What Constitutes a Constitution?

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Unit Title: What Constitutes a Constitution?

Grade Level: 7th

Subject/Topic Area(s): Texas History – Texas and US Constitution

Designed By: Becky Orsini and Nick Thomason

Time Frame: 2-3 weeks

School District: Uplift Education

School: Peak Preparatory and Hampton Preparatory

School Address and Phone: 4600 Bryan St, Dallas TX / 8915 Hampton Rd, Dallas TX

**Brief Summary of Unit** (Including curricular context and unit goals):

This unit was written as an in-depth explanation of the Texas and US Constitutions. It is an attempt to provide enduring understandings of the purpose behind the Texas and US Constitutions and why laws are important to keep a society functioning effectively. Students will be able to understand the relationship between civil liberties, state government powers, and federal government powers. They will see how the various parts of the constitution (Preamble, Articles, and Bill of Rights) work together to create a document that allows the government to work for the people while protecting them at the same time. In the end, the students will assimilate their knowledge of the six basic principles of the Constitution (popular sovereignty, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, and judicial review) into a project that requires them to create a their own constitution as a system of government to be adopted by their school.
### What Constitutes a Constitution?

#### Stage 1 – Desired Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEKS Texas History 2011: 7.1C</th>
<th>Transfer Students will independently use their learning to... Create their own school constitution including a preamble, bill of rights and articles.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="#"><em>Explanation and significance of the following date: 1876, adoption of current state constitution.</em></a> 7.14A: Identify how the Texas Constitution reflects the principles of limited government, republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights. 7.14B: Compare the principles and concepts of the Texas Constitution to the U.S. Constitution, including the Texas and U.S. Bill of Rights. 7.16A: Identify rights of Texas citizens. 7.17C: Express and defend a point of view on an issue of historical or contemporary interest in Texas. 7.21B: Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions. 7.21E: Support a point of view on a social studies issue or event. 7.22A: Use social studies terminology correctly. 7.22D: Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.</td>
<td>Meanings Understanding Students will know...  - the significance of the following date: 1876, adoption of current state constitution.  - how the Texas Constitution reflects the principles of limited government, republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights.  - some of the principles and concepts of the Texas Constitution and the U.S. Constitution, including the Texas and U.S. Bill of Rights.  - the basic rights of Texas citizens.  - the different parts and purposes of a constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Questions Students will be able to...  - express and defend a point of view regarding the US and Texas Constitutions.  - analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.  - support a point of view regarding the US and Texas Constitutions.  - use social studies terminology correctly.  - create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information regarding the US and Texas Constitutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.23A: Use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

7.23B: Use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE (M or T)</th>
<th>Evaluative Criteria (for rubric)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Collaboration, Originality, Proper Use of Vocabulary, Neatness, Effort, Ability to Follow Established Guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Task(s)**

**Part 1:**
Based on what students have learned about the Texas and United States Constitutions, they will create a new constitution for our school as if it functioned as its own government. In groups of three students will be given the opportunity to write a constitution that includes rights, rules, and responsibilities that they wish for their school's government to adopt. Students will be provided with a copy of the school’s mission statement to get a better idea of what the government’s goals are. The constitution must contain a “Bill of Rights” as well as a “Preamble” and “Articles”. After the student groups have written these constitutions each class will participate in a gallery walk and vote to choose which class constitution will be submitted to a group of teachers, including the principal, which will vote and ratify whichever constitution best embodies the aims and goals of the school. The student group who has their constitution ratified will receive an automatic 100% for this aspect of the performance task. *(Note: When grouping students for this project, low-level students should be assigned the Preamble, mid-level students should be assigned the Bill of Rights, and upper-level students should be assigned to the Articles. In order for students to still have a choice in who they group with, you can hand out the assignments on color coded cards [blue=preamble, orange=bill of rights, white=articles] and have students group up by finding the two other colors to complete the triad so that each group will have blue, orange, and white.)*

**Part 2:**
Students will complete a reflection and self-assessment sheet which outlines important questions as to the similarities and differences seen.

**Other Evidence:**
Pre-assessment: Step Out What Am I? Game
### Stage 3 – Learning Plan

#### CODE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step Out</strong>- Students stand in a straight line at the front of the classroom. Teacher asks YES/NO questions about the Texas and U.S. Constitutions to get an idea of how much students already know about this topic. After each question students will respond by moving forward if they think the answer to the question is YES. If they think the answer is NO they will not move.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Texas Constitution was based on the U.S. Constitution. (YES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Both the U.S. Constitution and the Texas Constitution created a form of government that has 3 branches of government. (YES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The supreme “law of the land” is the Texas State Constitution. (NO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The Legislative Branch in both constitutions executes the law. (NO)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Only the U.S. Constitution has a Bill of Rights. (NO)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The Executive Branch in both constitutions designates an elected leader to lead the nation and state. (YES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Only the U.S. Constitution includes a Supreme Court. (NO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain to students that these questions will be discussed more thoroughly throughout the unit just in case they weren’t sure of the answers.</td>
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</table>

#### Learning Activities:

**Day 1-A/M**

Day 1 – After the “Step Out” activity, have students participate in a “Silent Discussion”.

“Silent Discussion”- Posted around the room will be three pieces of butcher paper with the simplified essential questions listed on each one (“Why are laws important?”, “What rights do you think all students should have?”, and “What is a Constitution?”). Give each student a marker and place them into three groups. Have the groups rotate through each question (3 minutes to respond to each question). Then have the students rotate once more in order to read the various responses to each question (1 minute at each question). Remind students that all comments made must be written not spoken; this is a silent activity.

Have the students complete Word/Definition/Picture note cards. Vocabulary will include: Preamble, Ratify, Constitution, Inalienable, Amendment, Article, Bicameral, Federalism, Bill of Rights, Popular Sovereignty, Limited Government, Separation of Powers, Check and Balances, Republicanism, and Individual Rights. Teacher will provide definitions for each word via PowerPoint. Students will complete note cards for homework.

**Day 2-A/M**

Day 2 – Review vocabulary PowerPoint from previous day, paying more attention to each word to ensure that students have a good understanding of what the words mean and how they relate to our unit of study. After reviewing the vocabulary, show students the Brain Pop© video on the US Constitution. Hand out the Principles of the Constitution Worksheet.

#### Progress Monitoring

(e.g., formative data)

**Day 1** - Silent Discussion, Vocabulary Note Cards

**Day 2** - Principles of the Constitution Worksheet
| Day 3- A | Constitution worksheet and have them complete it with a partner. The worksheet contains each principle of the constitution, and boxes for: synonyms, student examples, and a picture. Each student will be responsible for completing a worksheet, but they may work in pairs. Anything left incomplete at the end of class will become homework. |
| Day 4- A/T | Day 3 – Students will participate in guided reading and take notes on the history of the Texas Constitution (pages 560-563 in Celebrating Texas). When finished, students will study page 680-681 in order to complete the Texas Constitution Comparison Chart that compares each version of the Texas Constitution and why changes were made. Anything that is not complete at the end of class will become homework. |
| Day 5- A/M | Day 4 – Students will have approximately 5 minutes to study their vocabulary notes before taking a quiz. Vocabulary Quiz: students will choose 10 of their 15 vocabulary words and use them in a sentence that demonstrates correct usage and conveys proper meaning of the word. After the quiz, students will be given an Un-Ramble the Preamble worksheet to introduce the purpose of a constitutional preamble. Teacher will show the students preamble examples from the US, Texas and other countries in order to discuss how the preamble of a constitution sets forth goals for a government. Have students make a set of goals for themselves for the upcoming 8th grade year. For homework, they will put these goals into a succinct phrase like that of the preambles they have seen. |
| Day 6- A/M | Day 5 – Teacher will show students the Brain Pop© video on the Bill of Rights. After the video the students will read Section 3 (pages 571-572) which addresses the Texas Bill of Rights. Teacher will point out that while the Texas Bill of Rights includes more rights, they incorporate all of the rights from the US Bill of Rights. Play-doh© Activity: Students will get into small groups and create Play-doh© representations of one of the first 10 amendments to the US Constitution as assigned by the Teacher. Student groups will present what they have created and other groups will have to guess which amendment they needed to represent. Students will study the Bill of Rights for a quiz the next day. |
| Day 3- Texas Constitution Comparison Chart | Day 4- Vocabulary Quiz, Un-Ramble the Preamble |
| Day 5- Create an amendment with Play-doh© | Day 6- Bill of Rights Quiz: “We Have the Right”, Branches of government writing prompt |

During Constitutional Conventions in Texas the framers created a system of government with 3 branches. They created a series of checks and balances with each branch: the Supreme Court and
Congress check the powers of the President, the President and the Supreme Court check the powers of Congress. Why do you think the framers thought this series of checks and balances was important? Responses must be at least ¾ of a page in length.

**Day 7 – What Am I? Game** – Teacher will explain the rules for the game to the students before handing out materials. Each student will have a sticky note with either (1) a Principle of the Constitution, (2) one of the Bill of Rights, (3) a goal of the Preamble, or (4) one of the branches of the government placed on their back so they can’t see it. They will then be instructed to circulate about the room and find someone who they can ask “Yes or No” questions to try and decipher what information their sticky note contains. Once they have figured out their information, students will return to their seats. Students will work individually to complete a Web Quest containing constitutional information from the following website: [http://clockwrk.com/constitution/index.php](http://clockwrk.com/constitution/index.php)

**Day 8 – Show the video clip, “The Almost Painless Guide: US Constitution” from Discovery Streaming©.** Have students complete a guided note taking sheet while watching the video and record their answers to the True/False quiz at the end of the video. Introduce the Performance Task to the students, assign tasks and allow students to choose groups according to the Performance Task in stage 2.

**Day 9 & 10 – Teacher will facilitate and monitor progress of groups while they work on their performance task.** Students will need to follow the rubric provided by the Teacher, conduct group meetings to ensure that the various parts of their constitutions match up, schedule a meeting with the teacher to provide an opportunity to ask any questions they may have and to get guidance if needed, edit and refine their constitutions prior to typing up a final copy. Students will have access to computers and/or supplemental materials to assist them in writing their constitutions.

**Day 11 – All typed constitutions will be displayed in the classroom and students will participate in a two-part Gallery Walk.** Part One: Students will read each of the new constitutions and keep notes on which ones they thought were most cohesive, coherent, and comprehensive. Part Two: Students will conduct a blind vote to determine which constitution will represent their class and will be submitted to a committee for ratification. 3-2-1 Wrap-Up: Have students write three things they found interesting about this unit, 2 questions they still have about the constitution and 1 piece of advice for next year’s students who will study the Constitutions. For homework, students will complete the reflection and self-assessment portion of the performance task.

**Day 7- M**

**Day 8- A**

**Day 9 & 10- T**

**Day 11- M/T**
Our School Constitution Project

Our school has decided to secede from the district and to do so we must create our own constitution. It is your task to come up with a constitution that would satisfy the people of our new “nation”. Similar to Texas setting up their own constitution, you may use the US and Texas Constitutions to reference as you set out to create our new constitution…no sense in reinventing the wheel!

In groups of three, you will create the three major pieces of our new constitution by writing your own Preamble, Bill of Rights, and major Articles that establish how our government will work. You need to make sure that all major rights, rules, and responsibilities of the citizens are discussed in your constitution. Each member of your group will be responsible for creating one piece of your constitution as assigned by the teacher, and each group will combine those three pieces to create a single document. These documents will be typed and printed so they can be used in a gallery walk. Each class will vote on which constitution is best, and that constitution will be submitted for ratification by the founders of our new nation (ie: principal and teachers).

Use the following websites to review and reference the US and Texas Constitutions:

http://www.usconstitution.net/constquick.html (simplified US Constitution)

http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/text/IART01.html (actual Texas Constitution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preamble</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Bill of Rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Must provide the purpose for writing the Constitution</td>
<td>1. Must include at least 7 articles</td>
<td>1. Must have at least 10 inalienable rights provided for the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Say who is writing the constitution</td>
<td>2. You must include articles that discuss the following: executive branch, legislative branch, judicial branch, powers of the government, and the process of amendment</td>
<td>2. Must provide justification for these rights (explain why these rights make sense for the school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Must incorporate key aspects of the school’s Mission Statement</td>
<td>3. Must incorporate key aspects from the Articles of the Texas or US Constitutions</td>
<td>3. Must incorporate key aspects of the school’s Student Handbook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### “Our School Constitution” Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Unacceptable (F)</th>
<th>Approaching (C)</th>
<th>Meeting (B)</th>
<th>Exceeding (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preamble (35 Points)</strong></td>
<td>I copied directly from the US/Texas Constitutions and didn’t alter the wording at all. The school mission statement is absent entirely. I failed to identify who was supporting the Constitution.</td>
<td>My preamble mentions the purpose for creating a new constitution but fails to incorporate the school’s current Mission Statement. And fails to give a clear indication of who the constitution is for.</td>
<td>My work provides a decent reason for why a new constitution is being written and a somewhat clear idea of who it is for. I tried to incorporate the school’s mission in my preamble, but didn’t quite succeed in giving it a unique feel; wording is too similar.</td>
<td>I have written a coherent statement of purpose in regards to why we are creating a new constitution and for whom it will serve. The key ideas of the school’s mission statement are evident in my own words without being direct quotes. My preamble adds true value to the other portions of the constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bill of Rights (35 Points)</strong></td>
<td>I did not meet the minimum number for the Bill of Rights and/or none of the rights I used were of my own design.</td>
<td>I failed to include at least 10 inalienable rights and/or copied directly from the US/Texas Constitutions. No justifications were offered for the rules I did choose.</td>
<td>While I included 10 inalienable rights, I failed to provide adequate justification for all of them. I attempted to incorporate some of the school rules that already exist.</td>
<td>My Bill of Rights included more than the minimum number of inalienable rights, and each one is amply justified. I incorporated several key aspects of the school handbook but maintained my own voice in their wording.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articles (35 Points)</strong></td>
<td>I did not meet the minimum number of Articles. None of the articles I chose were of my own creation and/or I copied directly from the US/Texas Constitutions.</td>
<td>I did not meet the minimum number of articles. Some key ideas from the US/Texas Constitutions are included but I failed to address all of the required components.</td>
<td>I included the minimum of 7 articles and touched on some key ideas from the US/Texas Constitutions. While I mentioned each of the required components, some explanations were lacking in depth or definition.</td>
<td>I have included more than the minimum number of articles and go into depth regarding each of the areas of government required. Key aspects from the US/Texas Constitutions as well as the student code of conduct were used as a guide to writing my articles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Work (30 points)</strong></td>
<td>I did not attempt to work with my group.</td>
<td>Although I was part of a group, I left most of the work for the other members. I did not contribute much to the group and was not productive.</td>
<td>I worked well within my group and contributed to make sure our project was cohesive.</td>
<td>I was a productive group member. I helped my group answer questions, and even after I finished my section, I helped the other members of the group to complete their tasks in order to make sure our project was cohesive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neatness and Effort (15 Points)</strong></td>
<td>My work showed very little time, effort, or thought. The final product was messy and/or incomplete.</td>
<td>My work was satisfactory. Some effort was shown, but it was not my best work. Some parts of my final product were disorganized or lacking in quality.</td>
<td>Much effort was shown in my work, but the final product was not as neat as it could have been. I may have rushed through my work to make sure the minimum standard was met.</td>
<td>My final product was organized and well thought-out, indicating that a great deal of time and effort was put into my work. My project was extremely neat and went through several revisions to make sure it was coherent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Originality/ Creativity (10 Points)</strong></td>
<td>I copied directly from the US and/or Texas Constitutions.</td>
<td>I borrowed heavily from the wording of the US and/or Texas Constitutions and made minimal changes.</td>
<td>I used the Student Handbook and Mission Statement of our school in addition to the US and/or Texas Constitutions in order to enhance the meaning behind my new constitution. I used all of these documents as a guide while I created a completely original document that showed my opinions and individuality.</td>
<td>I used the Student Handbook and Mission Statement of our school in addition to the US and/or Texas Constitutions in order to enhance the meaning behind my new constitution. I used all of these documents as a guide while I created a completely original document that showed my opinions and individuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions and Proper Use of Vocabulary (10 points)</strong></td>
<td>I did not use proper conventions in my writing. Vocabulary was used improperly throughout my work.</td>
<td>There were errors in my grammar and conventions, but the meaning behind my product was not lost. Vocabulary was used improperly some of the time.</td>
<td>There were few errors in my conventions and vocabulary usage. When errors did occur, they were minor.</td>
<td>My product was free of most grammatical errors and it was clear that revisions were made. Necessary vocabulary was used properly and often to express my thought and convey proper meaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection and Self-Assessment

What were the most significant differences you saw between your constitution and the Texas/US Constitutions?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Why did your group decide these changes were important?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

What were some of the significant similarities you saw between your constitution and the Texas/US Constitutions?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Why did your group decide to leave certain aspects the same?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Based on this project, do you feel like laws are important or necessary? Explain your answer in detail.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

What would our state/country look like if there was no constitution governing our actions and protecting our rights?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
1. Our Constitution sets up a kind of ______________________ for the whole country. It lays out the basic way our ______________________ is organized and operated.

2. A ______________________ ______________________ limits the powers of the government while protecting the individual rights of the people. The constitution sets up a higher law of the land that ______________________ must obey.

3. Unlike some countries, we, the citizens of the United States granted our government and its leaders the privilege of governing us for our common good, but “________ _______ _______________” are the ultimate authority.

4. Revising the ______________________ _______ ____________________ led to the drafting of the Constitution.

5. The Preamble to the Constitution is a kind of ______________________ that explains the purpose of our Constitution.

6. It took less than ____________ months to draft the Constitution and it is the __________________ continual form of government in use today.

7. At the time the Constitution was drafted, ______________________ was our capital.

8. The framers of the Constitution decided upon a ______________________ system of government. In a “federal system” of government, the power and responsibility is ______________________ between the nation and the states.

9. Our Constitution was designed with three ______________________ branches, creating a ______________________ of power.

10. The ______________________ is the head of the executive branch and the constitution empowered him to ______________________ the nation’s laws.

11. The ______________________ ______________________, which is part of the judicial branch, is the highest court in the land and is called upon to ______________________ laws as they apply to the Constitution.

12. The ______________________ ______ ______________________ and the ______________________ together comprise the ______________________ branch or legislative branch.
13. The framers of the Constitution had the foresight to realize they hadn’t created a ________________document.

14. When the first Congress met, they added the first 10 __________________________ to the Constitution, known as the ____________ ______ _________________.

15. According to Article 5, the Constitution can be ________________ as necessary.

16. 26 amendments have been ____________________________.

The Almost Painless Video Quiz over the U.S. Constitution:

1. The Constitution is the set of rules or guidelines that organizes our government.
   True    False

   True    False

3. In a Federal System of government, the Federal government shares power and responsibility with the States.
   True    False

4. The Constitution is a permanent document which may never be changed.
   True    False

5. There are only 10 amendments to the Constitution.
   True    False

6. The introduction to the Constitution is called the Preamble.
   True    False

7. The name given to the individuals that created the Constitution is the “Founding Fathers” or the “Framers”.
   True    False

8. All of the branches of government have equal power.
   True    False

9. The Constitution does not specifically state the powers of the branches of government.
   True    False

10. The Constitution can only be changed by the President of the United States.
    True    False
Teachers Key:
1. Our Constitution sets up a kind of rulebook for the whole country. It lays out the basic way our government is organized and operated.
2. A Constitutional Government limits the powers of the government while protecting the individual rights of the people. The constitution sets up a higher law of the land that everybody must obey.
3. Unlike some countries, we, the citizens of the United States granted our government and its leaders the privilege of governing us for our common good, but “We the People” are the ultimate authority.
4. Revising the Articles of Confederation led to the drafting of the Constitution.
5. The Preamble to the Constitution is a kind of introduction that explains the purpose of our Constitution.
6. It took less than four months to draft the Constitution and it is the oldest continual form of government in use today.
7. At the time the Constitution was drafted, Philadelphia was our capital.
8. The framers of the Constitution decided upon a federal system of government. In a “federal system” of government, the power and responsibility is shared between the nation and the states.
9. Our Constitution was designed with three co-equal branches, creating a balance of power.
10. The president is the head of the executive branch and the constitution empowered him to enforce the nation’s laws.
11. The Supreme Court, which is part of the judicial branch, is the highest court in the land and is called upon to interpret laws as they apply to the Constitution.
12. The House of Representatives and the Senate together comprise the lawmaking branch or legislative branch.
13. The framers of the Constitution had the foresight to realize they hadn’t created a perfect document.
14. When the first Congress met, they added the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights.
15. According to Article 5, the Constitution can be modified as necessary.
16. 26 amendments have been ratified.

Quiz answers:
1. True
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. False
In this activity you will need to study the summaries of the different constitutions that Texas has followed and point out how the constitution has changed over the years. You are also expected to provide a reason as to why you think the changes were made. The first one is done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitution</th>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Reason for the change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>The Constitution of 1824 did away with the Constitutional Monarchy of 1812 and national sovereignty. It combined the provinces of Coahuila and Texas.</td>
<td>I think the people of Mexico wanted to have more of a say in their government and didn’t want to be ruled by a king. I think they combined the two provinces in an attempt to make a stronger, larger state in that area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1827</td>
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<td>1836</td>
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<td>1876</td>
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