

Student Handout 1

Flag Burning: Crime or Free Speech?

Read each quote carefully and circle the number that comes closest to your degree of agreement.

	strongly disagree	disagree	mildly agree	agree	strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. And what the flag does, it embodies everything that freedom embodies.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The brave men and women who are buried there [at Arlington National Cemetery] did not die for the flag, though they loved it; they died for the freedom that that flag represents.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It [the flag] was a symbol. It represented everything we were there [in Vietnam] to fight for.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Actually what the American flag is is a symbol of American empire. It doesn't stop at the American border. It flies over all the ugly things that they [Americans] do throughout the world. It was the flag painted on the jets that dropped napalm on the Vietnamese people; it was painted on the sides of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; it's the flag that the Seventh Cavalry carried when they massacred the Native Americans at Wounded Knee.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I think generally one of the inspiring things about youth is that they tend to look at the world the way it should be rather than the way it is.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Perhaps we should just reestablish the pride and patriotism that's needed in young people today to make this country great. We should put the "Pledge of Allegiance" back in schools. We should not be afraid to talk about [our] faith in schools. Those are the things that make this country great, and I think the flag embodies all those things.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Burning the flag ain't no crime; this is a revolutionary celebration.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Free speech is important, not for the words that we like, but rather for the words that we hate.	1	2	3	4	5

9. The flag is important because it is the symbol of the United States. . . . The act of burning the flag is likely to cause a breach of the peace. . . . Flag burning is an invitation to violence. . . . The states should be able to say "don't destroy the flag."	1	2	3	4	5
10. The fact is when you destroy one flag you're not destroying the flag. The flag stands strong as a symbol, and it's only the people that decide that the flag has been desecrated or not. And that's what the First Amendment really stands for; to cause us to debate the issue and to arrive at our own conclusions.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There is no time that you should burn the flag. I think the First Amendment does not allow you to burn the flag. I think the flag is the one thing that embodies all that is great about America, and it's the one thing that should not be desecrated in that manner.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The defendant [in the flag-burning case] . . . didn't intend to convey a political idea; it was the opposite of that. . . . It was no different than a child pounding . . . angered that his mother would not permit him to stay out past 10:30. That makes no contribution to the free speech goals of the First Amendment.	1	2	3	4	5
13. To protect the flag, Congress and the states should have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Let's think here. Do we really want to get into a pattern of amending the Constitution every time we think the Supreme Court has erred?	1	2	3	4	5
15. But the 5 to 4 decision of the Supreme Court leaves me with no alternative but to propose an amendment to the Constitution [to prohibit flag burning].	1	2	3	4	5
16. It's [the flag-burning amendment] an attempt to divide America, to divide fathers against sons, to divide families again. . . .	1	2	3	4	5
17. The question [of passing a flag-burning amendment] before us is whether or not, after 200 years in which the American Bill of Rights, the most concise, the most eloquent effective statement of individual liberty in all of human history, is to be changed for the first time.	1	2	3	4	5