

The Spanish, the American & the British Constitutions

- 1) Warm-up
 - a. Introduce the topic. Elicit information about the Spanish Constitution
 - b. Ask students if they know anything about the English and the American constitutions.
- 2) Questionnaire about the blog post: guess the answers to these questions in pairs before reading the texts and video in the blog:
 - a. What is the Magna Carta?
 - b. Write 4 legal rights that are included in the “Bill of Rights” (1689)?
 - c. When did England and Scotland become the United Kingdom (Union of Crowns)?
 - d. What is “devolution”?
 - e. Which are the “three powers” that the American Constitution separates?
- 3) Read the body of the blog post and check your guesses to the questions in (2).
- 4) Read the article “*Devolution: What is it and how does it work across the UK?*”, and name 5 devolved powers of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland assemblies.
- 5) Watch the TED-Ed video “*U.S. Bill of Rights*” and list 5 of the rights and freedoms granted by the US Bill of Rights. Discuss your answers in pairs and watch the video twice.
- 6) Follow-up discussion:
 - a. Are you happy with the Spanish constitution?
 - b. Can you see any similarities between the Spanish, American and UK constitution? Are there any differences?
 - c. Is there any article you would amend in the Spanish constitution or not? If so, choose only one or two articles and give some reasons and arguments to support your views. If you wouldn’t change the constitution, say why and support your opinion with arguments.
 - d. Are there any current threats to the freedoms and rights listed in the UK or US Bills of Rights?
 - e. Do you vote in general, autonomous or local elections?
 - f. Which level of government, central, autonomous or local, affects your daily life more directly?
 - g. Do you think too much money is spent on election campaigns?
 - h. Are politics becoming too polarized in Spain or not? And in the USA, the UK or in other democracies around the world?

Key:

- 1) Warm-up:
 - Students’ own answers, they may talk about when is Constitution Day is marked in Spain; the special reports that the media produce that day; the opening of the “Congreso de los Diputados” to ordinary citizens etc.;

if there are older students, they can remember the constitutional referendum in 1978 or talk briefly about the Transition period to democracy in Spain.

- They might know that the UK has a non-written constitution, or that the USA is a federal republic, but do not expect many answers at this stage.

2) Questionnaire about the blog post:

- The first “constitution” of England that limited the powers of the monarch, (King John, in 1215).
- Freedom of speech; the right of petition; the right to suffer no cruel or unusual punishments; legal immunity for members of Parliament (for actions of deeds made in the course of their legislative duties) etc.
- In 1707.
- The passing of some power to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland assemblies.
- The executive (Government), the legislative (Congress) and the judiciary (courts of justice, of course, the Spanish and the non-written UK constitution also separate these three powers.

4) Article about devolution:

- Scotland:
 - Agriculture, forestry, and fishing; education; environment; health; housing; justice, policing and courts; local government; some transport; taxes (including income tax, stamp duty and air passenger duty); some welfare powers.
- Wales
 - Agriculture, forestry, and fishing; education; environment; health and social care; housing; local government; highways and transport; some control over income tax, stamp duty and landfill tax; Welsh language.
- Northern Ireland
 - Agriculture; education; environment and planning; health and social services; local government; justice, policing and prisons; control over air passenger duty, transport; culture, language and sport.

5) TED-Ed video about the US Bill of Rights

- U.S. Bill of Rights is made up of 10 amendments which grant the following rights and freedoms: the freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly and petition (1st Amendment); the right to bear arms (2nd Amendment); the quartering amendment (3rd Amendment); the right to search and seizure, which upholds the right of privacy (4th Amendment); the right of a due process (5th Amendment); the fair trial and jury rights, which include the right to have a lawyer (6th and 7th Amendments); the prohibition of cruel punishment (8th Amendment), and finally, the 9th and 10th Amendments mention all the other rights

that are not listed in the constitution, but are still in the hands of the people and the states.