

Topic:

Defining Boundaries For
Free Expression

Time:

1 class period

**Historical
Period:**

Late 1700's

Core:

US I 6120 - 0603
US II 6250-0102
Gov. 6210-0104

Objectives:

1. Students will understanding the limitations of free speech.
2. Students will gain an increased awareness of how Constitutional rights are interpreted.

Procedure:

1. Begin the activity by asking such springboard questions as:
 - a. Does freedom of speech mean a citizen is free to say anything he/she wants at any time, any place, and in any situation?
 - b. Are there limits to freedom of speech?
2. Distribute Handout 1. Divide the class into groups of four to five students to discuss and respond to the items. Tell students that group decisions do not have to be unanimous if there are differences of opinions that are not resolved through discussion.
3. After groups have completed the activity, discuss each item. Have groups give their responses and the reasoning behind them. Answers may be recorded on a grid on the chalkboard.

NOTE: This activity is intended to allow students to explore their own values related to what speech the Constitution should or should not protect. Many of these situations have been litigated, but the decisions relate to specific cases, which when generalized, might be misleading.

Handouts/Worksheets:

1. When is Speech Free?

Author: *Law in U. S.
History*

HANDOUT 1

WHEN IS SPEECH FREE?

Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Does the First Amendment protect someone who:	Yes	No
1. Makes a political speech in support of a candidate for mayor?	_____	_____
2. Publicly criticizes the President?	_____	_____
3. Makes a pro-Nazi speech outside a Jewish community center?	_____	_____
4. Uses a sound track to broadcast a message in a residential area?	_____	_____
5. Pickets a grocery store in support of a demand that the store hire more minority personnel?	_____	_____
6. Wears a green armband to school to show support for the Irish Republican Army?	_____	_____
7. Telephones the school with a phony bomb threat?	_____	_____
8. After hearing that American soldiers would be sent once again to fight in Southeast Asia, he burned his draft card?	_____	_____
9. Writes a book praising the communists?	_____	_____
10. Attends a meeting of the KKK?	_____	_____
11. Assembles a group to protest some city policy and in doing so blocks sidewalks?	_____	_____

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	Yes	No
12. Wants to buy an ad in the school newspaper to criticize the school board?	_____	_____
13. Speaks to others so they can plan a series of kidnappings?	_____	_____
14. Throws a rock, which has the message, "Free all political prisoners!" tied to it, through a window at the county jail?	_____	_____
15. Urges an angry crowd to march on city hall and "teach those in power a lesson"?	_____	_____
16. Falsely shouts "Fire!" in the gym while it is filled with people watching a basketball game?	_____	_____
17. Writes a book advertised as the dirtiest book ever written?	_____	_____
18. Makes false claims in an advertisement for a product?	_____	_____
19. Threatens verbally to kill you?	_____	_____
20. Urges the violent overthrow of the government at some future unspecified time?	_____	_____
21. Carves obscene messages in desk tops at school?	_____	_____
22. Refuses to follow the school dress code?	_____	_____
23. Collects signatures on a petition opposing planned zoning change?	_____	_____
24. Holds a parade without a permit?	_____	_____
25. Embarrasses the governor by telling a large audience about a mistake the governor made?	_____	_____

	Yes	No
26. Calls for resistance to the military draft during a declared war?	_____	_____
27. Damages your reputation by publishing lies about your private life?	_____	_____
28. Joins the Communist Party of America?	_____	_____
29. Has a friendly conversation with a neighbor?	_____	_____