



The Constitution | Lesson Plan

What is the United States Constitution, and how did it shape the structure of the federal government?

Students learn about the United States Constitution, the founding document that established our country's governing principles.

Learning Objectives:

- Define what the Preamble of the Constitution is.
- Describe how the Constitution limits the powers of government through the separation of powers and checks and balances.
- Recognize that the Bill of Rights comprises the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
- Distinguish how the Constitution safeguards and limits individual rights.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Constitution:** The supreme law of the United States that outlines the national framework of government and fundamental laws, guaranteeing certain basic rights to its citizens. It established the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) and incorporated systems of checks and balances and federalism.
- **Preamble:** The introductory statement that sets forth the foundational principles and purposes of the Constitution of the United States of America. It begins with the iconic phrase "We the People," indicating that the government derives its power from the citizens and outlines the aims of the government, including establishing justice, ensuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty for present and future generations.
- **Amendment:** A formal change or addition proposed and ratified according to the procedures laid out in the U.S. Constitution.
- **The Bill of Rights:** The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1791, which explicitly enumerate individual liberties and limitations on government power.
- **Checks and Balances:** A system in which different branches of government share power and can prevent each other from taking certain actions. This system is designed to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, American Values, U.S. History



What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Constitution* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Constitution* (Click [Here](#))
- List of classroom or school rules poster, U.S. Constitution example, or simple text version

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (10 minutes)

1. Begin the lesson by asking students to look around the classroom and identify any documents that explicitly lay out ways for the classroom to run safely and smoothly. Ask if a document exists for the school that lists guidelines for students of all grades to follow.
2. Students will share their answers in a brief discussion. If needed, guide the students to the classroom/school rules. Briefly go through the class rules. Ask:
 - Why does our classroom need a set of rules?
 - Why would our school need a set of rules?
 - What would happen if these rules were not in place?
3. After discussing the purpose of classroom and school rules, ask students if a document/list of rules exists explaining what rights Americans have. How do we make sure that citizens of our country know what is expected of them?
4. Introduce the United States Constitution and its specific functions. Ask students to share what they already know about the Constitution. Write their answers on the board.
5. Directly compare the school and classroom rules to specific functions of the Constitution. For example, discuss how the Constitution's Preamble mirrors the intentions behind school rules by aiming to create a stable and just society.
6. Extend the discussion to include not only what is expected from the students but also what they can expect from others, mirroring how the Constitution not only imposes duties but also protects rights. This can segue into the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights and the responsibilities of government branches as outlined in the Constitution.
7. Incorporate questions that prompt deeper thinking, such as:
 - How might our classroom look if no one followed the rules? How might our country look if there were no Constitution?
 - Why do you think the Founders of our country felt it was important to write down the rules in the Constitution?
8. Explain that students will watch a game-show-style video to learn more about the Constitution. Pass out student copies of "Street Smarts: The Constitution Worksheet."

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, confirming or correcting answers on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented.
3. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned regarding the Constitution of the U.S.
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.
3. Summarize the lesson by reinforcing how the Constitution, much like school rules, is essential for maintaining order and protecting rights within a society. Highlight the importance of each student's role in upholding and understanding these fundamental principles.

Extension Activities:

1. Consider connecting to recent judicial decisions that illustrate the Constitution in action.
2. Have students memorize the Preamble to the Constitution through song or recitation.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.