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U. S. Constitution [8th grade]

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Education Department

Understanding by Design Curriculum Units

Trinity University

Year 2006

U. S. Constitution

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UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: The Constitution	Grade Level: 8 th
Subject/Topic Area: U.S. History	Time Frame: 4 weeks

Designed by: Ben Altman	
School District: Northeast ISD	School: W.W. Jackson Middle School

Brief Summary of Unit

In this unit, students will explore the U.S. Constitution. They will begin by analyzing the issues and debates of the colonial era that brought about the need for a more structured centralized government. They will then study the processes of creation and ratification, and examine how these processes have contributed to the documents longevity and success. They will further that examination by evaluating the actual words of the document.

The culminating performance assessment will require students to create their own constitutional plan for the governance of their history classroom. They will present their plans to the class and examine the strengths and weaknesses of each plan. They will compare their classroom's constitution to that of the United States and assess whether or not it would be as effectively successful.

Stage 1: Desired Results

Understandings

- A Constitution sets forth the terms and limits of a government's power.
- Ratifying the Constitution required much compromise to settle significant conflict and resolve inadequacies of government.
- The success of the U.S. Constitution can be attributed to its design, which enables it to meet the ever-changing needs of the people.

Essential Questions

- ◆ What is a constitution? Why do we need one?
- ◆ How did the issues and debates of the late colonial era shape the constitution? Do they still apply today?
- ◆ How is power divided by the Constitution?
- ◆ How does the Constitution include me in our government?

Knowledge & Skill

The student is expected to:

TEKS 1.A identify the major eras in U.S. history through 1877 and describe their defining characteristics.

1.C explain the significance of the following date: 1787

4.D analyze the issues of the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, including major compromises and arguments for ratification.

16.C identify colonial grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence and explain how those grievances were addressed in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

18.A analyze the arguments of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, including those of Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and George Mason.

20.A/B define and give examples of unalienable rights and summarize the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

23.B describe the contributions of significant political, social, and military leaders of the United States.

Founding Principles of the Constitution:
Popular Sovereignty, Republicanism, Federalism, Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances, Limited Government, and Individual Rights.

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task Summary

- ◆ **“We the people of the JMS 8th Grade...”** – In groups the class will design a constitutional plan for a new middle school to be used to govern its daily functions. Students will decide who they will put in positions of power, as well as the powers they will delegate to their chosen leaders. Each group will compile a list of rights that will be protected for students, teachers, and administrators. The students will present their plans to the class and be asked to elaborate and explain the nuances of their plans. They will also analyze possible weaknesses or pitfalls in their school governmental plan that they may have.

Key Criteria: Proposals follow project guidelines and are both creative and reasonable; presentations cite reasons for inclusion of principles; students participate actively in debates forming the new school government; students display an understanding of the division of power included in the Constitution and how their own plan compares to that model through their presentations.

Self-Assessments	Other Evidence, Summarized
<p>Self-Assess Cooperative Learning – How well did I work with my group? Students will rate their contribution.</p> <p>Self-Assess Classroom Constitution – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the model of government we created? Will it work or not in practical application?</p>	<p>Academic prompt – Why do we need government?</p> <p>Exit Slip – Why did the colonists need a new government during the Confederation Era?</p> <p>Venn diagram worksheet – comparing and contrasting the major compromises of the Constitutional Convention.</p> <p>Interactive Homework – How To?</p> <p>Compromise Essay – Respond to p.224 Critical Thinking Question #4 in essay form.</p> <p>Constitution quiz – identify compromises, key figures and terms from sections 1 & 2.</p> <p>Federalism Debate - Divide students into small groups and distribute concept formation slips. Have students group the slips in either the Federalist or Anti-Federalist categories. Allow student groups to explain the differences in the two sides.</p> <p>Preamble Collages: In groups students will be given a portion of the preamble of the Constitution and be asked to create collages that depict the meaning of the phrase and the reason for its deliberate inclusion.</p> <p>Constitution Test – Covers Ch 8 (all sections) and Document.</p> <p>Interpreting the Bill of Rights – The student will be asked to create visual representation of each guarantee listed in the Bill of Rights. Each visual representation must be accompanied by an explanation of the Right and how the picture relates to it.</p> <p>Notebook check – completed warm-ups and defined vocabulary terms</p>

Constitution Retest – Covers material from first test with some new material from the Bill of Rights

Stage 3: Learning Activities

- ◆ Present academic prompt: Why do we need government? Allow students time to reflect and write, then have them share responses.
- ◆ Lecture Section 1: *The Confederation Era*. Highlight weaknesses in central government and changes in America that require new “directions.”
- ◆ Kinesthetic Representation: Have students represent 18th Century American population before and after Revolution by grouping on one side of the room. This will be the colonies, which are very closely linked. Then have students move across the room to represent the growing population and the push westward after the repeal of the Proclamation of 1763 through Independence. Show that this makes it more difficult for a central body, especially a weak one, to control the whole room.
- ◆ Exit Slip: Why did the colonists need a new government during the Confederation Era? Allow students time to reflect and write responses. Have them turned in before students leave classroom.
- ◆ *Key vocabulary terms will be introduced as they are encountered in the text: Students will be responsible for keeping track of keyword definitions for Chapter 8 in a notebook throughout the unit.
- ◆ Introduce the essential questions: What is a constitution and why do we need one? Review why new “directions” were needed.
- ◆ Introduce Text Section 2: *Creating the Constitution* and how the issues and debates of the 18th Century influenced how the document was created, focus on major compromises made in drafting the constitution.
- ◆ Assign Interactive Homework: *How To?* Use this worksheet to introduce Constitution as a set of directions for government.
- ◆ Class trip destination simulation: Have students use these to model comparing and contrasting using a Venn diagram.
- ◆ Use Venn diagram worksheet to compare and contrast the major compromises of the Constitutional Convention.
- ◆ Discuss Critical Thinking: p.224 question #4: “Do you think the founders were right to make the compromises they did in the Constitution on the issues of representation and slavery? What might have happened had they not compromised?”
- ◆ Writing Workshop: From class discussion have students respond in essay form the above question. The teacher will model historical writing using supporting evidence and proper writing technique. Give students a day in the writing lab to compose the essays.
- ◆ Give quiz on Text Sections 1 & 2.
- ◆ Say Something: In pairs have students read sub-sections of Text Section 3 and summarize what they read, focus on the arguments of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists.
- ◆ Concept Formation (modified): In groups give students concepts relating to and quotes from Federalist and Anti-Federalist arguments from p. 222-223. Have them place each example in the correct category.
- ◆ Examine the ratification process, including the voting records of each of the thirteen states using selected readings and worksheets.
- ◆ Preamble Collages: In groups students will be given a portion of the preamble of the Constitution and be asked to create collages that depict the meaning of the phrase and the reason for its deliberate inclusion.

- ◆ Graphic Organizers and notes on Articles 1-3 of the Constitution and the division of power between the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government.
- ◆ Interactive Jeopardy Review: Students will be divided into teams and be given a series of questions about the Constitution and the information presented in CH. 8.
- ◆ Constitution Test
- ◆ Discuss how the Bill of Rights solved the Federalism debate and go through all 10 amendments in the text while asking students to provide possible reasons (from Pre-Revolution study and this chapter) for the inclusion of each. Also include how the Bill of Rights and Amendment process ensures personal liberty.
- ◆ Present students with blank sheet divided into 10 squares for “Interpreting the Bill of Rights Assignment.” Model how one might represent one of the amendments in pictorial form.
- ◆ Performance Assessment Activity, “We the people of the JMS 8th Grade:” In groups, students will brainstorm plans for a new school government by answering three questions. They will present their plans in rough note form on large dry erase boards. They will be asked to elaborate and explain the nuances of their plans. They will also analyze possible weaknesses or pitfalls in their school governmental plan that they may have.
- ◆ Retest: Covers material from first test with some new material from the Bill of Rights.