



## OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Refugees have compelling needs for protection and, by definition, have a well-founded fear of persecution, often from government authorities or from other powerful social entities. As refugees prepare to come to the United States, many are unfamiliar with the laws that protect their rights, and once they arrive, need encouragement to engage with their new government with trust.

This lesson plan is designed to introduce refugees to some fundamental rights in the United States which many Americans may take for granted. It is designed to instill confidence in their safety and build a sense of civic pride and responsibility.

### KEY MESSAGES

- The First Amendment is part of the United States Constitution and it protects freedoms of religion, speech, and the press, and the right to assemble peacefully and to petition the government.
- Citizens of the United States and other residents (including refugees) can participate in the public discourse in many ways and can take legal action for their protection, if necessary.

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

After this lesson, refugees will be able to:

- Identify the First Amendment as part of the U.S. Constitution.
- Articulate the five freedoms, which are rights protected by the First Amendment: Religion, Speech, Press, Peaceful Assembly, Petition the Government.
- Acknowledge that the state laws protecting First Amendment rights can be different from one state to another.
- Recognize that the debate around the First Amendment is an ongoing right and responsibility of citizens and residents in the United States.

### APPLYING SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON PLANS

The First Amendment Rights lesson plan is not required, but may assist Cultural Orientation (CO) providers who are looking for ways to enhance the Cultural Adjustment and U.S. Laws sections of their CO curriculum.

In an overseas context, CO providers and their supervisors can decide to incorporate this lesson into their curriculum based on the needs of the refugee populations they serve and the level of pre-departure anxiety related to freedom and protection needs. In a domestic context, CO providers and their supervisors can decide to incorporate this lesson into their curriculum based on the level of welcoming support in the local community.

The lesson plan is a suggested guide and can be adapted according to circumstances and the creative wisdom of CO providers and their supervisors. It can be used, in whole or in part, depending upon need and time available.

A companion **First Amendment Rights fact sheet** has also been created which can serve as a take-home handout to emphasize the key messages of the lesson.

In an effort to reassure departing refugees, overseas CO providers should use caution when promising protection and acknowledge the limitations of First Amendment laws. As mentioned in the lesson, state laws all differ and some states offer more protection than others.

This CORE resource, and the companion fact sheet, are in the public domain. All CORE resources are free to access, download, and use.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- Review the key vocabulary for the lesson.
- Explain that the U.S. Constitution is the foundation of law and government for the country. Explain that it doesn't happen often, but sometimes the Constitution needs to be changed. These changes are called "Amendments". The first, and some would argue, the most critical amendment is the First Amendment which protects individual freedom.
- Using the Five Freedoms game board pictures, explain the First Amendment and describe the five freedoms it protects.
- Prepare participants for the Five Freedoms Game.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Five Freedoms game board and picture cards (1 set per group)
- Petition template (1 per group) (optional)
- First Amendment Rights Fact Sheet (1 per participant) (optional)

## ACTIVITY BANK

### THE FIVE FREEDOMS GAME

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide participants into small groups. If possible, ensure that at least one person in each group is literate. *\*Please note that the use of this lesson plan is discretionary.*
2. Give each group a Five Freedoms game board and a set of the Five Freedoms picture cards ([See Appendix](#)).
3. Ask one person in each group to read aloud the situation described in the first box of the Five Freedoms game board; for example, he or she will read, "A student presents a paper at school which criticizes the government's involvement in a war."
4. Tell the group to discuss the situation described and select one of the five freedoms picture cards to place next to that situation on the game board; for example, the group should select the photo representing freedom of speech and place it in the corresponding box.
5. Ask the group to select the five freedoms picture cards best suited to each of the situations described on the game board.
6. When all the groups have completed the game, have the groups explain their choices and discuss any discrepancies between groups' answers. ([See Appendix for answers.](#))
7. Ask the group if they were surprised by any of the situations and discuss.

## KEY VOCABULARY

- Constitution
- Bill of Rights
- Amendment
- Peaceful Assembly
- Petition
- Supreme Court

## MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- Alternatively, for groups with low literacy, the CO provider and/or interpreter can assist by reading the cards as necessary, or the activity can be performed with the class as a whole.
- Some of the situations described in the Five Freedoms Game were taken from actual cases. The details of each case are too complex for inclusion in this lesson, but the links provided in the Appendix are intended to help CO providers better understand the correct answers.
- The Five Freedoms Game may provide a basic introduction to First Amendment concepts, and CO providers may find the Writing a Petition exercise unnecessary. Debrief questions can similarly be shortened.

## WRITE A PETITION

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide participants into small groups. If possible, ensure that at least one person in each group is literate.
2. Give each group a petition template (See Appendix). Explain the different parts of the petition template. Tell them that you are the governor of the “State of Cultural Orientation.” Ask them to write to you making a petition for a change they’d like to see in the State of CO. Offer some examples, such as “provide more comfortable chairs, let us bring food to class, etc.” To manage expectations, you may want to add that the point of this activity is to learn how the petition process works as part of the democratic process. The “State of CO” is a hypothetical democracy, but in a real democracy, a petition is a formal means for voters to communicate their requests and political opinions to elected officials. A petition doesn’t always mean that the requests are granted, but when they are not, voters may decide not to re-elect their officials.
3. When each group has written and signed the petition, collect them and discuss.
4. Explain that groups and individuals are allowed to formally petition the local, state, and federal government in the United States and that this is regarded not only as a right but also a responsibility in order to make the country better. Many people take advantage of this opportunity every day in the United States.

### DEBRIEF

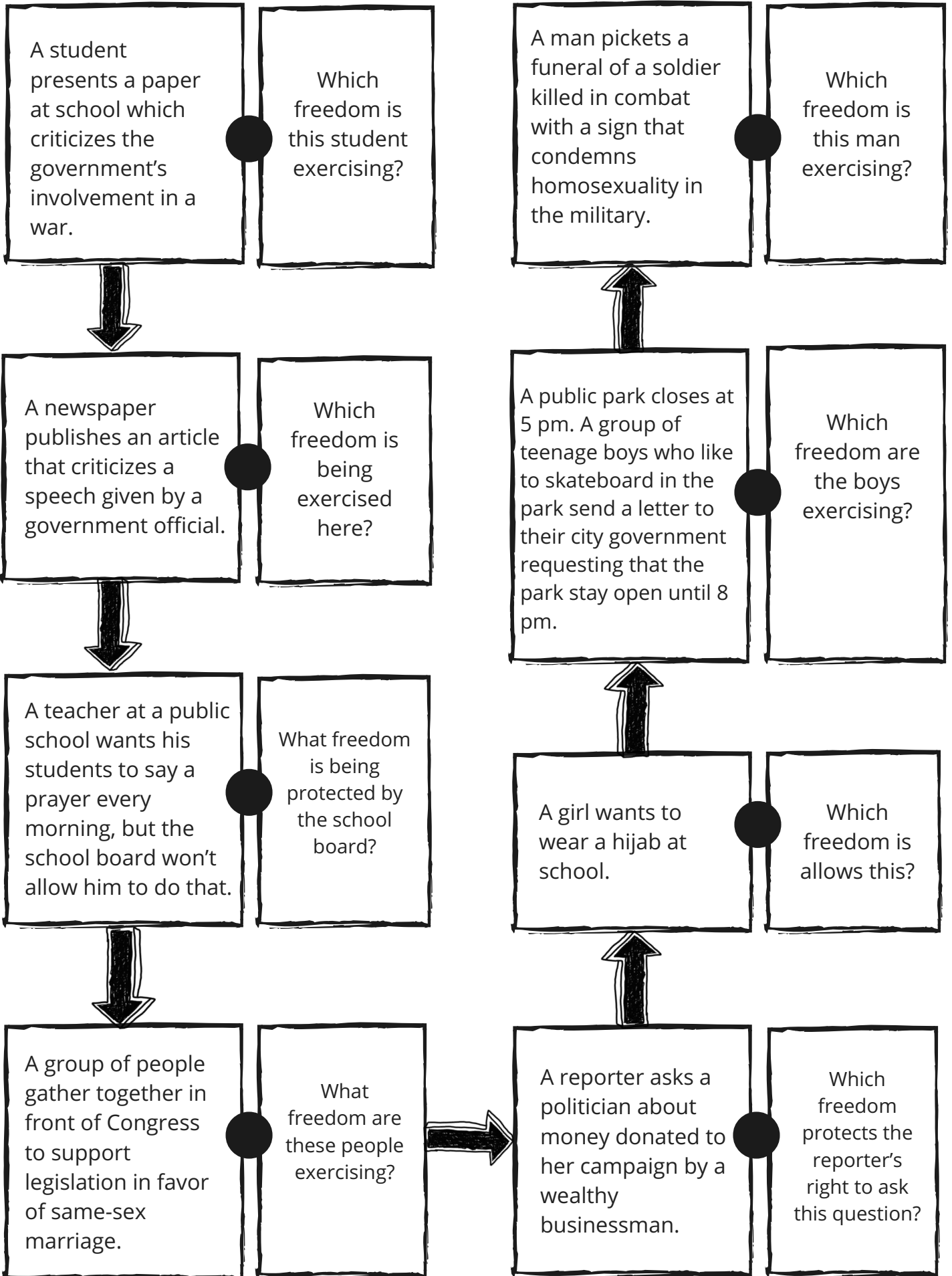
1. What are the similarities and differences between the way an individual’s freedom is protected in your country of origin (or country of first asylum) and the United States?
2. Many Americans highly value individuality and self-sufficiency. How do you think the First Amendment help preserve these values?
3. How do you think the First Amendment can protect you in the United States?
4. What could you do if you feel like your rights are not being respected?

### MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- CO providers may want to combine this lesson with guest visits from local law enforcement to build trust and understanding of systemic protection of refugee rights. They may also want to use this lesson to link refugees to local community-based organizations, or if necessary, to pro-bono legal aid.

# APPENDIX

## THE FIVE FREEDOMS GAME BOARD



# IMAGES FOR THE FIVE FREEDOMS GAME

FREEDOM OF SPEECH



FREEDOM OF SPEECH



FREEDOM OF PRESS



FREEDOM TO PEACEFULLY ASSEMBLE



FREEDOM TO PEACEFULLY ASSEMBLE



FREEDOM OF PRESS



FREEDOM OF RELIGION



FREEDOM OF RELIGION



FREEDOM TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT



FREEDOM TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT



## CORRECT ANSWERS FOR THE FIVE FREEDOMS GAME

"A student presents a paper at school which criticizes the government's involvement in a war."

*Answer: Freedom of Speech (Tinker v. Des Moines)*

"A newspaper publishes an article that criticizes a speech given by a government official."

*Answer: Freedom of Press*

"A teacher at a public school wants his students to say a prayer every morning, but the school board won't allow him to do that."

*Answer: Freedom of Religion (Engel v. Vitale)*

"A group of people gather together in front of Congress to support legislation in favor of same-sex marriage."

*Answer: Freedom to Peacefully Assemble*

"A reporter asks a politician about money donated to her campaign by a wealthy businessman."

*Answer: Freedom of Press*

"A girl wants to wear a hijab at school."

*Answer: Freedom of Religion*

A public park closes at 5 pm. A group of teenage boys who like to skateboard in the park send a letter to their city government requesting that the park stay open until 8 pm."

*Answer: Freedom to Petition the Government*

"A man pickets a funeral of a soldier killed in combat with a sign that condemns homosexuality in the military."

**(Snyder v. Phelps)**

*Answer: Freedom of Speech*

**WRITE A PETITION TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF CULTURAL ORIENTATION**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

We, the undersigned, are writing today, to request that

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We believe this is important because

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We call on you, as our representative, to

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We appreciate your consideration of this matter and look forward to supporting you with our vote in the next election.

Thank you.

Signed by:

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

See below, several excellent websites which provided the historical background and educational support for this lesson plan. In particular, the Five Freedoms Game and Write a Petition exercise were modified from the **Educational Resources** available on the National Constitution Center website.

- **National Constitution Center**
- **The First Amendment Center**
- **U.S. Courts First Amendment Activities**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This lesson plan was developed by CORE in collaboration with the CO Leadership Network, a community of practice comprised of Resettlement Support Center CO Coordinators and Resettlement Agency CO Focal Points.

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### Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

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[www.coresourceexchange.org](http://www.coresourceexchange.org)



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