



#8971

FOR THE GREATER GOOD

Grade Levels: 8-13+
30 minutes

VIDEO RESOURCES SOFTWARE 1999

DESCRIPTION

A proposed highway project threatens homes and businesses in a Latino section of the city and polarizes groups. One Latino councilman must weigh the past against the future and personal desire against the greater good. After the drama, a short documentary reviews the ratification of the constitution and the bill of rights, those amendments that guard individual rights against governmental abuse. The drama offers a platform for discussion.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To study the Bill of Rights.
2. To discover the purpose for the Bill of Rights.
3. To learn what can happen when individual rights conflict with the common good.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For the Greater Good is one of 15 thirty-minute episodes found in the *On Common Ground* series. *On Common Ground* is a different and exciting way to learn about U.S. history and government. Each episode includes an action-filled story and a short documentary segment. The stories show the "common ground"—the common values that people in the United States share.

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. arbitrary | 8. district |
| 2. Bill of Rights | 9. eminent domain |
| 3. bill of attainder | 10. ex post facto laws |
| 4. campaign | 11. landslide |
| 5. common good | 12. ratify |
| 6. compromise | 13. resolution |
| 7. constituents | 14. writ of habeas |
| corpus | |



BEFORE SHOWING

1. Consider the following during viewing:
 - a. What basic rights do U.S. citizens hold?
 - b. What is meant by personal rights and how do these rights compare to political and economic rights?
 - c. What recourse is there when personal rights conflict with each other or the common good?
2. Discuss the concept of eminent domain and the constraints placed by the Constitution on the seizure of private property.
3. Conduct a brainstorming activity asking students to specify the personal, political and economic rights guaranteed by the Constitution and its amendments. Prioritize the rights.
 - a. Which of these rights is considered an absolute right? Under what circumstances, if any, could this right be legally suspended or abridged?
 - b. Discuss some specific examples of cases where rights are in conflict.
 - 1) How do we balance the rights of an individual to own property and pursue their version of happiness when the use of the property pollutes the environment and harms the rights of society in terms of clean air and the preservation of natural habitats?
 - 2) How do we balance an individual's freedom to smoke in public places and still protect the health of the people in the surrounding areas?
4. Think about the series title, *On Common Ground*, and the video title, *For the Greater Good*. What feelings and ideas do the titles provoke? Share these with the class.
5. Discuss the vocabulary words utilized in the video.



AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss examples of conflict between individual good and common good.
2. Review and discuss the history of the Constitution.
 - a. Why did supporters of the Constitution want a strong national government?
 - b. What were opponents of the Constitution afraid of?
 - c. Why did supporters of the Constitution agree to add a bill of rights?
 - d. What was the purpose of the Bill of Rights?
 - e. What process was followed to approve the U.S. Bill of Rights?
3. Discuss the following regarding the Bill of Rights:
 - a. Why are individual rights important in a democracy?
 - b. Which rights are most important to you? Why?
 - c. Which rights do you hear about the most?
 - d. Are there any unnecessary rights listed?

Applications and Activities

1. Have students interview three people and find out their opinions of the Bill of Rights using the questions in AFTER SHOWING Discussion Item #3. Share findings with the class.
2. Construct a bulletin board containing newspaper articles about a situation in which individual rights conflict with the common good.
3. As a class, discuss the importance of pressure groups in determining the outcome of votes involving issues being debated by representatives of city, state or national governments. Should an elected official's vote on an issue be determined by the constituents; by a majority of all people within the city, state or nation or, should it be a matter of personal conscience? Explain.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Bill of Rights #3438



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES**

<http://majoritywhip.house.gov/constitution/default.asp>

Government site dedicated to teach high school students about the constitution. Includes the text of the Constitution, Amendments, a quiz and more.

- **NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION**

<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/constitution/conmain.html>

Thorough website includes information on the founding fathers, transcription of the Constitution, biographies of the delegates who signed the Constitution, a Q & A section and more.

- **BEN'S GUIDE TO U.S. GOVERNMENT: GRADES 9-12**

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12/index.html>

Government site includes topics such as historical documents, how laws are made, national versus state government, branches of government and more.