

THE U.S. CONSTITUTION: WHY IS IT SPECIAL?

LESSON PLAN

Objectives:

- Students will discuss, debate, and evaluate the U.S. Constitution.
- Students will identify the fundamental tenets and purpose of the Constitution.
- Students will introduce claims about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claims from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- Students will use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

Materials:

VIDEO: [Why the Constitution is Special](#) discusses three reasons why the U.S. Constitution is valuable.

- a) [Video comprehension quiz](#)
- b) [Video discussion worksheets](#)

ARTICLE: [The Constitution: The Foundation of a Nation](#) describes the origin of the Constitution and outlines its key tenets.

Suggested Procedure:

1. Give students a slip of paper and have them write 2-3 sentences describing the most important aspects of the U.S. Constitution. Students can then read their answers out loud and compare responses. What similarities and differences are there? Students can come to the front of the class and write their keywords on the board.
2. Ask students if they think the Constitution is still valuable today. Informally discuss what they value/don't value in the Constitution.
3. Show video [Why the Constitution is Special](#).
Suggested places to stop and ask questions:
0:37 – When was the Constitution ratified?
0:50 – What was the Constitution's purpose? What was the Framers' goal?
1:30 – What new idea did the U.S. Constitution bring to the world?
2:04 – What does the phrase "no taxation without representation" mean, and what is its significance?
2:16 – Do you know anything about the 5th and 14th amendments? If so, what?
2:32 – What do you know about King George?
2:52 – What are the three branches of government, and how do they work?

3:14 – Read and discuss the passage.

3:43 – How does the Constitution guarantee equality? Does this work in practice?

4:10 – How is the U.S. Constitution unique?

4. Students complete the [comprehension quiz](#).
5. Students complete one or both of the [discussion worksheets](#), individually or in groups.
6. Students read the article [The Constitution: The Foundation of a Nation](#).
7. Ask students whether they think the Framers' intentions were fulfilled.
8. Creative collage activity highlighting the students' most valued aspects of the Constitution, or anything they feel is relevant. Some suggestions:
 - Group class: Students could glue their responses from the beginning of the lesson onto a poster and decorate.
 - Group class: Students create a collage using keywords, drawings, etc.
 - Individual: Student brainstorms what he/she thinks are the most critical aspects of the Constitution to create a decorative collage.
 - Small group/individual: Students use a free online "word cloud" generator to create a word cloud poster with their chosen constitutional keywords.

Extension: Creative writing. Ask students to imagine one of the Framers gets transported in a time machine to the present day. Have them write a short story about how he would react to modern society and government.

Extension: Creative writing. Students imagine they are transported back to the framing of the Constitution, or that they are responsible for the creation of a brand new country. Have them write up a Constitution they believe in – how similar or different is it to the U.S. document?

Extension: Have students choose an article from the Constitution and write an analysis of its value and role in society.

Extension: Read the article [Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist: A Fierce Debate and the Birth of a Nation](#).

Why the Constitution is Special

Test Your Knowledge: Answer the questions based on the video “Why the Constitution is Special.”

1. The Constitution was ratified on what date?
 - a. March 5, 1770
 - b. June 21, 1788
 - c. July 4, 1776
 - d. September 17, 1787

2. Who designed the Fugio cent?
 - a. Benjamin Franklin
 - b. George Washington
 - c. Alexander Hamilton
 - d. Franklin D. Roosevelt

3. What is the purpose of the Judicial Branch?
 - a. Punish crimes
 - b. Create legislation
 - c. Investigate corruption
 - d. Interpret laws

4. The Constitution separates the government into which three branches?
 - a. Legislations, Courts, Parliament
 - b. Army, Navy, Coast Guard
 - c. Congress, President, Cabinet
 - d. Legislative, Judicial, Executive

5. The Constitution established a government to rule over the people, granting certain rights so long as the population obeyed. True / False

6. The Legislative Branch is represented by Congress, which is made up of two houses, the Senate and the General Assembly. True / False

7. The purpose of the Executive branch is to carry out the law. True / False

8. What is the purpose of dividing the government into three coequal branches?

9. Why do we call those who wrote the Constitution the Framers?

10. What was the Framers’ goal in creating the Constitution?

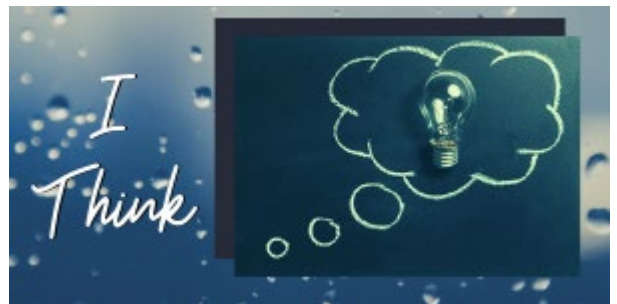


Why the Constitution is Special

Discussion: Answer the questions based on the video “Why the Constitution is Special.” Do you think the United States Constitution still matters today, and why?

- 1. What does it mean for a right to be inalienable?

- 2. Why would the Framers want to keep the true power in the hands of the citizens?



- 3. The idea of a government that works for the people was new. How was this different from the normal government systems of the time, and why might the Framers have wanted a change?

- 4. How does the right to due process protect individual liberty?

- 5. How does separating the government into three branches limit its power?

Why the Constitution is Special

Discussion: Answer the questions based on the video, "Why the Constitution is Special." Do you think the United States Constitution still matters today, and why?

1. In what ways could ignoring the Constitution cause our system to break down?

2. Why is it so rare throughout history for many different ethnic and religious groups to live peacefully together, and how does the Constitution change that?



3. How should the Constitution influence the formation and interpretation of other laws?

4. What role did the people's trust in their leaders play in the early success of the Constitution? How might things have been different without that trust?

5. Why did the Framers fear letting the government grow without limits? Do you think an all-powerful government protects the rights of the people, and why?
