

Name _____

THE First Amendment

Introduction:

The First Amendment is home to some of America's most important freedoms. These rights are the pillars of our republic. The Founders wanted to protect the citizens from an all-powerful government.

The text of this amendment reads, "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."

Questions:

1. What year was the First Amendment ratified?
2. What five freedoms are protected by the first amendment?
3. Many of the earliest colonists left England to avoid religious persecution. Where is this referenced in the text of the First Amendment?
4. Which of the five freedoms was essential to the founders?
5. How might free speech be impacted by a free press?
6. Explain the quote by Jefferson, "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press,..."
7. Why would the Supreme Court limit freedom of speech? Note the Schenck case.
8. Why does the US separate its religious and government institutions?
9. Out of the five freedoms of expression, which one do you think is the most important?
10. What other freedom of expression would you include if you could rewrite the First Amendment?

Answer Key

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Questions:

1. What year was the First Amendment ratified?
1791
2. What five freedoms are protected by the first amendment?
Religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition
3. Many of the earliest colonists left England to avoid religious persecution. Where is this referenced in the text of the First Amendment?
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."
4. Which of the five freedoms was essential to the founders?
Press
5. How might free speech be impacted by a free press?
Answers will vary.
6. Explain the quote by Jefferson, "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press..."
To be free, our press must be independent of the government.
7. Why would the Supreme Court limit freedom of speech? Note the Schenck case.
Answers will vary.
8. Why does the US separate its religious and government institutions?
Answers will vary
9. Out of the five freedoms of expression, which one do you think is the most important?
Answers will vary
10. What other freedom of expression would you include if you could rewrite the First Amendment? Answers will vary