

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

## Related Media Exploration

### What is Freedom of Speech?

#### PART 1: Discussion

**Directions:** Read the scenario below and answer question 1. Be prepared to share your answer with the class.



*Isabel, an employee of Gerry's Discount Plumbing, puts a post on social media stating that she thinks the current president is the worst we've ever had. Gerry, her boss, knows that many of his customers are fans of the current president. He feels Isabel's statement is bad for his business, so he fires her.*

1. In your opinion, does "freedom of speech" protect Isabel from being fired in this situation?

#### PART 2: History of the First Amendment

**Directions:** Watch "First Amendment Overview: Part I." Then, answer questions 2-3.



2. Which freedoms are guaranteed in the First Amendment?

3. What was the original purpose of the First Amendment?

#### PART 3: Limits and Protections

**Directions:** Watch "What Does 'Freedom of Speech' Mean in the U.S.?". Then, answer questions 4-6.



4. Who or what has the power to decide the limits on freedom of speech?

5. What patterns do you notice in the limits on speech?

6. What patterns do you notice in speech that has been protected?

## PART 4: Analyzing the Text

**Directions:** Read the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Then answer questions 7-9.



### THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION:

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.

7. “Abridge” is one of your vocabulary words in this unit. To remind yourself, write the definition here.

8. Whose power to abridge people’s freedom of speech is specifically limited by the amendment?

9. The US courts have decided that groups or institutions that get their power from the federal government are *also* limited in their ability to abridge people’s freedom of speech. Circle or highlight each group below whose power is *also* limited by this amendment.

- State governments
- The military
- The police
- Churches
- Corporations
- Public schools
- Private schools

## PART 5: Scenarios

**Directions:** Read each scenario and imagine you are a judge deciding whether the First Amendment protects the person’s right to speak. Then answer questions 10-13. Explain each of your answers.



**SCENARIO A:** Isabel, an employee of Gerry's Discount Plumbing, puts a post on social media stating that she thinks the current president is the worst we’ve ever had. Gerry, her boss, knows that many of his customers are fans of the current president. He feels Isabel’s statement is bad for his business, so he fires her.

10. In your opinion as a judge, would the First Amendment protect Isabel from being fired in this situation?

**SCENARIO B:** Cal is walking down the street with some friends when he says that the current president is the worst we’ve ever had. Jay, a police officer, is standing nearby and hears Cal’s statement. Jay is a big fan of the president. He approaches Cal, asks him for identification, and starts searching him. When Cal resists this search, Jay arrests him. Cal fights this arrest in court by saying there was no legal reason for Jay to have stopped and searched him in the first place.

11. In your opinion as a judge, would the First Amendment protect Cal from being arrested in this situation?

**SCENARIO C:** Ms. Jones is a teacher at Washington Senior High School, a public school. She is an atheist who has made many social media posts that are strongly critical of organized religion. Several parents of Washington students are very religious and find Ms. Jones’s posts offensive. These parents go to the principal and demand that she fire Ms. Jones.

12. In your opinion as a judge, would the First Amendment protect Ms. Jones from being fired in this situation?

**SCENARIO D:** Senator Mitchell recently introduced a bill in the Senate that has made Susannah, one of his constituents, really angry. Susannah writes a series of tweets saying that she will kill Senator Mitchell; she even includes the addresses of his office and home. The next day, the FBI arrives at Susannah’s door. They search her house and find several firearms. Susannah is arrested for threatening the senator’s life.

13. In your opinion as a judge, would the First Amendment protect Susannah from being arrested in this situation?

## PART 6: Independent Reflection

**Directions:** Respond to the prompt below by writing or typing in the box.



**PROMPT:** What does “freedom of speech” mean in the United States? Use evidence from today’s lesson to support your answer.

## PART 7: Whole Class Discussion

**Directions:** Share your answer to the question from Part 5 with the class. Then, keep the conversation going by discussing the following optional questions.



- How does freedom of speech make our nation stronger?
- What difficulties or challenges do you think this freedom causes in our society?
- Do you think social media has made freedom of speech more or less important?
- Which has more *potential to harm people*: speech in person or speech on social media?
- Which is more *politically powerful*: speech in person or speech on social media?
- What do you think it would be like to live in a country which did not guarantee freedom of speech?