translation please.	All	How?
17	If you were to commit a crime and you got arrested, your trial must follow soon afterwards.	21	Remember how King George was too controlling of the colonists?
All	ASAP!	22	He didn't give them any say in Parliament?
18	What if I don't have enough money to hire a lawyer?	All	That's not fair. [gesture]
17	The government has to give you one.	21	Right. So that's what the 10 th is all about – It says that any powers <u>not</u> given to the Federal Government...
All	Got it. Onto Amendment seven.	All	Go to the states!
18	Amendment seven says that in suits of common law where the value in controversy shall exceed \$20, the right of trial by jury shall be otherwise examined....	22	So the Federal government doesn't get too powerful.
All	Say what? [gesture]	23	And those are the first 10 amendments to our Constitution, which are called
18	Okay. It means that if you stole something worth more than \$20, you'd have to go Federal Court.	All	The Bill of Rights.
19	So if I stole something like a TV, I'd have a jury trial in Federal Court?	24	I guess all Americans should know them.
18	You could have a jury trial, but Federal Courts deal with the big money cases.	25	Or people could take advantage of us.
19	If I stole something cheap like a Slurpee, would you bail me out?	All	Not us! [gesture]
			WE [gesture] KNOW our rights!
			Yeah! [gesture]

