Social Studies Lesson Plan

Explain how popular sovereignty, rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, and individual rights limit the powers of the federal government as expressed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

1. **Title:** Fundamental Principles of American Democracy

2. **Overview - Big Ideas:**  
   **Enduring Understandings**
   - Understand basic Principles/Concepts (rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, popular sovereignty and federalism) of American Democracy as they relate to daily life of all citizens.
   - Comprehend the foundation of American constitutional government.
   - Understand the difference between limited government and unlimited power.
   - Know why limited power is an essential concept of our form of government.
   - Be aware of how these concepts and principles relate to our contemporary society.
   - Understand the concept of rule of law.
   - Recognize the different powers shared by the different levels of government (federal and state).

   **Essential Questions** – *(What provocative questions will you use to foster inquiry, understanding and transfer of learning?)*
   - Why is it important to understand how a limited Government can secure the basic liberties of the American people?
   - Why did the Founding Fathers establish the concept of Checks and Balances?
   - How and why does federalism limit the government?
   - What are some examples of enumerated, concurrent and reserved powers?
• How do the following principles lead to an orderly society? (popular sovereignty, rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, and individual rights)

3. **Lesson Objectives**

**Standards** - Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Social Studies

**NGSSS-SS Benchmarks**

• Explain how popular sovereignty, rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, and individual rights limit the powers of the federal government as expressed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

**Tested Seventh Grade NGSSS-SS Benchmarks Relevant to this Lesson**

• SS.7.C.3.8 Analyze the structure, functions, and processes of the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

• SS.7.C.3.9 Illustrate the law-making process at the local, state, and federal levels.

4. **Key Vocabulary:**

checks and balances, concurrent, democracy, enumerated powers or expressed powers, executive branch, federal, federalism, founding fathers, individual rights, judicial branch, legislative branch, popular sovereignty, reserved powers, rule of law, separation of powers, veto

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 be able to identify the basic principles of American government. An understanding of each principle should be evident, as well as being able to identify examples of checks and balances and powers of the national and/or state governments. Students should be able to evaluate the benefits of these principles and know how they help protect our democratic form of government. Furthermore, students should be able to
compare and contrast a society that operates under rule of law and one that does not.

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

As a result of the skills and knowledge acquired from this lesson, students will be able to complete the activity related to the five basic concepts which are outlined in the Constitution reading. They should be able to define each item and provide an example. Students should also be able to evaluate the graphs and fill out the charts related to the concepts of checks and balances and federalism.

Additionally, students will be able to correctly answer the questions that are part of the formal assessment included with this lesson.

Both formative and summative assessments are included.

6. Materials Needed:

Attachment A: Reading: Fundamental principles of American democracy

Attachment B: Picture of end product (activity done in class): Materials needed for each student to complete this activity are five index cards, one hanger, yarn, glue and scissors.

Attachment C: Checks and Balances Chart

Attachment D: Checks and Balances Graph

Attachment E: Federalism Classification Activity

Attachment F: Decisions: Who makes them?

Attachment G: Post quiz

7. Steps to Deliver the Lesson:

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

a. Lesson opening: Start by asking students what are some limits they have in their homes e.g. can’t eat junk food, have to go to bed at a certain time etc. Explain that in order for the United States to have a democracy, the Founding Fathers created a government with certain principles to protect individual rights. Give specific examples of governments that do not
embrace these concepts and discuss what could happen to the people’s rights in these situations.

b. Reading: Distribute reading (Attachment A): Fundamental Principals of American Democracy. Use different reading strategies for this passage. Since the passage has three pages (it contains charts) have students create two-column notes. Main idea and detail could be appropriate categories.

c. Activity: Materials needed for each student to complete this activity are: five index cards, one hanger, yarn, glue and scissors. Give students five index cards, one for each principle. On the front of the index card have students write the name of the principle i.e. rules of law. On the back of the index card students are to write a definition and an example of the principle i.e. even the president can get arrested for breaking the law, nobody is above the law. After all five cards are finished give each student five pieces of yarn (5 inches long) and a hanger. Students are to decorate as they wish. Please see Attachment B for picture of end product.

d. Distribute (Attachment C). Explain to students that they are to complete the chart by using attachment D: Checks and Balances Chart. Go over answers with students.

e. The concept of Federalism is very difficult to understand. In this activity students will first understand some decisions that they make by themselves, others that their parents make for them and lastly, decisions that they make together. Have students take attachment F home to work together with their parents to complete. Students may share their answers with the class. Write some of the most common answers on the board. Now, explain that this is the same concept as Federalism, there are some decisions and/or duties that the Federal government makes, others that the states have and others that they share.

f. Have students complete Attachment E.

g. After finishing all steps, students should take post-quiz (Attachment G). Check for understanding and re-teach any concepts that were not mastered.

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 finished reading Attachment A and are working on the activity (attachment B) ask them to come up with correct examples. Redirect them to Attachment A, the reading passage to get the correct definitions and/or examples.

b. Pair students who are struggling readers and/or English Language Learners with another student for assistance. Instead of writing an example on the back of the index cards, they may draw the example.

c. Circulate the room to monitor students’ abilities in writing and model examples as they relate the Five Fundamental Principles.

d. Display student’s final work in the classroom.

9. Differentiated Instruction Strategies:

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

a. While students are working on the different activities, work individually with students who are having difficulty with the assigned task.

b. Assist students with Attachments B, C and E. If students are having difficulties understanding some of the concepts, have them watch Brain Pop and/or other visuals.

10. Technology Integration:

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


c. Have students watch the animated video on the NCSL website about the importance of getting involved so these principle of democracy can exist: http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=21708

d. For more information on the concept of Check and Balances students can access the Center on Congress website and use the interactive module: http://www.democracykids.org/demo_kids_1/main.swf
e. Have students look at the glossary terms on the “Democracykids” website: http://www.democracykids.org/demo_kids_1/main.swf

f. In this interactive game students will further their knowledge on the concept of Separation of Powers. If technology is a problem, teachers can show the activity on a monitor. http://www.icivics.org/subject/separation-powers

11. **Lesson Closure:**

*Methods to draw ideas together, review concepts, etc.*

a. After reviewing the post quiz, ask students the following questions to conclude the lesson:

- What are some principles of American democracy?
- Why are these principles so important?
- How do these principles limit the power of the Government?
- How do these principles protect the rights of the individuals?
- What are some examples of the concept of Rule of Law?
- Give examples of powers shared by the state and the federal government.
- What does it mean to be sovereign?
- How do the three branches of government check and balance each other’s powers? Do you agree with this system?

b. For home learning: Give students Attachment F and have them fill out the three column chart. Let students know that they might have to consult with their parents. Students may share their answers with the class. Write some of the most common answers on the board.
The word “democracy” means “rule by the people.” It originated more than 2,400 years ago in Ancient Greece. While this definition tells us that the citizens of a democracy govern their nation, it omits essential parts of the idea of democracy as practiced in countries around the world. The principal purposes for which people establish democratic government are the protection and promotion of their rights, interests, and welfare. Democracy requires that each individual be free to participate in the political community’s self-government. Therefore political freedom lies within the each of us.

There are five fundamentals principles underlying the Constitution, these are:

1. **Popular sovereignty:** the idea that the People are the ultimate authority and the source of the authority of government—is a fundamental principle of democracy. Sovereignty means the right to rule and popular means the population or public. In a democracy, the powers of government are based upon the consent of the governed. Free elections and other forms of civic participation are essential to democracy. Elected officials are always accountable to the people. By the majority vote citizen decide who is going to govern them.

2. **Rule of Law:** Government is limited by rule of law, which means that no one is above the law. No one should break the law or try to escape from it. This also means that the law applies to everyone. Our laws are based on the Constitution and protected by the courts.

3. **Separation of Powers:** The founding fathers, also called the Framers of the Constitution, feared that one person or one group could gain too much power, therefore they divided the government into three parts or branches. Montesquieu a French philosopher influenced the idea of separating the legislative, executive and judicial branches. Splitting the powers among the three branches is called Separations of powers.
4. **Checks and Balances**: Another way of limiting the power of government is to include the system of checks and balances. This means that each of the three branches is able to check and balance each other’s powers. Some concrete examples are that the President can veto legislation and by doing that is checking and balancing the power of the Legislative branch. The chart below demonstrates the way it works.
5. **Federalism**: It is another principle of our American Government which further limits it. It simply means that the powers of government are divided among the Federal (whole USA) and the states (fifty individual states). The powers that are specifically given to the Federal government are called enumerated or expressed powers. The ones given specifically to the states are called reserved powers and the ones that both levels of government can exercise are called concurrent powers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Government</th>
<th>State Governments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Print money</td>
<td>• Issue licenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regulate interstate (between states) and international trade</td>
<td>• Regulate intrastate (within the state) businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make treaties and conduct foreign policy</td>
<td>• Conduct elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Declare war</td>
<td>• Establish local governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide an army and navy</td>
<td>• Ratify amendments to the Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish post offices</td>
<td>• Take measures for public health and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make laws necessary and proper to carry out the these powers</td>
<td>• May exert powers the Constitution does not delegate to the national government or prohibit the states from using</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concurrent powers of the national government and state governments include the ability to:

- Collect taxes
- Build roads
- Borrow money
- Establish courts
- Make and enforce laws
- Charter banks and corporations
- Spend money for the general welfare
- Take private property for public purposes, with just compensation
Attachment B

End product
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POWER</th>
<th>HOW IT CAN BE CHECKED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress passes a law.</td>
<td>The president may ________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR the president may ________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THEN, the Supreme Court may __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The president vetoes a law passed by Congress.</td>
<td>Congress may ________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The president makes a treaty with another country.</td>
<td>The Senate may ________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The president enforces a law.</td>
<td>The Supreme Court may ______________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Congress passes a law.  
The president may ______________________________  
OR the president may ______________________________  
THEN, the Supreme Court may __________________________

The president vetoes a law passed by Congress.  
Congress may ______________________________

The president makes a treaty with another country.  
The Senate may ______________________________

The president enforces a law.  
The Supreme Court may ______________________________
Congress approves presidential nominations and controls the budget. It can pass laws over the president's veto and can impeach the president and remove him or her from office.

The president can veto congressional legislation.

Executive Branch
The President
Executive office of the president; executive and cabinet departments; independent government agencies.

Legislative Branch
The Congress
House of Representatives; Senate. House and Senate can veto each other's bills.

Judicial Branch
The Courts
Supreme Court; Courts of Appeal; District courts.

The Senate confirms the President's nominations. Congress can impeach, convict, and remove them from office.

The Court can declare laws unconstitutional.

The president nominates judges.

The Court can declare presidential acts unconstitutional.
Federalism Classification Activity

Federalism: a system in which power is divided between local, state, and national governments

Directions: Classify the following powers in the chart on the next page. Take the time to consider which category would be the most appropriate based on the description.

- declare and engage in war
- conduct elections
- print and coin money
- govern marriage laws
- maintain an army, navy, and air force
- regulate interstate and foreign commerce
- regulate intrastate commerce
- punish lawbreakers
- levy and collect taxes
- protect the rights of citizens
- set traffic standards
- admit new states
- provide for public safety
- borrow money
- establish and maintain schools
- negotiate treaties with foreign countries
- protect public health
- determine the qualifications of voters
- set up a post office
- set rules for immigration
- maintain the state militia (also known as the National Guard)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Powers of the National Government</th>
<th>Powers Shared by the State and National Governments</th>
<th>Powers of the State Governments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions students make by themselves</td>
<td><strong>Decisions/Powers Shared by students and parents</strong></td>
<td>Decisions that their parents make for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Low Complexity Items:

1. One of the major concepts of American Democracy is rule of law which means:
   a. That legislative branch of the government has more power than any of the three branches.
   b. The states have more power than the national government.
   c. Nobody is above the law.
   d. The president can be excused for breaking the law.

2. The division of authority among the three branches of government is known as?
   a. Separation of powers.
   b. Concurrent powers.
   c. Government powers.
   d. The federal powers.

3. What is the meaning of “the power lies with the people?”
   b. Popular Sovereignty
   c. Rule of Law.
   d. Separation of powers.
Moderate Complexity Items

4. What is the meaning of the statement below?

“Congress has the power to impeach the president”

a. Congress works together with the other branches
b. Congress can remove the president from office.
c. Congress and the president don’t get along.
d. The president has more power than Congress.

5. The concept of Rule of Law teaches us that nobody is above the law. What can happen if a member of the legislative branch of Congress abuses his/her power and breaks the law?

a. This member of Congress is part of government therefore he can’t be punished.
b. The other members of Congress will get mad at him/her.
c. The president will punish him/her.
d. He or she can be prosecuted under the law.

6. Which branch of Government can veto laws?

a. The Executive branch, which is represented by the president.
b. The legislative branch, which is represented by Congress.
c. No branch of government can veto laws.
d. The judicial branch, which is represented by the Courts.
7. The statement below is a quote by William R. Rehnquist, a former Supreme Court Justice. The statement demonstrates that he believed in which principle of American democracy?

Quote: "We start with first principles. The Constitution creates a Federal Government of enumerated powers"

a. Rule of Law
b. Checks and Balances
c. Federalism
d. Popular Sovereignty.

8. According to Article V, both Congress and the states must participate in the amendment process. This requirement reflects which of the following ideas about the distribution of power in America?

a. Separation of church and government
e. Separation of the three branches of government
f. The importance of federalism
g. The importance of the state powers.

9. "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. Federalist No. 51"

The above quote by James Madison from Federalist 51 (the Federalist Papers) refers to a specific need. What need is Madison referring to?

a. The need for government with Checks and Balances.
b. The need for a system rules.
c. The need for an independent military
d. The need for a national education system
10. Below is a chart that shows certain powers that the National and State governments have. What are some powers that are shared by both governments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Government</th>
<th>State Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coin money.</td>
<td>Ratify amendments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declare war.</td>
<td>Manage public health and safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct foreign relations.</td>
<td>Oversee trade within the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversee foreign and interstate trade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. They both control mints that print money.
b. They both can declare war.
c. They both make treaties with foreign governments.
d. They both can tax make and enforce laws.
Answers to Post Quiz

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. D
6. A
7. C
8. F
9. A
10. D