

Lesson Title: Foundations of U.S. Government

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: Government and Citizenship

Standard:

Students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the principles upon which the U.S. government is based.

Learners: This lesson is designed for students in either grades 9 or 10 who are enrolled in a required high school Government or Civics class.

Content Objectives:

- Students will define and provide examples of fundamental principles and core values of American political and civic life.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use print and electronic media to do research and analyze data.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use graphic organizers.

Language Objectives:

- Students will be able to use specific vocabulary to make comparisons between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States.
- Students will write sentences using context clues in a journal entry.

Differentiation Strategies:

- Process on days 1 & 2
- Product on days 3 & 4

Materials (content): U.S. Constitution Fact Sheet*, The Constitution Comes to Life worksheet*, Internet access* to or a copy of the Constitution of the United States, Internet access* to or a copy of the Articles of Confederation and the “Comparing the Articles to the Constitution” web site, pen/pencil and paper or other note taking materials, computer, MS PowerPoint or equivalent slideshow application, Jeopardy PowerPoint/slideshow template, MS Word or equivalent word processing application, SmartBoard, audio recording device

Key Vocabulary:

Constitution, confederation, federalist, sovereign, ratify, amendment, suffrage, veto, delegate

Procedure (process):

Days 1 & 2

1. Distribute and, as a class, review the U.S. Constitution Fact Sheet*. Inform students that this document can be used as a reminder and study guide as they learn about the U. S. Constitution.
2. Review with students that, prior to 1787, the country was guided by a document called the Articles of Confederation. Provide students with URL to “Comparing the Articles to the Constitution” or display on SmartBoard for entire class to view.
3. In pairs, students will create a Venn diagram on paper that identifies the components and compares the similarities and differences of the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution of the United States.
4. As a class, review the similarities and differences between the Articles and the Constitution by having students take turns sharing information from their group’s Venn diagrams by individually coming to the board and writing key concepts and facts in the class’s Venn diagram on the board. (Class of 25-30 students should be able to have each student come up to the board at least one time to share an item from their Venn diagram).

5. As a class, discuss the huge task that faced the delegates at the Constitutional convention. Ask students what difficulties they think the delegates might have faced. On the board, write a list of all the difficulties. Then, ask students to list aspects of the Constitution. Write these on the board as well. Finally, have students connect the difficulties the delegates faced to an aspect of the Constitution that solves the problem. For example: Difficulty: giving individual states power in the central government. Solution: the legislative branch of government, which had representation from each state.
6. Inform students that the Constitution created some organizations directly within the document (such as the Supreme Court), while other organizations it empowered Congress to create (such as the U.S. Mint: see Article I, Section 8). Remind students that the delegates included a clear process for amending the Constitution and provided the federal government with the power to add new organizations in the future. Ask students why they think the delegates would allow this flexibility.
7. Distribute The Constitution Comes to Life worksheet. In this activity students will explore how the Constitution created—and continues to create—vital government organizations. Students will use a copy of the Constitution to fill in Part I of the worksheet.
8. Students will write a one-page journal entry explaining what they think would have happened to the country if the Constitution had not been ratified. Students should reference at least three existing government institutions created by the Constitution without which they think the country could not survive.

Days 3 & 4

Students will choose from one of the following projects. Students will be assigned to work in groups of 2-3 people. (Students may choose to work individually on any project except the Mock Interview.) Each project should identify the main ideas and key components of the Constitution of the United States in defining the three branches of the United States government and providing the details that are the checks and balances for the branches of the United States government.

- Constitution Jeopardy project - questions/answers and Jeopardy game using PowerPoint Jeopardy template
 - Using the Constitution as a resource, students will create 4 categories with six questions in each category about the Constitution and each of the three branches of U.S. government.
 - Projects should include at least one question that involves a photo, which students will locate using the Internet or capturing themselves using a digital camera.
 - Projects that include an audio clip will earn bonus points.
- Constitution of the United States slideshow
 - Using the Constitution of the U.S. and the Internet as resources, 2-3 students will create a PowerPoint slideshow that demonstrates knowledge and understanding about the key components of the three branches of the U.S. government and their interconnected role in the checks and balances.
 - Projects must include a combination of text and images and background music that is embedded into the slideshow.
- Mock interview between a Federalist from 1787 and a modern day reporter.
 - 2-3 students will role play an interview between a modern day TV news reporter and 1-2 Federalists who were involved in the Second Continental Convention and the compromises that led to the creation of the Constitution of the United States.
 - Using the Constitution of the U.S. and the Internet, 2-3 students will create a transcript of interview questions and answers that they will then record while acting out.
 - Students may capture their interview as an audio recording or as a video recording.
- Constitution of the United States informational brochure
 - Using the Constitution of the United States, 2-3 students will locate information that demonstrates an understanding about the key components of the three branches of the U.S. government and their interconnected role in the checks and balances.

- Students will use a word processor or other desktop publishing application to create a three panel (six columns on two sheets of paper) informational brochure about the Constitution of the United States.
- Brochures must include images, text based graphics, written text, and be colorful.
- Brochures must be organized and thoughtfully assembled.

Assessment (product):

Days 1 & 2

- Venn diagram
- Journal entry

Days 3 & 4

- PowerPoint Jeopardy, slideshow, mock interview, or informational brochure

Differentiation Strategies:

Days 1 & 2: Process: Cooperative groups, graphic organizer, class discussion, journaling

Days 3 & 4: Product: Unit Menu – choice between creating:

- Constitution Jeopardy project - questions/answers and Jeopardy game using PowerPoint Jeopardy template
- Constitution of the United States slideshow
- Mock interview between a Federalist from 1787 and a modern day reporter
- Constitution of the United States informational brochure

(These projects could all easily be tiered if it was decided to only offer one project for students to complete instead of a menu of four)

Intelligences addressed and why:

Days 1 & 2

- Verbal-Linguistic: research of key concepts, class discussion,
- Visual: graphic organizers
- Interpersonal: group work, sharing activity
- Bodily: group work, sharing activity, using computer to access Internet
- Intrapersonal: journaling

Days 3 & 4

- Verbal-Linguistic: research of key concepts
- Visual: PowerPoint or brochure
- Musical: background music in PowerPoint Jeopardy or slideshow, recording Mock interview
- Interpersonal: group work, sharing completed projects, playing Jeopardy games
- Bodily: group work, using computer to complete project, sharing completed projects, role playing (Mock interview)

Technology used and why:

- SmartBoard for interactivity of sharing items from Venn diagrams
- Computer for:
 - -Internet access: for researching and accessing source documents and information
 - -PowerPoint: for creating interactive Jeopardy game
 - -PowerPoint: for creating slideshow to integrate visual content with textual information
 - -Word processor: for creating print-type brochure that organizes content differently than slideshow and still integrates visual and textual content.
- Computer or other audio recording device (i.e., tape or digital recorder, mobile phone) for capturing mock interview.

***Resources:**

- Fact Sheet-
http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/a/Abota_Const_Factsheet.pdf
- Constitution Comes to Life-
http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/a/Abota_Const_Comestolive.pdf
- The Constitution of the United States-
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html
- Web site for the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of U.S.-
<http://www.usconstitution.net>
- Comparing the Articles to the Constitution-<http://www.usconstitution.net/constconart.html>
- Jeopardy PowerPoint Template – <http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/PPT-GAMES/Jeopardy.ppt>
- More Jeopardy and other PowerPoint Templates - <http://teach.fcps.net/trt10/PowerPoint.htm>

This was inspired by the lesson plan “The Constitution in Today’s America” retrieved from the teacher resources section on Scholastic.com - <http://bit.ly/Agh4y>