Title: Readers’ Theatre and the Bill of Rights
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NOTE: This lesson can be a framework for how to address factual information in a dramatic form for grade levels 1-5+.

Grade Level: 4-5

Elements of Drama Addressed: Drama skills: Cooperation, Communication, Concentration Drama tools: Mind/Imagination, Voice

Drama Standards Addressed:
Standard 1: Learn and develop the essential skills and meet technical demands unique to dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts.
K-5 Benchmark 1A: Use body and voice to portray character.
Standard 2: Use dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts to express ideas.
K-5 Benchmark 2A: Develop classroom dramatizations that express various moods or emotions (e.g., happy/sad, funny, scary, mysterious, etc.).
Standard 8: Contribute to communities by sharing expertise in dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts and by participating in the activities of cultural institutions.
K-5 Benchmark 8B: Assume roles for an audience that demonstrate characterization and tell a story.

Social Studies Standards Addressed:
Strand: Civics and Government
Content Standard III: Students understand the ideals, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship and understand the content and history of the founding documents of the United States with particular emphasis on the United States and New Mexico constitutions and how governments function at local, state, tribal, and national levels.
K-4 Benchmark III-A: Know the fundamental purposes, concepts, structures, and functions of local, state, tribal, and national governments.
5-8 Benchmark 3-A: demonstrate understanding of the structure, functions and powers of government (local, state, tribal and national).
5-8 Benchmark 3-C: compare political philosophies and concepts of government that became the foundation for the American revolution and the United States government.
5-8 Benchmark 3-D: explain how individuals have rights and responsibilities as members of social groups, families, schools, communities, states, tribes and countries.

Essential Question: Why do we have rules and laws? How do rules and laws affect people?

Lesson Objectives:
- Students will review the structure of the United States Bill of Rights.
- Students will utilize script reading to portray characters.
- Students will read with fluency.

Materials:
- Bill of Rights scripts—one per student
- Objects for sound effects—bells, buzzers etc.
- Chairs for 25 students
Lesson Teaching Process/Procedure:

- Play for students The Preamble from Schoolhouse Rocks. Discuss what each of the phrases means:

  Establish justice, Ensure domestic tranquility, Provide for the common defense, Promote the general welfare, Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

- Discuss what the US Constitution is, focusing on the Bill of Rights (amendments).

- Introduce the script—NOTE: If this is the first experience for students reading a script, point out the features of the indication of the reader in all caps, stage directions—in parentheses and italics—how to read the lines.

- With the class seated in a circle, read through the script, the next reader taking the next line. Discuss any challenges students may have in understanding or in mechanics.

- Assign roles and divide students into their scenes. Have them read through the scenes at least twice—NOTE: Even though readers’ theatre is read it is not a cold read. The reading is rehearsed.

- Perform the readers’ theatre. Students should be seated in numerical order, 1-25 stage right to stage left.

Assessment: Teacher observation

Modification: Younger students—Work in small, guided reading groups. Choose or write a script appropriate for them. Scripts about family, community, mathematic operations, cycles in science can be found on line or can easily be written. Or have older study buddies read in unison with younger students as they perform.

Additional Resources or Materials Related to This Lesson:

www.aaronshep.com/rt/index.html  A good resource for free Readers’ Theatre scripts—lots of folktales!


www.storycart.com/scripts_free.php  Free Readers’ Theatre scripts for different grade levels.