Constitution Day Lesson Plan: 9-11 & Civil Liberties

This lesson explores the challenges the United States faced as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and examines the government's response through the lens of protection and civil liberties. Students will consider the consequences and constitutionality of this law and how they might inform the balance between security and liberty today.

Objectives:

- Understand 9/11 as a turning point in American history
- Explain civil liberties in the Bill of Rights Explain the Patriot Act, particularly as it relates to protections and liberty Determine the constitutionality of government actions
- Consider the costs and benefits of American freedoms and safety and their role in protecting both
- Determine how policies regarding freedom and safety might be adjusted to suit the current needs of the United States

The Presentation/Lesson:

This Google Slides presentation is intended to be a step-by-step ("click and go") lesson for you. All of the elements of the lesson plan from the Center for Civic Education have been included plus other added materials so you can easily implement the lesson.

1. The lesson begins by looking at George Bush's address to the nation from the Oval Office on the evening of September 11 and asking them to answer questions following review of the speech.
2. Next, students brainstorm freedoms and opportunities they enjoy living in the United States.
3. Then students will look at the definition of civil liberties, examples from the Bill or Rights, and connect them to President Bush's speech.
4. Then students will watch a video overview of the Patriot Act and discuss if the law violates the civil liberties you looked at as a group. They'll think about the pros and cons of this law.
5. Last, they will write their opinion (or discuss as a class) how we balance freedoms and protecting America.
6. Another option would be to have them write a newspaper editorial to express one or more of the following ideas:
    a. Their opinion of the Patriot Act and how it balanced liberty and safety in 2001
    b. The extent to which the Patriot Act specifically and the liberty and safety debate generally are relevant today
    c. Where they see the need for more freedoms and more protections in the United States today
    d. How people today can work to ensure a healthy constitutional democracy

Link to the Google Slides presentation/lesson: Constitution Day_9-11 & Civil Liberties_f21

The link to the original lesson plan can be found at: https://files.civiced.org/lessons/911andCivilLiberties.pdf

Application / Ways I Used This

This lesson takes about 30 minutes to complete but could take longer depending on how much discussion you want students to have. Last year I created this to be used during our advisement period (a 30 minute period we have every Tuesday) as our school's required lesson for Constitution Day. However, most told me their students were interested in the topic and they did not get to the last slides.