

## Unit 5, Lesson 19: Zenger's Zinger and Freedom of the Press

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### Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the trial of John Peter Zenger in New York (1735) and how it helped lead to our right to freedom of the press in the United States. Students will practice historical thinking skills such as identifying causes and effects, change over time, and points of view.

### Delaware Standard(s)

- **History Standard 1, 4-5 [Chronology]:** Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- **History Standard 2b, 4-5 [Analysis]:** Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them; and analyze change over time.
- **History Standard 3, 4-5 [Interpretation]:** Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.

**Big Ideas:** freedom of the press, point of view

### Essential Questions

- Why do we have freedom of the press in the United States?

### Enduring Understandings

- Students will understand that the trial of Peter Zenger is a turning point in the history of freedom of the press in United States history.

### Resource

- [Resource 1 - The Daily Dirt Headlines](#)
- [Resource 2 - the Story of John Peter Zenger](#)
- [Resource 3 - Checks for Understanding](#)

### Procedures

1. **Warm-Up:** Present a copy of [Resource 1 - The Daily Dirt Headlines](#) to students. Tell them that this is a copy of a newspaper published today. Ask them to read the paper and work with a partner or in small groups to address the following questions:
  - a. Is the front page story in this newspaper inappropriate or disrespectful? Explain.
  - b. Why might some people be offended by what is written in this newspaper?
  - c. Should people be allowed to write stories like this? Why or why not?
  - d. Should the people who published the paper face consequences for writing the story? If so, what might those consequences be?
  - e. What might be the governor's point of view if asked questions 3 and 4 above?
  - f. What might be the newspaper staff's point of view if asked questions 3 and 4 above?

2. **Introduce the Lesson:** Tell students that they are going to learn about a person and an event that actually occurred in American history and that is very similar to what they did in today's warm-up.
3. **Reading:** distribute copies of [Resource 2 - the Story of John Peter Zenger](#). Read the story aloud modeling reading skills as students follow along. Pause at the end of each section to check for comprehension by asking the questions at the paragraphs' header.
4. **Video Option:** YouTube offers a 10 minute video entitled "*Unexpected Verdict: The Trial of John Peter Zenger*" that goes into details about the trial of Peter Zenger that you might want to preview and show students. Access the video [here](#).
5. **Checks for Understanding:** distribute copies of [Resource 3 - Checks for Understanding](#) and have students complete the checks for understanding with copies of Resource 2 available for re-reading and review.
6. **Debrief:** you are encouraged to highlight the importance of freedom of the press in our country. By allowing journalists to print the truth without fear of punishment, the news media in our country provides citizens with an incredibly valuable check on the power held by government officials.