

CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT

A Visitor from Outer Space¹

Introduction

This highly motivating activity requires students to think about the relative importance of the guarantees of the Bill of Rights by having them select five that they would surrender to a "visitor from outer space." It can be used as an introduction or concluding activity to the study of the Bill of Rights.

Objectives

1. To stimulate examination of values about the guarantees of the Bill of Rights.
2. To develop understanding of the interrelationships among individuals rights.

Level

Grade 5 and above

Time

One class period

Materials

Copies of Handout for all students

Procedure

1. Distribute Handout. Read through instructions and ask students to make their selections. Students can work individually or in groups of three.
2. List the ten rights on the board and poll the class on their ranking of each freedom. Ask students to give the reasoning behind their choices.

¹ Donald P. Vetter and Linda Ford, *Responsibilities and Rights in Schools*, 1978, Carroll County Public Schools, Westminster, Maryland 21157.

A Visitor from Outer Space

You are living a happy life in New Mexico. You are quietly watching television with your family when a special news bulletin comes over the TV station. You immediately see that this is not the normal type of news bulletin because there is what looks like a very strange creature on the screen -- the only thing familiar is that he is speaking English. He tells you that he and his people have gained control over all of the communications networks in the United States and that everyone had better pay attention to what he has to say. You change the channel and, just as he said, there he is on every station. He begins to speak very loudly. You gather your family around you because you are beginning to worry about what he is going to do. His speech is as follows:

My name is STHGIR. I am from the planet NOITUTITSNOC in another galaxy where the inhabitants are far superior to the beings on the planet EARTH. Just as we have gained control over the communications of the United States, we have the ability to take complete control over every one of your lives. We do not want a war between our planet and yours, but we do want to control some things so that we can live in peace and harmony with you. We have looked at some of your laws and the way your government operates and have found that they give too much freedom to the individual. Therefore, we are going to conduct a survey and try to arrive at a decision about which both you and I will be happy. As I have said, I do not want to take everything away from you. But I cannot allow you to continue to live as you have in the past. Therefore, I am giving you a list of ten of the rights that you now have according to your Constitution. You are to look over the list and decide which of the ten are most important to you. I will allow you to keep FIVE of the ten rights, the five that get the most votes from all the citizens for the United States. You are to rank the following rights in the order in which you would give them up, with 1 being the one you would give up last and 10 being the one you would give up first. After you have completed your ranking, you will receive further instructions.

- _____ Right to bear arms
- _____ Right of freedom of speech
- _____ Right to legal counsel
- _____ Right to protection from cruel and unusual punishment
- _____ Right to freedom of press
- _____ Right to a jury trial
- _____ Right to freedom of religion
- _____ Right to peacefully assemble
- _____ Right to protection from self-incrimination
- _____ Right to protection from unreasonable searches and seizures