

Teacher's Name:
Employee Number:
School:

Social Studies Lesson Plan
Define a constitution, and discuss its purposes.

1. **Title: What is a constitution?**

2. **Overview**

Enduring Understandings

- Understand what a constitution is and why it is needed
- Understand the purpose of a constitution
- Appreciate how the United States Constitution enables the government to function
- Comprehend the intention of the United States Constitution as outlined by the *preamble*

Essential Questions – (What provocative questions will you use to foster inquiry, understanding and transfer of learning?)

- What is a law and why are laws needed?
- Why is there a need for clearly defined, written laws?
- What is a constitution?
- What are the purposes of government?
- How does a constitution affect people's lives?
- Why is the preamble important to the United States Constitution?
- Why is the Constitution of the United States called a "living constitution?"
- How does the Constitution of the United States help our government function?

- What is the intent of the Preamble?

3. Lesson Objectives:

Standards - Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Social Studies

NGSSS-SS Benchmarks

- Define a constitution, and discuss its purposes.

Tested Seventh Grade NGSSS-SS Benchmarks Relevant to this Lesson

- SS.7C.1.6 Interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution.

4. Key Vocabulary:

amend, articles, constitution, convention, cornerstone, defence, domestic, establish, Framers, govern, governed, justice, law, liberty, ordain, posterity, preamble, principle, ratification, tranquility, union, welfare

5. Evidence of Student Understanding (Assessment) in this Lesson:

What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this lesson?

After students complete this lesson they will have an understanding of what a constitution is and why it is necessary. An understanding of the purpose of the United States Constitution as outlined in the preamble will be also evident. Students should also demonstrate an understanding of working with primary source documents.

What will students be able to do as a result of such knowledge and skills?

As a result of acquiring the knowledge and skills addressed in this lesson, the student will be able to complete the attached graphic organizers analyzing laws and interpreting the preamble to the Constitution. Students should also be able to discuss the purpose of the constitution and explain how the preamble outlines these purposes. Students should also be able to complete a primary source document worksheet.

Both **formative and summative assessments** are included. Additionally, students will be able to correctly answer the questions that are part of the formal assessment included with this lesson.

6. Materials Needed:

- Attachment A: Graphic Organizer: Will the Laws Work?
- Attachment B: Reading #1: What is a Constitution?
- Attachment C: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States
- Attachment D: Analyzing a Primary Source Document
- Attachment E: Post Quiz

7. Steps to Deliver the Lesson and Activities:

A detailed, step by step description of how to deliver the lesson and achieve the lesson plan objectives.

- a. Lesson Opening: Write the word “law” on the whiteboard and brainstorm as to the meaning. Ask students to imagine what it would be like if there were no laws in the United States. Discuss what life would be like.
- b. Distribute Attachment A: Graphic Organizer - *Will the Laws Work?* Have students work in small groups to complete. When complete, come together as a group and discuss students’ conclusions. Note that clearly defining laws and government organization and functions were problems facing the Founding Fathers as they met to write a constitution.
- c. Reading: Distribute reading (Attachment B): What is a Constitution? /About the Constitution of the United States. Use jump in reading or other effective reading strategies appropriate for your class to read the background information contained in the article.
- d. Have students define the highlighted vocabulary associated with the lesson.
- e. When the reading is complete, write the term **Constitution** on the board. Brainstorm and discuss the purposes of the **Constitution**. (It covers the way we organize our **government** and is the supreme [most important]

law in the United States.) Why do we need a document such as this? How might the Constitution address some of the issues brought up in the earlier small group discussions (have students refer to attachment A).

- f. Review all of the vocabulary words associated with the preamble to the Constitution. Point out the difference in usage and spelling certain words in the 18th Century as opposed to today. Use the word “defence” as one example. Discuss what a “preamble” is and why it might be important. You may wish to have students view the “TeacherTube” video- the musical explanation of the Preamble:
http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=196683
- g. Distribute Attachment C: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States. Have students read the preamble together. Either individually, or in small groups, have students complete the graphic organizer on Attachment C. You may chose to have each group complete one section of the organizer. After work has been completed, discuss findings as a class.
- h. Discuss the meaning of primary source documents and their usefulness. Explain that the Preamble is an example of a primary source document. Tell students that they will now have the opportunity to analyze a primary source document. Distribute Attachment D: Analyzing a Primary Source Document.
- i. Do the introductory boxes and item numbers 1 & 2 as a class. Have students complete the remainder of Attachment D individually, or in small groups.
- h. Have students take the post-quiz associated with this lesson (Attachment E). Go over the quiz with students. Check for understanding and re-teach any concepts not understood.

8. **Specific Activities: (From Guided to Independent)**

Activities designed to facilitate the gradual release of teacher responsibility, from teacher-led to independent

- a. After students have completed the two readings and the graphic organizers, have students write a 1-2 paragraph journal entry explaining why the United States Constitution begins with the words : **We the**

People, and why these words are written so large at the beginning of the Constitution.

- b. For students who are struggling readers and/or English Language Learners, pair them with another student for assistance.
- c. Circulate the room to monitor students' abilities in writing the journal entry. If students have difficulty with this assignment, model a sample journal entry on the white board.
- d. Have students share their completed journal entries with the class.

9. Differentiated Instruction Strategies:

How to accommodate a variety of student learning needs; remediation strategies as well as enrichment strategies

- a. As students are completing the graphic organizers, work individually with students who are having difficulty with this task.
- b. While students are completing the journal entry, work on an individual basis with students who are having difficulty.

10. Technology Integration:

Activities incorporating technology; e.g., address lesson content through online resources.

- a. Have students visit the US Constitution for Kids website for online activities on the Preamble:
http://www.congressforkids.net/Constitution_index.htm
- b. Have students access Ben's Guide to the Constitution for information and activities relating to the Constitution and Preamble:
<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/documents/constitution/index.html>
- c. For more information and activities on the Preamble, have students access the Interactive Constitution- The Preamble - **National Constitution Center**
http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/details_explanation.php?link=003&const=00_pre_00

- d. For practice with the Preamble, have students solve the “Preamble Puzzle” at:
http://www.texaslre.org/lfei_preamble.html
- e. Visit TeacherTube for a video with the musical explanation of the Preamble:
http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=196683

11. Lesson Closure:

Methods to draw ideas together, review concepts, etc.

- a. After completing and reviewing the post quiz with students, ask students the following questions to conclude the lesson:
 - Why do we need laws?
 - Why is it important that laws are clearly defined?
 - What is a constitution?
 - Why do we need a constitution?
 - Why is the preamble important?
 - What purposes of the constitution are set forth in the preamble?
 - What is a primary source document?
 - What are the advantages of working with a primary source document?
- b. For home learning, Have students write a 1-2 paragraph essay on how a constitution helps governments to function. Students should be prepared to share their work with the class.

Will the Laws Work?

Law	What does the law do? (what is its' purpose)	What problems do you see with this law?	How would you fix the law to make it better?
Citizens of the United States have rights.			
Citizens of the United States will elect a president.			
Every citizen of the United States must pay income taxes.			
Congress will pass laws.			

Attachment A

Will the Laws Work? (Possible answers)

Law	What does the law do? (what is its' purpose)	What problems do you see with this law?	How would you fix the law to make it better?
Citizens of the United States have rights.	Ensure that citizens have basic rights.	It doesn't establish: What a citizen is; How one becomes a citizen; What rights are given;	Define a citizen. Clearly state how one receives citizenship. Clearly define the rights given.
Citizens of the United States will elect a president.	Provide a leader (president) for the country and guarantee that the president is elected by the people.	Problems: What is a president? What are the qualifications for president? Term of office? What is the election process	The law must define: Duties of the President; Qualifications; Term of office; Who may vote; How the election will be conducted (process)
Citizens must pay income taxes.	Provide a source of income for the government. Provide a way for citizens to pay for government services.	It doesn't clearly establish: Who will pay taxes (clearly define citizen, etc) How much will each person pay? How/when/where will taxes be paid?	The law must define: Who must pay taxes How much each person will pay An organization to implement and enforce the tax system
Congress will pass laws.	Informs the people about who makes the laws.	It doesn't clearly establish: What a "congress" is- how we get a congress, and what it does A process for creating and establishing laws	The law must define: A congress, its' function, guidelines, etc How laws are created, passed, enacted

Attachment B:

What is a Constitution?

A **constitution** is a written plan by which a country or organization is **governed**. It contains a set of basic standards or rules to govern a particular group. A constitution defines the **principles** of the organization and sets up a process to establish **laws**.

About the Constitution of the United States

The Constitution of the United States is the **cornerstone** of our American government. In 4,543 words this document describes the structure or plan of the government and the rights of the American people. The Constitution is known as a "living document" because it can be **amended**. Since its **ratification**, it has only been changed ([amended](#)) 27 times. The Constitution is a strong document, more powerful than any branch of government or any state. At the same time, it is flexible enough to allow for freedom and changes in America.

The Constitution is organized into three parts:

- **Preamble:** Describes the purpose of the document and government.
- **Articles:** Establish how the government is structured and how the Constitution can be changed. There are seven articles.
- **Amendments:** Changes to the Constitution; the first ten are called the Bill of Rights.



Source: Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect **Union**, establish **Justice**, insure **domestic Tranquility**, provide for the common **defence**, promote the general **Welfare**, and secure the Blessings of **Liberty** to ourselves and our **Posterity**, do **ordain** and **establish** this Constitution for the United States of America.

What the preamble says:	What does it mean?
We the people, of the United States	
in order to form a more perfect Union	
establish justice	
insure domestic Tranquility	
provide for the common defence	
promote the general welfare	
secure the blessings of liberty	
to ourselves and our posterity	
do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America	

Analyzing a Primary Source Document *
The Preamble

TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Map	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Telegram	<input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record
<input type="checkbox"/> Patent	<input type="checkbox"/> Press release	<input type="checkbox"/> Census report
<input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum	<input type="checkbox"/> Report	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Notations
<input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten	<input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp
<input type="checkbox"/> Typed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Seals	

1. When was the document written?

2. Author(s)?

3. What is the purpose of the Preamble? Why do you think it was written?

4. List two things the Preamble tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

5. List three things you think are important about the Preamble:

6. What evidence in the Preamble helps you know why it was written? Use a quote from the document to demonstrate the evidence.



We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

- Adapted from- Document Analysis Worksheet, National Archives and Records Administration

Low Complexity Items:

1. What is a constitution?
 - a. An agreement of the executive branch of the government
 - b. A written plan by which a country or organization is governed
 - c. A set of traditionally accepted laws and rules
 - d. The right to a speedy trial

2. Why is the Constitution of the United States referred to as a “living” constitution?
 - a. Because it can never be amended (changed)
 - b. Because it can be amended (changed)
 - c. Because it is very old
 - d. Because a copy of it is preserved in the National Archives

3. What does the United States Constitution define?
 - a. How the Federal Government is structured
 - b. How local officials are elected
 - c. How each state must organize its’ paperwork
 - d. How city leaders are elected

Moderate Complexity Items (3 items):

4. Why does a country need a Constitution?
 - a. To organize, set laws, and govern a country properly
 - b. To make sure that everyone in the country agrees on everything
 - c. To cut down on the state's paperwork
 - d. To make sure the king's are kept in check

5. What is wrong with the following law:
Citizens will elect a president?
 - a. It doesn't define a citizen, duties or qualifications of a president, or the election process
 - b. It doesn't define a citizen or how much citizens must pay in taxes to be able to vote
 - c. It doesn't describe states' rights or civil liberties
 - d. Nothing, the law is fine

6. What is the purpose of the Preamble?
 - a. It doesn't have a specific purpose; it was the accepted writing style of the time.
 - b. To show the strength of the Articles of Confederation
 - c. To make sure that George Washington was elected President.
 - d. To set forth the general goals and describe the purposes of the Constitution

High Complexity Items

7. Why did the Founding Fathers include the amendment process in the Constitution?
 - a. So that the Declaration of Independence could be ratified
 - b. To prove that the Constitution was infallible and never needed to change
 - c. So that the Constitution never had to be revised
 - d. So that the Constitution could be revised to keep up with changing times

Use the Preamble to the Constitution (below) to answer questions 8-10

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect **Union**, establish **Justice**, insure **domestic Tranquility**, provide for the common **defence**, promote the general **Welfare**, and secure the Blessings of **Liberty** to ourselves and our **Posterity**, do **ordain** and **establish** this Constitution for the United States of America.

8. Which principle about “the People” is shown in the Preamble?
 - a. They have a right to a speedy trial
 - b. They have a right to have the highest standard of living in the world
 - c. They are the source of political power
 - d. They are the ultimate source of funding the government

9. The preamble to the Constitution mentions “a more perfect Union.” What is meant by “a more perfect Union”?
- a. a better government that united the Confederate States and the Union
 - b. a better government that united the 13 separate states into one nation
 - c. a more united government that would join the colonies to Great Britain
 - d. a more united government joining the United States to Europe
10. According to the Preamble (above), which of the following is a purpose of the United States government?
- a. to make sure Americans are loyal to the British Government
 - b. to make all Americans support the government
 - c. to explain and justify the Revolutionary War
 - d. to make Americans free now and in the future

Answer Key:

1. B

2. B

3. A

4. A

5. A

6. D

7. D

8. C

9. B

10. D