

Module: Social Studies

Lesson Title: Enduring Issues in Civics and Government

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Understand what enduring issues are and their importance
- Closely read excerpts from primary sources and identify enduring issues that are found within them

Prerequisite Skills Common Core State Standards	Social Studies Content Area 2014 GED® Assessment Targets	Social Studies Practices 2014 GED® Assessment Targets
<p>Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. (CCSS.RH.9-10.1)</p> <p>Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text. (CCSS.RH.9-10.2)</p>	<p>Principles that have contributed to development of American constitutional democracy (CG.b)</p> <p>Individual rights and civic responsibilities (CG.d)</p>	<p>Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences (SSP.1)</p> <p>Determining Central Ideas, Hypotheses, and Conclusions (SSP.2)</p>

Materials

- **Handout 1: Bill of Rights**
- **Handout 2: What’s the Enduring Issue?**

Instructional Plan

Overview

Many students in GED® preparation programs have limited knowledge of civics and government. As a result, students struggle to understand the rights and responsibilities as members of American society. This lesson is designed to provide students with a general understanding of enduring issues in civics and government that will assist them in responding to questions on the GED® Social Studies test.

For the purposes of the GED® Social Studies test, an "enduring issue" is an important topic or idea that may be subject to ongoing discussion throughout multiple eras of history. Enduring issues do not have simple solutions. Rather, they are ideas and concepts that the American people continue to struggle with as new situations arise.

Process

Introduce the lesson by writing the word “enduring” on the board. Ask students to define the term. Students may define it as *lasting, continuing, long-term, persistent*, etc. Now write the word “issue” on the board. Ask students to define the term. Students may define the term as *problem, concern, topic, subject, or something that people are talking about*, etc.

Explain that on the GED® Social Studies test, students will encounter the “big ideas” of enduring issues in questions that relate to civics and government. Explain that most of the enduring issues fall into one of the following categories:

- Individual rights versus the common good
- Separation of powers
- Checks and balances
- States’ rights versus federal power

Briefly review the basics of each of the categories. The following provides some general information about what is included within each category.

For more complete information, you may wish to download and print copies of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Amendments 11-27 at the National Archives website at:

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/>

- **Individual rights** – The Bill of Rights outlines specific rights provided to citizens of the United States from First Amendment rights such as freedom of speech, the press, religion, and the right to assemble peacefully to the rights granted those who are accused of a crime. It also explains in the Tenth Amendment that any powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States, or to the people.
- **Separation of powers** – the U.S. Constitution lays out the basic powers of each of the three branches of government. Students should have an understanding of the role of each of the three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial.
- **Checks and balances** – the U.S. Constitution has established a system of checks and balances to ensure that no one branch of the government has unlimited power. Discuss some of the basic checks and balances, such as the veto power of the President to prevent certain laws passed by Congress from going into effect; the power of the Supreme Court to rule a law as unconstitutional; and the ability of Congress to override a presidential veto.
- **States’ rights** – the Tenth Amendment grants states any rights not specifically delegated to the federal government. Discuss the individual state’s rights to provide for law enforcement, education, and management of state’s revenue. Federal powers are outlined in the U.S. Constitution and include such things as raising revenue to fund the operation of the government and the military to protect the homeland and its people, development of treaties with other countries, to coin (print) money, and regulate commerce.

Distribute **Handout A: The Bill of Rights**. Model for students how to closely read and identify the specific rights outlined in the First Amendment. Explain that to closely read, they need to:

- Complete an initial reading of the text to get a general idea of what it is telling them
- Complete a second, close reading to identify key words and phrases

- Underline key words or phrases that focus on the rights provided
- Paraphrase what the text is telling them

The following is an example of key words or phrases that students should underline.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

The following is an example of paraphrasing of the First Amendment.

Congress can't make laws that impact the religious freedom of citizens. They can't prevent people from speaking out about their own beliefs or issues that concern them. The press can't be stopped from reporting about different issues. People have the right to get together as long as they do so peaceably. People have the right to sue the Government if the people feel something wrong has been done.

Explain to students that they will need to closely read each of the next nine amendments and determine what right is explicitly stated within the amendment. Explain that they need to underline key words or phrases and then paraphrase what right the Amendment grants to them as citizens of the U.S.

Discuss the process that students used in order to identify specific rights within the Bill of Rights. Explain that in order to identify each right, they had to closely read the amendment and then pick out key words that helped them determine what right was being granted.

Distribute **Handout B: What's the Enduring Issue?** to each of the students. Explain that in this activity, they will be reading short excerpts from primary sources, such as key documents, speeches, or letters. Explain to the students that they will need to closely read each excerpt and identify the enduring issue that is referenced. Have students discuss how they reached their conclusion.

Answer Key to **Handout B: What's the Enduring Issue?**

1. An individual's rights versus the good of the community (freedom of press)
2. States' rights versus federal power
3. An individual's rights versus the good of the community
4. Checks and balances
5. Separation of powers
6. States' rights versus federal power

Modifications for Different Levels

The introduction of enduring issues is not limited to just GED® preparation students, but can benefit students at all levels. At lower achievement levels, provide students with a copy of **Handout A**. Have students follow along as you read the text to them. Have students discuss each Amendment and what it means.

For students at higher achievement levels, have them practice locating articles, editorials, or letters to the editor (from print or Internet sources) that relate to each of the enduring issues they identified in **Handout B**.

Note to Teachers: If you feel that your students lack a basic understanding of the U.S. Constitution or need more in-depth work with key documents, access the lesson plan entitled: ***Primary Sources: Looking for the Answer in the Constitution***. The lesson plan may be downloaded from the Florida IPDAE website at: http://www.floridaipdae.org/dfiles/resources/lessons/GED2014/SS_PrimarySourcesLookingfortheAnswerintheConstitution.pdf

Assessments/Extensions

Have students write one or two paragraphs about the Bill of Rights and its impact on them. In their paragraphs, have them identify the Amendment that they believe has the greatest impact on their daily lives and explain their reasoning.

Handout A: The Bill of Rights

The U.S. Bill of Rights

The Preamble to The Bill of Rights

Congress of the United States begun and held at the City of New-York, on Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.

THE Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.

RESOLVED by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring, that the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution; viz.

ARTICLES in addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution.

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

Amendment VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

Note: These amendments were ratified December 15, 1791, and form what is known as the "Bill of Rights."
Retrieved from the National Archives at: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/>

Handout B: What's the Enduring Issue?

"[O]ur liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."

Thomas Jefferson, 1796

The Enduring Issue is

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land."

United States Constitution, Article Six, 1788

The Enduring Issue is

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Letter from Birmingham Jail*

The Enduring Issue is

"...I say, that Power must never be trusted without a check."

*John Adams
Adams-Jefferson Letters*

The Enduring Issue is

“While the Constitution diffuses power the better to secure liberty, it also contemplates that practice will integrate the dispersed powers into a workable government. It enjoins upon its branches separateness but interdependence, autonomy but reciprocity. Presidential powers are not fixed but fluctuate depending upon their disjunction or conjunction with those of Congress.”

Associate Justice Robert Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court

The Enduring Issue is

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