**CLOSE READING EXAMPLES FOR SOCIAL STUDIES[[1]](#footnote-1)**

To become college and career ready, students must be able to read sufficiently complex texts on their own and gather evidence, knowledge, and insight from these texts.  These close reading examples model how teachers can support their students as they master the kind of careful reading the Common Core State Standards require. These examples are meant to be used in all types of classrooms with **ALL STUDENTS**.

Each of these exemplars features a complex and rich reading along with a series of text-dependent questions meant to foster deep understanding and assist students and teachers in remaining tightly connected to the text. Each focuses on the following: a short reading of highly engaging content in which students are asked to reread passages and respond to a series of [text dependent questions](http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/text-dependent-questions); vocabulary and syntax tasks which linger over noteworthy or challenging words and phrases; discussion tasks in which students are prompted to use text evidence and refine their thinking; and writing tasks that assess student understanding of the text.

The close reading method modeled in these examples is a specific method with a designed purpose. The composition of these examples coincided with deliberate and regular practice of this method over a wide range of classrooms during 2012-2013. In that time, the composition group learned many importantlessons. Without exception, teachers noted that ample time provided for students to talk with their peers about the text and the accompanying questions is paramount to the effective nature of these lessons. Because these examples include highly complex text for ALL students to access, heterogeneous grouping of students provided a safe arena for students to challenge themselves and collaboratively interrogate the text. Most importantly, teachers found that completing the method according to the steps outlined below ensured success for students of all reading abilities. On several occasions, teachers felt rushed and neglected some of the steps or assigned portions as individual work or homework. In all of these cases, student learning suffered. Based on this professional learning, these examples were designed, vetted, and modified to engage the whole class and small groups in learning to better navigate rich and complex text. The readings are all meant to be lesson features of larger units with the purpose of building a coherent body of knowledge.

The particular method of close reading that we studied in our classes has been found highly effective and can address many Common Core State Standards as well as content standards. That being said, using it with great frequency (daily or weekly) is not the intention. In this case, the quality of instruction and of readings is far more important than the quantity. We suggest implementing the close reading cycle of instruction once or twice per quarter in each content area with seminal and formative texts that provide a deep understanding of an aspect of the unit. In addition, we advocate for a balanced approach to literacy that includes intentional teaching of academic vocabulary, annotation of texts, and other research-based literacy strategies that complement the close reading method. Finally, we understand that these examples are not perfect, and as we grow in our practice, we will continue to modify and update this site. We welcome your feedback.

**CLOSE READING METHODOLOGY**

**Reading Methodology**

Students will silently read the passage in question—first independently and then following along with the text as the teacher reads aloud. This order may be reversed depending on the difficulties of a given text and the teacher’s knowledge of students’ reading abilities. What is important is to allow all students to interact with challenging text on their own as frequently and independently as possible. Students will then reread specific passages in response to a set of concise, text-dependent questions that compel them to examine the meaning and structure of the author’s writing.

**Vocabulary Methodology**

Most of the meanings of words in the exemplar text can be discovered by students through a careful reading of the context in which they appear. Teachers will model and reinforce how to learn vocabulary from contextual clues, and will hold students accountable for engaging in this practice. When context clues are absent and the difficult word is essential to the meaning of the text, words are defined briefly for students to the right of the text. We have left many Tier 3, content-specific words, undefined so that teachers may use their discretion in teaching, explaining, and discussing them as they are used in context.

**Sentence Structure Methodology**

On occasion students will encounter particularly difficult sentences to decipher. Text dependent questions are composed to deliberately engage students in the word of examining these difficult sentences to discover how they are built and how they convey meaning. Students need regular supported practice in slowing down to decipher complex sentences. It is crucial that students receive help in unpacking complex sentences and dense sections of text so that they can focus both on the precise meaning of what the author is saying as well as the author’s craft.

**Discussion Methodology**

Students will discuss the rich and complex text with their classmates and teacher as they answer text-dependent questions and formulate their ideas for the writing activity. The goal throughout the lesson is to foster student confidence when encountering complex text and to reinforce the skills they have acquired regarding how to build and extend their understanding of a text. A cooperative model using informal discussion with peers promotes this confidence. Returning to the text for evidence in the discussions provides students yet another encounter with the text, helping them develop the habits of mind necessary for reading complex text. Discussion of the text and the questions is equal to rereading in its pedagogical importance.

**Writing Methodology**

It is essential that students engage in writing about the text as a culminating activity. The assignment in these examples forces students to reach back yet again into the text to provide evidence for a position. Student writing can vary in length, with the expectation that all students are learning and practicing the skill of writing with textual evidence. Teachers might afford students the opportunity to revise their papers after participating in classroom discussion or receiving teacher feedback, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.

**Outline of Close Reading Steps**

***Time needed for the various examples on this site ranges from 2-5 days of instruction, depending on the length of class time each day.***

1. The teacher introduces the document without providing a great deal of background knowledge. This is a cold read, and the teacher should be aware that students will often encounter texts for which there is no one available to provide the context and a narrative of the text’s importance or critical attributes. Because these readings will likely be completed in the midst of a unit of study, students will come with a certain amount of background, but the teacher should refrain from providing a parallel narrative from which the students can use details to answer questions rather than honing in on the text itself.
2. To support the historical thinking skill of sourcing a text, the teacher asks students to note the title, date, and author. The teacher points out that the line numbers will increase opportunities for discussion by allowing the whole class to attend to specific lines of text.
3. Students silently read their own copy of the document. *Note: Due to the varying reading abilities and learning styles of students, the teacher may need to end this silent reading time before every single student has completed the reading. Because students will hear it read aloud and reread the document many times, the necessity of maintaining classroom flow outweighs the need to ensure that all students have read the entire document.*
4. The teacher demonstrates fluency by reading the document aloud to the class as students follow along. *Steps 3 & 4 may be reversed based on teacher knowledge of student needs.*
5. The teacher reveals to the students only one text-dependent question at a time (rather than handing out a worksheet with questions). This could be accomplished through a smart or promethean board, an overhead projector, an ELMO, or chart paper. This focus on a single question promotes discussion.
6. The teacher asks students search the document for evidence to provide for an answer. Some questions refer to specific areas of the text for students to reread, while others allow students to scan larger areas of the text. In small peer groups, students discuss their evidence citing specific line numbers in order to orient everyone to their place in the text. *The time discussing the text in small groups should remain productive. Offering students too much time may cause them to wander from the text. Keep the pace of the class flowing.*
7. Then, the teacher solicits multiple answers from various groups in the class. During the whole group answer session for each question, multiple responses are expected. Each question provides opportunities to find answers in different words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs throughout the text. The teacher should probe students so they will provide sufficient support and meaningful evidence for each answer. We suggest that as students provide textual evidence, the teacher models annotation of the document, so that all students learn how to mark up the text, and so that all students are prepared for the culminating writing assessment.
8. **All questions and answers should remain tied to the text itself. The questions and answers are intended to build knowledge over the course of the reading.**
9. The reading is followed by a writing assignment. Students demonstrate a deep and nuanced understanding of the text using evidence in their writing. This allows the teacher to assess for individual understanding and formatively diagnose the literacy gains and further needs of students.
10. TIP: *Because rereading is of fundamental importance in accessing highly complex texts, one very effective way to reach struggling readers is to allow them access to the text ahead of time (especially with teacher support). However, we suggest that all students in the class encounter the questions on the text for the first time together, as the method provides for heterogeneous groups to tackle the difficult aspects of the text in a low-stakes and cooperative manner. In our experience, even struggling readers perform well with this method, as they can find evidence directly in the text rather than relying upon a wealth of prior knowledge and experiences.*

**Griswold v Connecticut**

Excerpted from the Opinion Authored by Justice Douglas

June 7, 1965

person bringing case

interpreted

related

gray area

emitting, radiating

listing

Appellant Griswold is Executive Director of the Planned Parenthood League of Connecticut. Appellant Buxton is a licensed physician and a professor … They gave information, instruction, and medical advice to *married persons* as to the means of preventing conception….We think that appellants have standing to raise the constitutional rights of the married people with whom they had a professional relationship.

…The association of people is not mentioned in the Constitution nor in the Bill of Rights. The right to educate a child in a school of the parents' choice -- whether public or private or parochial -- is also not mentioned. Nor is the right to study any particular subject or any foreign language. Yet the [First Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmenti) has been construed to include certain of those rights.

…The right of freedom of speech and press includes not only the right to utter or to print, but the right to distribute, the right to receive, the right to read and freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, and freedom to teach… Without those peripheral rights, the specific rights would be less secure.

In *NAACP v. Alabama,* we protected the "freedom to associate and privacy in one's associations," noting that freedom of association was a peripheral [First Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmenti) right. …In other words, the [First Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmenti) has a penumbra where privacy is protected from governmental intrusion….

…The right of "association," like the right of belief, is more than the right to attend a meeting; it includes the right to express one's attitudes or philosophies by membership in a group or by affiliation with it or by other lawful means. Association in that context is a form of expression of opinion, and, while it is not expressly included in the [First Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmenti), its existence is necessary in making the express guarantees fully meaningful.

…specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights have penumbras, formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and substance. Various guarantees create zones of privacy. The right of association contained in the penumbra of the [First Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmenti) is one, as we have seen. The [Third Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentiii), in its prohibition against the quartering of soldiers "in any house" in time of peace without the consent of the owner, is another facet of that privacy. The [Fourth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentiv) explicitly affirms the "right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." The [Fifth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentv), in its Self-Incrimination Clause, enables the citizen to create a zone of privacy which government may not force him to surrender to his detriment. The [Ninth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentix) provides: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."

The Fourth and [Fifth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentv)s were described in *Boyd v. United States,* as protection against all governmental invasions "of the sanctity of a man's home and the privacies of life." We recently referred in *Mapp v. Ohio,* to the [Fourth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentiv) as creating a "right to privacy, no less important than any other right carefully and particularly reserved to the people."

…The present case, then, concerns a relationship lying within the zone of privacy created by several fundamental constitutional guarantees. And it concerns a law which, in forbidding the use of contraceptives, rather than regulating their manufacture or sale, seeks to achieve its goals by means having a maximum destructive impact upon that relationship. Such a law cannot stand in light of the familiar principle…that a governmental purpose to control or prevent activities constitutionally subject to state regulation may not be achieved by means which sweep unnecessarily broadly and thereby invade the area of protected freedoms.

birth control

ridiculously stupid

We deal with a right of privacy older than the Bill of Rights -- older than our political parties, older than our school system. Marriage is a coming together for better or for worse, hopefully enduring, and intimate to the degree of being sacred. It is an association that promotes a way of life, not causes; a harmony in living, not political faiths; a bilateral loyalty, not commercial or social projects. Yet it is an association for as noble a purpose as any involved in our prior decisions. *Reversed.*

**EXCERPTED FROM THE DISENT BY JUSTICE STEWART**

Since 1879, Connecticut has had on its books a law which forbids the use of contraceptives by anyone. I think this is an uncommonly silly law… But we are not asked in this case to say whether we think this law is unwise, or even asinine. We are asked to hold that it violates the United States Constitution. And that I cannot do.

In the course of its opinion, the Court refers to no less than six Amendments to the Constitution…. But the Court does not say which of these Amendments, if any, it thinks is infringed by this Connecticut law.

As to the First, Third, Fourth, and [Fifth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentv)s, I can find nothing in any of them to invalidate this Connecticut law… And surely, unless the solemn process of constitutional adjudication is to descend to the level of a play on words, there is not involved here any abridgment of 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. No soldier has been quartered in any house. There has been no search, and no seizure. Nobody has been compelled to be a witness against himself.

The Court also quotes the [Ninth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentix)…But to say that the [Ninth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentix) has anything to do with this case is to turn somersaults with history. The [Ninth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentix) … was framed by James Madison and adopted by the States simply to make clear that the adoption of the Bill of Rights did not alter the plan that the *Federal* Government was to be a government of express and limited powers, and that all rights and powers not delegated to it were retained by the people and the individual States. Until today, no member of this Court has ever suggested that the [Ninth Amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentix) meant anything else…

With all deference, I can find no such general right of privacy in the Bill of Rights, in any other part of the Constitution, or in any case ever before decided by this Court.

…it is not the function of this Court to decide cases on the basis of community standards. We are here to decide cases "agreeably to the Constitution and laws of the United States." It is the essence of judicial duty to subordinate our own personal views, our own ideas of what legislation is wise and what is not.

**Teacher Guide**

Name of Text: Griswold v. Connecticut

Grade Level: This is meant to coincide with a U.S. Government curriculum. In the state of Nevada, U.S. Government is a 12th grade course.

Text Complexity:

* ***Quantitative Measurement:*** Fleisch-Kinkaid 11.4. / Lexile 1270L
* ***Qualitative Measurements:*** Complex structure, high language and vocabulary demands with Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, sophisticated themes, multiple perspectives, high knowledge of discipline specific content in U.S. government and Constitutional understanding
* ***Reader & Task***: Analyzing and interpreting Supreme Court cases is a cognitively demanding exercise, as this type of text is structured in a non-traditional way and makes use of history, precedent, and appeals to logic to make an argument. This type of reading is not typical in earlier grades. In addition, this particular case sets critical precedent for future Supreme Court cases that affect the lives of Americans, including young people, making it an engaging topic if students gain comprehension of the larger themes. The precedent set in this case is based on a conceptual understanding of a “penumbra of rights,” which is highly controversial and open to multiple interpretations. Students will need background knowledge in the area of American Government and Constitutional history to be able to deeply analyze this text and to complete the culminating writing activity. For this reason, this reading will fit most appropriately in a unit on the judiciary or civil rights in a U.S. Government class. However, even without background, the following lesson would permit access and surface understanding for all students.

Question Composers: Angela Orr and Andrew Yoxsimer

Standards: CCSS RH.11-12.1, RH.11-12.2, RH.11-12.5, RH.11-12.8, RH.11-12.10, WH.11-12.7, WH.11-12.9, WH.11-12.10, SL.11-12.1B/C/D Nevada State Social Studies Standards C13.5, C14.2, C14.12

Objectives: SWBAT – 1) Analyze a complex text and derive meaning from it while discussing the merits of the arguments presented with their peers and teacher. 2) Discuss with peers the implicit and explicit meanings of words, phrases, and sections of the text. 3) Be able to explain the differing viewpoints of Justices in this case on ways to interpret the constitution. 4) Conduct a short research project stemming from this reading.

| Text Dependent Questions | Possible Answers and Textual Evidence |
| --- | --- |
| *Teacher note: This text may be especially difficult for some language learners. Based on the knowledge of your students, think about the following:*   1. Allow students an opportunity to hear the text read aloud by a fluent reader (support teacher, yourself, a recording of you reading) a day or two before class. 2. Consider making certain cognates for English/Spanish words transparent for students. Some examples from this text include: conception (line 7)/concepción; association (lines 9, 22, 24, 29, etc.)/asociacion; and secure (lines 17, 33)/seguro. Note that “opinion” is a false cognate, because a judicial opinion in Spanish is verdicto. | |
| What do you learn about this text from lines 1-8? | This is an orientation to the document. It establishes the date (1965). The author is Justice Douglas. Students should note that it is a court case between a people (Griswold and Buxton) and a state (Connecticut). Each of the appellants’ occupations is listed to demonstrate their standing to bring the issue for their clients, married people who want to prevent conception. |
| *Teacher note: The answers to the following questions can be drawn from large areas of the Justices’ arguments. They do not necessarily focus only on specific paragraphs from the text. Use your professional judgment in determining if students have answered one of the later questions while addressing an earlier one. Also, bring attention to the logical progression of ideas so often used in Supreme Court opinions. For instance, Justice Douglas cannot go straight to the zone of privacy aspect of his argument without first outlining the precedents for penumbras.* | |
| Justice Douglas states that the “First Amendment has been construed to include certain” rights. Which rights does he mention?  What does the word “construed” tell us about the rights mentioned? | The heart of the argument to follow is that there are already rights acknowledged by the courts that are not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. It’s important that students understand this concept early in the piece.   * Association of people * Right to educate a child in a school of the parents’ choice * Study particular subjects or languages   *Students might also mention rights listed further in the document including:*   * *Right to distribute, receive, read* * *Freedom of inquiry, thought, to teach* * *Right of belief and expression of attitudes* * *Belonging to a group (association)*   *The teacher should probe students further, though, if they begin to list the right of freedom of speech and press, as these are rights specifically listed in the Bill of Rights.*  The word construed is important, because the courts have had to “interpret” these rights as the language of the Constitution does not explicitly include them. |
| According to Justice Douglas, how do penumbras give “life and substance” to the explicitly stated rights? | There will likely be a range of answers. These rights are “peripheral,” not “express,” but these rights are needed to make the others “secure” (line 17). They will likely go back to NAACP v. Alabama where the freedom to associate was linked with “privacy in one’s associations.” Association is more than just “the right to attend a meeting;” it includes the ability to express the attitudes and philosophies of the group. Students should note the sentence beginning on line 24 and ending in “its existence is necessary in making the express guarantees fully meaningful.” That is, without recognizing penumbras of certain rights, the government would infringe on the explicit rights, because the essence of the right would be meaningless. |
| Justice Douglas identifies “several fundamental constitutional guarantees” that create “zones of privacy.” What are these guarantees? | Douglas’ argument in creating a penumbra of privacy and a zone of privacy rests on his ability to demonstrate that although the word “privacy” is not written in the Constitution, its essence is found in many other fundamental rights.   * Association in First Amendment * Prohibition of quartering of soldiers in 3rd Amendment * Right of people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures in the Fourth Amendment * No self-incrimination in the 5th Amendment * The entire 9th Amendment: “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” |
| According to Justice Douglas in lines 43-50, what makes the particular law under consideration unconstitutional? | Marriage lies in the zone of privacy. The law is overly broad and has a “maximum destructive impact” on marriage because instead of regulating the manufacture or sale of contraceptives, the law does not allow married couples to practice birth control. State laws that unnecessarily “invade the area of protected freedoms” are unconstitutional because they are too broad. |
| *Teacher note: The three questions that follow this note together focus on the unique structure of the dissenting opinion in this case. Help students use the next two questions to develop this understanding. Return to the bold question in this box if students do not fully comprehend the structural differences in the opinions.*  ***How does Justice Stewart structure his dissent to discredit the majority opinion? How is the structure of the dissent different than that of the majority opinion?***  *Students should note that Justice Stewart begins his dissent in a flippant and casual tone when he calls the law in question silly. He then, attacks the majority opinion’s use of Amendment 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, as nothing in the actual words of these amendments would invalidate the law. He leads the reader to understand that his job is to focus on the explicit, rather than on the implied, meaning of the words in the Constitution. In the final paragraph, Stewart returns to his comments about his personal views, but states that regardless of these views and “community standards of decency,” “it is the essence of the judicial duty to subordinate our personal views of what legislation is wise and what is not.”*  *The dissent differs structurally from the majority opinion, because the majority opinion seeks to logically unite the meanings of various amendments to establish an argument for the right of privacy, which is nowhere actually mentioned. The majority opinion is linear and makes use of many precedents in the case law to substantiate the decision.* | |
| In lines 58-61, how does Justice Stewart explain his opinion of this case? | Justice Stewart describes the law on contraception as “uncommonly silly,” “unwise,” “asinine.” But he says that his job is not to assert whether the law is good but if it violates the Constitution. He believes this is something he cannot do. |
| Why does Justice Stewart dismiss Justice Douglas’ argument that zones of privacy emanate from the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 9th Amendments? | He states that none of the actual rights listed in the amendments has been infringed by the Connecticut law. He goes into specifics of this in lines 67-71.  He also rebukes Justice Douglas with the following: “And surely, unless the solemn proves of constitutional adjudication is to descend to the level of a play on words…” Douglas believes that Constitutional interpretation must rely upon interpreting the actual words and rights instead of inferring rights as penumbras.  He also says that using the 9th Amendment to speak of privacy “is to turn somersaults with history,” as the original purpose of the 9th Amendment, and all of the case law precedent, never had anything to do with privacy.  Students should cite lines 80-81 as the crux of the argument. |
| What is Justice Stewart’s view of the role of the Supreme Court? | Stewart believes the court should: “decide cases “agreeably to the Constitution and laws of the United States,” “judicial duty to subordinate our own personal views, our own ideas of what legislation is wise and what is not.”  He does not believe the court should “decide cases on the basis of community standards.” |

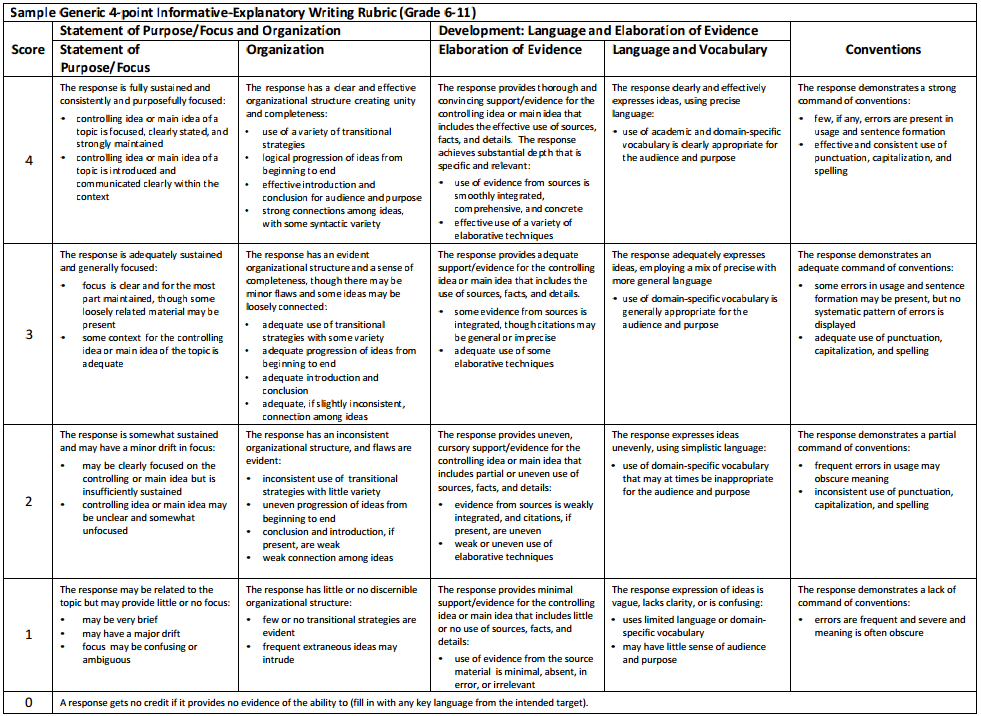
Writing Task:

Conduct a short research project to gather sufficient evidence to answer the following questions. Use appropriate sources that are both credible and accurate. Detail between three and four cases in your project.

How has the right to privacy established in Griswold v. Connecticut affected later Supreme Court jurisprudence? For what future cases was this case a major precedent? How has the controversy over the penumbra of privacy played out in Supreme Court case law since 1970?

Writing Task Checklist: *Please refer to this checklist as you develop your short research project.*

* Introduce the project with a paragraph that explains the decision in Griswold and emphasizes the discussion of the penumbra of privacy.
* Identify three to four cases that use Griswold as a precedent for privacy (from 1970 to present). For each case:
  + Briefly describe the Constitutional question and main details of the case.
  + Describe how Griswold was used as precedent in the decision (or dissent/concurrence).
  + Evaluate the manner in which the precedent was used (used to support the argument, counter the argument, enlarged view of the penumbra of privacy, narrower view of the penumbra of privacy, etc.).
* Cite evidence (paraphrases and short quotations) to support your analysis of each case.
  + At least one piece of evidence should come from the Supreme Court Opinion.
  + Other sources used to support your argument (at least one per case) should be evaluated for credibility and cited appropriately.
* Reasoning is the most essential component of your analysis. Ensure that for every piece of evidence and conjecture you make, you provide details, elaboration, explanation, and make clear your thinking.
* Conclude with your own interpretation of the final question: How has the controversy over the penumbra of privacy played out in Supreme Court case law since 1970?
* See 4 point rubric for essential components including: purpose, focus, organization, development of language and elaboration of evidence, and proper grammar and conventions.



1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)