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U.S. History & Government ~ Miss Cummings Bill of Rights

**The Bill of Rights**

The first 10 amendments to the [Constitution](http://billofrightsinstitute.org/founding-documents/constitution) make up the Bill of Rights. Written by [James Madison](http://billofrightsinstitute.org/educate/educator-resources/founders/james-madison/) in response to calls for greater constitutional protection for individual liberties, the Bill of Rights lists specific prohibitions on governmental power.

One of the many points of contention between Federalists and Anti-Federalists was the Constitution’s lack of a bill of rights that would place specific limits on government power. Federalists argued that the Constitution did not need a bill of rights, because the people and the states kept any powers not given to the federal government. Anti-Federalists held that a bill of rights was necessary to safeguard individual liberty.

The Bill of Rights is a list of limits on government power. For example, what the Founders saw as the natural right of individuals to speak and worship freely was protected by the First Amendment’s prohibitions on Congress from making laws establishing a religion or abridging freedom of speech. For another example, the natural right to be free from unreasonable government intrusion in one’s home was safeguarded by the Fourth Amendment’s warrant requirements.

\*Other precursors to the Bill of Rights include English documents such as the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, the English Bill of Rights, and the Massachusetts Body of Liberties.

**Bill of Rights Scenarios**

**Directions**: Read each scenario. Decide if it violates any of the Bill of Rights. If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

**Scenario 1:**

*Sara, and 18 tear old college student, is arrested for stealing a classmate’s term paper and selling it on the internet. When she appears before the judge, she asks for a lawyer to help defend her. The judge tells her that if she is smart enough to be in college, she is smart enough to defend herself. Besides, she is not being charged with a felony, so the stakes are not very high.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 2:**

*A neighbor is suing the Joneses because a tree in the Joneses’ yard fell on their roof during a hurricane. The neighbors want the Jones family to pay $850 to have their roof repaired. Mr. Jones requests that a jury be present to hear this case. The judge says it is not necessary since the amount of the repairs is is so small. The Jones family lives in Washington D.C.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 3:**

*Carolyn is arrested for shoplifting a candy bar from a neighborhood convenience store. At trial, she is found guilty. The judge decides that the appropriate punishment is to cut off Carolyn’s hands so that she will not be able to shoplift again.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 4:**

*Mr. Reynolds, an avid hunter, opens the door of his home one day to find agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms outside. They inform him that certain provisions of a new federal law allow them to confiscate his rifles so that he may not engage in terrorist activities or plot against the United States government. They have no evidence that he is connected to any such activities.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 5:**

*Your science teacher asks the class to exchange papers to correct last night’s homework. Your friend, Jamie, refuses to do so and is sent to the principal.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 6:**

*Jesse, a 14 year-old student, decides to protest the war in Iraq. He wears a T-shirt to school and the caption “Weapon of Massive Information”. His principal lulls Jesse aside and asks him not to wear the shirt again because it is disruptive to the learning environment. Jesse wear it the next week and is suspended from school for 3 days.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 7:**

*Sixteen-year old Ryan is the captain of the football team. Before the Friday night game, he and his teammates are required to submit to a drug test. Ryan’s test shows traces of marijuana. He is not allowed to participate in the game and he is suspended from school.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 8:**

*A known drug dealer is arrested for suspected connections to an inner city murder. The police do not inform him of his rights and immediately begin to interrogate him. They continue until he admits he knows the victim of the crime and was in the neighborhood where the murder took place.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 9:**

*Your parents are very religious people, but you are not. Today, your parents are going to a service at their place of worship and they expect you to come along. You refuse. They make you come anyway and they ground you for the following month.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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**Scenario 10:**

*Because of the budget deficit, the United States government is looking for ways to cut costs. They have announced a plan during peacetime to house unmarried soldiers in the homes of American citizens who do not have children.*

Does this violate the Bill of Rights? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If it does, then identify which part of the amendment(s) the scenario violates.

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