

## The Second Amendment: Let's Get "Armed" for Discussion

**WebQuest Description:** A WebQuest designed to explore issues related to the Second Amendment

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum:** Social Studies

**Keywords:**

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### Introduction

The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution continues to be the source of controversy in American society. Advocates of gun control believe that restrictions against the ownership of certain firearms are necessary to reduce gun related crime, while opponents argue that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual's right to possess a wide array of arms. In this WebQuest, we will explore the language and historical background of the Second Amendment, gun control legislation over the years, and gun ownership and gun violence statistics from around the world. Once we are "armed" with this information, we will have a class discussion of the arguments for and against gun control.

### Tasks

In this WebQuest, we will be investigating several aspects of the Second Amendment. You will be asked several questions, for which the answers will be available through the provided links. Make detailed notes so that you will be prepared for the culminating class discussion during which we will explore and debate the issues. Also, retain your notes as I will be collecting and grading them after our class discussion.

### Process

Although the language of the Second Amendment is brief, controversy continues to exist concerning its precise meaning and the founders' intent. The amendment reads, in its entirety, as follows:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

What do these words mean? Let's explore.

First, what is a "Militia"? Click here.

Next, what constitutes "Arms"? Click here.

And how about "infringed"? Click here.

Is the term "Arms" limited to guns or firearms?

Do you think "infringed" relates to any interference or regulation?

Does the need for a "Militia" include the right to own firearms for self defense generally?

Let's take a look at what types of firearms were available at the time the Second amendment was proposed and adopted. Click here.

Do you think that the founders meant to limit Second Amendment rights to these arms?

Or did they anticipate that more advanced weapons would be developed, such as these? Click here.  
<http://itishooting.com/>

Now let's take a look at the background and historical context of the amendment. Click here.

Is the right to bear arms a purely American tradition?

Do you think that the founders anticipated maintaining standing armies during times of peace?

Ownership of firearms has not gone without some regulation over the years. Take a look at these sites:

-gun control timeline 1791-1999

-federal assault weapons ban

-owning a machine gun

What types of circumstances have prompted gun control legislation?

Are any citizens forbidden to own any firearms?

Surprisingly, there have been very few Supreme Court cases interpreting the Second Amendment. There have, however, been two recent cases involving laws in Washington D.C. and Chicago, Illinois banning ownership of hand guns. Let's take a look.

- Washington D.C. case summary
- Chicago case summary

Does the Court appear to be unified or divided on the issue?  
 What were the arguments in favor of the handgun bans?  
 What were the arguments against the bans?

Finally, let's take a look at some statistics from around the world related to gun ownership and gun violence. Navigate within this site to gather the data described below for the United States, Canada, England and Wales, Japan, and Australia. Navigate under "Facts by Country" by clicking on the country to be reviewed. When at the relevant country, click on "Gun Numbers" and then "Civilian Guns". Record data for the Rate of civilian firearm possession per 100 people and the corresponding World Ranking for that category. Then click on "Gun Death and Injury" and record the Rate of Gun Homicide per 100,000 citizens.

Click here for site.

What did you find interesting about these statistics?  
 Did anything surprise you?  
 Do you think that there is a relationship between firearm possession and gun homicides?

Your Webquest is now complete. I hope that you found it to be enlightening and thought provoking. Please retain your notes, as I will be collecting and grading them after our class discussion.

## Evaluation

The rubric below will be used to evaluate your Webquest notes in combination with your contributions during the class discussion. A total of 16 points are available.

Category and Score	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Score
Demonstrates understanding of Second Amendment language	unable to articulate meaning of any words used in Second Amendment-- 0 points	able to articulate one of the listed Second Amendment words-- 1 point	able to articulate two of the listed Second Amendment words-- 2 points	able to articulate all of the listed Second Amendment words-- 3 points	
Historical background of Second Amendment	demonstrates no understanding of purposes for, background of, or circumstances leading to Second Amendment-- 0 points	demonstrates some understanding of purposes for, background of, and circumstances leading to Second Amendment-- 1 point	demonstrates good understanding of purposes for, background of, and circumstances leading to Second Amendment-- 2 points	demonstrates superior understanding of purposes for, background of, and circumstances leading to Second Amendment-- 3 points	
Existing firearms regulation	demonstrates no understanding of any existing regulations-- 0 points	demonstrates some understanding of existing regulations-- 1 point	demonstrates good understanding of existing regulations-- 2 points	demonstrates superior understanding of existing regulations-- 3 points	
Arguments for and against gun control	demonstrates no understanding of any arguments in favor of or against gun control-- 0 points	demonstrates some understanding of arguments in favor of and against gun control-- 1 point	demonstrates good understanding of arguments in favor of and against gun control-- 2 points	demonstrates superior understanding of arguments in favor of and against gun control-- 3 points	
				Total Score	

## Conclusion

I hope that everyone found this WebQuest to be interesting and provocative. As with many provisions of the Constitution and its Amendments, there are no clear and easy answers when questions arise. Is the Constitution a "living" document, specifically designed to change with the times, or did the founders envision that it would apply strictly and rigidly under all circumstances. Debate over this principle continues among constitutional scholars, and now you are "armed" to join the debate as it relates to the Second Amendment.

## Teacher Page

This WebQuest was a project for an Education Technology course. Feel free to use at your own risk.

**Standards**

**Credits**

**Other**