



storytellers

## VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam

A VH1 Special  
VH1/Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School Social Studies Classes

Sing Free or Die

Lesson 3 of 3

Note to teachers: Please view this videotape for appropriateness for your classes. This lesson can be adapted for various age groups. As students get older they may reach for “forbidden” topics that have been regulated in society (racism, anti-semitism, etc.). The point of this lesson is to discuss the issue of free speech and determine if there is any speech so offensive that the society must forbid it. Discretion on the part of the teacher is strongly recommended.

### Objectives

1. Students will understand the concept of freedom of speech as it applies to music
2. Students will compare the behavior of key protest songs/musicians to illustrate examples of free speech.
3. Students will research and debate the value of free speech versus the need for the society and/or government to maintain order.

### Materials

- \* Videotape of VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam
- \* Television and VCR
- \* Print out of the 1st Amendment to the United States Constitution: **Amendment I** - *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*

## Prior Knowledge:

- \* Students should have a basic working knowledge of American government and the United States constitution, especially as it applies to the judiciary.

## Procedures

1. Have students view and listen to the video VH1 Storytellers: Pearl Jam
2. Students should discuss the video and compare ideas on free speech. Suggested discussion questions below:

### Discussion Questions:

- \* Eddie Vedder makes clear references in the video which indicate he is both against the war in Iraq and the current President of the United States. Do you think he should be allowed to voice those opinions on stage?
- \* What effect does being “anti-war” or “anti-government” seem to have on various groups (e.g. Pearl Jam, the Dixie Chicks, the Beatles?) Are there examples where these free speech events have been negatively received by the public?
- \* How important is it that the government regulate speech to protect order?
- \* In your past studies, give examples where free speech has led to policy changes in America (civil rights movements in the 1960’s, anti-war movement in the 1970’s, etc.)
- \* Do you believe speech should be regulated at all?
- \* Is there a difference between a speech and a song? Give examples for your answer.

Students should then begin to research in preparation for the classroom debate on the topic, “Is all speech, including music, protected in America, or are there some ideas that should not be allowed?”

Students may find the information on their own (age appropriate), or begin by using some of these selected sites:

1. **Columbia University Debate** on Free Speech with Links. This is a college level site appropriate to upper level high school as well. Some excellent links for teachers related to legislation and judicial actions.
2. **Free Speech @ Answers.com** - Excellent first link for 7th grade and above. Definitions, links to Wikipedia articles, etc.
3. **First Amendment.org** is an entire website dedicated to the First Amendment to the Constitution including an excellent article outlining the issues surrounding free speech and the first amendment here.
4. **Free Speech in Europe** - a good discussion at the Christian Science Monitor site on the issues surrounding the publication of cartoons featuring the prophet Muhammed.
5. **Google Directory** - another good starting point with various links to freedom of speech sites.
6. **Banned Music** - a decade by decade look at music that has been banned in America. Much of this site is anecdotal, but students will find it very interesting.
7. **FreeMuse** - selected speeches on music censorship. This sophisticated site would only be appropriate for upper high school students.
8. **Censorship of Music** - Wikipedia is a good starting point for any age student when what you want is an explanation of the basics.

Classroom Debate Ideas - Students can either debate as individuals (if time allows) or in small groups. For tips on how to manage classroom debates, the following links are provided for first time debaters!

- \* [Education World](#) - first time users of a classroom debate lesson will find this site very helpful.
- \* [WebEnglishTeacher](#) has an excellent site with tips for how to do debates in your classroom including a good rubric for classroom debate grading which is here.
- \* [Debates in the Middle School](#) - some age specific guidelines for younger debaters.

## **National Standards for History/Social Studies**

### **National Center for History in the Schools**

1. Era 9 Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)
  1. Standard 3: Domestic policies after World War II
  2. Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties
2. Era 10 Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)
  1. Standard 1: Recent developments in foreign and domestic politics
  2. Standard 2: Economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States
    1. (2D) Analyze how social change and renewed ethnic diversity has affected artistic expression and popular culture. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]



*This lesson plan was created by Tim Dugan, 2005 Cable in the Classroom National Teacher Advisor and Social Studies teacher at Princeton High School, Cincinnati, OH.*