



## Teaching Guide

### SEGMENT 4, WEBISODE 10

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



#### Segment Overview



#### Let's Discuss

The First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of the press, plays an essential role in checking the excesses of society. So it was in the late nineteenth century, when the corruption of industry and the greed of unregulated capitalism created fabulous fortunes for the few. While the wealthy became wealthier, many others lived and worked in hopeless poverty and squalor. These circumstances created political unrest and jarred America's democratic ideals.

Into this void stepped a talented, energetic group of risk-taking journalists who were committed to exposing America's shameful business and political secrets. The muckrakers, so named by Teddy Roosevelt because of their eagerness to rake up muck or dirt, took on the giant of unbridled laissez-faire capitalism in a David versus Goliath struggle — and won.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Write on the chalkboard, chart paper, or transparency.

##### The Four Branches of Government

- 1) The Judicial
- 2) The Legislative
- 3) The Executive

2. Tell the students that the Constitution provides for the first three branches of government. There is an unofficial fourth branch of government that acts as a watchdog on the three official branches. Ask them to speculate what the fourth unofficial branch might be.
3. To assist students in their speculation, display the following quotation on the chalkboard, chart paper or transparency

*The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without the government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.*

~~ Thomas Jefferson

4. Help students to realize that the fourth unofficial branch of government is the free press. Newspapers keep the citizens informed about the actions of the other branches of government.



## Teacher Directions

**Note to the Teacher:** Have available in the classroom for students' use a collection of recent newspapers and news magazines. Students will also need scissors, paste, highlighters, and one piece of poster board per team.

1. Direct students' attention to the words of the First Amendment on a bulletin board (written as a heading).

*Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.*

2. Tell students that this Constitutional protection is one of the most important cornerstones of our freedom. Students consider why this is true by thinking about what would happen if the government controlled what people could say and what the newspapers could print. Some ideas may include the following.
  - People would be afraid to talk or write about things with which they disagree.
  - People would be afraid to try to make changes for the better.
  - Those in power could arrest and punish anyone who disagrees with them.
  - The government could control what people know.
  - The government could control what people say and do.
3. Tell students that newspaper writers who investigate situations that are unfair, unsafe, and dishonest are called investigative reporters. In the early twentieth century they were called "muckrakers." Make sure students understand that muck means filth or dirt.
4. Distribute one sheet of poster board to each team, scissors and paste, highlighters, and a selection of newspapers and news magazines. Direct students to skim through the printed material for articles that are examples of investigative reporting.
5. Students highlight the lines in the articles that state the topic and what problem the reporter is investigating.
6. Students cut out and paste their articles on their team's poster board and display them on the bulletin board with the First Amendment heading.
7. Teams share the topics and problems of one or two of their articles with the class.



What do you  
Think?

### Teacher Directions

1. Display the following quotation on the chalkboard, chart paper or transparency (If the students read this quotation in the Let's Discuss activity, recall their attention to it.)

*The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without the government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.*

~~ Thomas Jefferson

2. Ask the students the following questions.
  - Why did Thomas Jefferson write that if he had to choose, he would rather have newspapers without a government than a government without newspapers?
  - Which amendment guarantees freedom of the press? (First Amendment)
  - Why did Jefferson believe newspapers were so important?

### Teacher Directions

1. Display the following quotation on the chalkboard, chart paper, or transparency. Define the term censor.

*The people are the only censors of their government.*

~~ Thomas Jefferson

2. Ask the students the following questions.
  - What do the people need in order to be censors of their government?
  - Why does the government need censors?
  - What can provide this?
  - How can a free press contribute to good government?
  - How does a free press keep our country moving toward freedom?



Moving Toward  
Freedom



Connections

### Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

**Local History** — Are there modern muckrakers in your community? Students research local social activists and their causes.

**Writing/Research** — Distribute samples of daily newspapers to each team or use the articles from the History Sleuth activity. Students briefly skim the headlines and first paragraph or two of several articles. Students use the information they have learned to become muckrakers themselves. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Modern Muckraking*. Students identify an issue or problem in their school or neighborhood and write a short investigative article.

**Note to the Teacher:** You may want to suggest appropriate topics, such as cafeteria food, lack of field trips, the school's snow closing policy, etc. and establish some ground rules for fair reporting.

# Modern Muckraking



My issue:

Just the Facts:

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?