

Name _____

Date _____

The Bill of Rights

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. The Constitution outlines the workings of the government but not the rights of citizens. Congress wanted to get the Constitution ratified by the states, so it made good on its promise to add amendments that would outline some of the rights of American citizens. The first 10 amendments that were added to the Constitution became known as the Bill of Rights. In general, these rights were idealistic. And they were, probably more importantly, reactions to English practices in the colonies. The Founding Fathers wanted to ensure that the citizens of the United States would never be victims of tyranny again.

Based on the passage, the Bill of Rights _____.

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| A. outlines the rights of American citizens | B. helped continue English practices |
| C. was never needed after it was added to the Constitution | D. explained that citizens didn't have as many rights as members of Congress |
2. Not all speech is protected by the First Amendment. The Supreme Court and the states have decided that there are restrictions to free speech. In 1919, the Supreme Court decided that someone may not yell "fire" in a crowded theater just to be funny. The First Amendment protects freedom of the press, which means that newspapers, newscasts, magazines, and journals can report on negative information about an event or individual, as long as they are truthful. But they can't print something false about someone else—libel and slander—though laws about this differ from state to state. States also regulate obscene speech.

Based on the passage, which of the following actions is protected by the First Amendment?

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| A. A commentator swears during a live television broadcast. | B. A person threatens to harm their neighbor. |
| C. A newspaper prints a critical but truthful report about a congressperson. | D. A sports fan shouts, "Bomb!" in a crowded stadium as a joke. |

3. The writers of the Constitution believed that the people must have the ability to protect themselves and to fight back against an oppressive government. Today, some people argue that some of these original reasons behind the Second Amendment no longer apply. Others argue that the right to protect yourself is the central idea of the Second Amendment and that guns are necessary for self-protection. Either way, the United States has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world.

The Third Amendment states: "No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law." It was a direct reaction to the British Quartering Acts, which allowed British soldiers to stay in colonists' houses. The Third Amendment now seems rather out of place among the other amendments. It has never been the basis for a Supreme Court decision.

According to the passage, which of the following is true about the Third Amendment?

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| A. It has been the basis of many Supreme Court decisions. | B. It is the continuation of the ideas in the First and Second Amendments. |
| C. It was a response to a law that allowed British soldiers to stay in colonists' homes. | D. It is no longer a part of the Bill of Rights. |

4. The Fourth Amendment protects the people from the government's or law enforcement's unnecessary search and seizure. The term "search" can refer to many actions: a search of a suspect's home or computer, a DNA test, or a police officer frisking citizens. "Seizure" is when the government takes an individual's possession. Items that the government seizes can be used as evidence in a case against a suspect. "Seizure" is also used to refer to the government taking possession of an individual.

The main principle of this amendment is that any citizen may be accused of a crime by the state, so the state must ensure their legal protection. The amendment prevents the police and courts from using illegally obtained evidence. It allows for limits on police when they are investigating a crime. But there are certain types of searches that citizens aren't protected against by the Fourth Amendment. For instance, schools can search students' lockers for evidence of a crime even though a student may consider their locker "property."

According to this passage, the Fourth Amendment _____.

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| A. was created to help police easily complete investigations | B. protects American citizens from unnecessary search and seizure |
| C. protects students' property on school grounds | D. allows the police to use any evidence against a citizen, no matter how they obtain it |

5. The Fifth Amendment is the first in a series of amendments addressing the rights of citizens when facing prosecution.

The Fifth Amendment prohibits jailing individuals without charging them publicly with a crime. It forbids trying someone twice for the same crime, which is known as double jeopardy. Scholars and lawyers have also used the phrase “no person shall be...deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law” as the basis for the idea that someone is innocent until proven guilty. The phrase “innocent until proven guilty,” however, does not appear in the Constitution.

This amendment also prohibits self-incrimination. The responsibility of proving guilt falls to the prosecution, not the person who is accused of the crime. This is where the famous phrase “I plead the Fifth” comes from. It translates to: “I decline to answer this question where the answer might incriminate me.”

The Sixth Amendment protects the right to a public trial. It makes it illegal for a secret police force to arrest someone without telling them the reason. The police cannot whisk an American citizen off, throw them in an underground cell, and have a “trial” for them that they cannot attend. Many countries have held these types of trials, and some countries still engage in these practices today.

Based on the passage, what does the Fifth Amendment prevent?

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| A. Self-incrimination | B. The right to a fair trial |
| C. The right to decline any questions that might incriminate someone | D. A public trial |

6. The Seventh Amendment protects against the will of a single judge. It places more power in the hands of the people. Scholars have used this amendment as the basis of the idea that everyone is guaranteed the right to a trial by “a jury of one’s peers.” Just like “innocent until proven guilty,” the phrase “jury of one’s peers” does not appear anywhere in the Constitution.

There is great debate about how fairly juries decide cases, or how much of their verdicts are based on personal prejudices and feelings. In general, however, it is thought that putting this power in the hands of the people is better than putting it in the hands of a single judge.

The Eighth Amendment outlaws “cruel and unusual punishment” like torture, ensuring another important right for people facing prosecution. The critical debate over the death penalty often focuses on the Eighth Amendment: is killing someone a form of cruel and unusual punishment? In 1972, the Supreme Court prohibited the death penalty in the United States, then reinstated it in 1976. Today, America is one of the only industrialized nations in the world that still executes criminals.

What is the main purpose of the second paragraph of this passage?

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| A. It defines the phrase “jury of one’s peers.” | B. It argues that a single judge should decide cases. |
| C. It defines several legal terms used in the Seventh Amendment. | D. It outlines the debate over how fair a “jury of one’s peers” is. |

7. The Ninth Amendment states: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." This was an important amendment for people who wanted to make it clear that humans have more rights than just those listed in the amendments. For example, the Constitution does not explicitly guarantee the right to eat. But that doesn't mean that US citizens don't have that right.

The Tenth Amendment was included to reassure the advocates of states' rights. This amendment confirms that states can create their own laws, as long as those laws don't violate the Constitution.

Based on the passage, the Ninth Amendment explains that _____.

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| A. the rights of the people are protected whether or not these rights are listed in the Bill of Rights | B. people only have the rights that are explicitly listed in the Bill of Rights |
| C. certain rights are not protected even though they are mentioned in the Bill of Rights | D. states cannot create their own laws |