

# A MORE PERFECT UNION

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

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**Length of Unit:** Seven lessons (approximately two weeks (10 days), 1day = 50 minutes)

## I. ABSTRACT

This unit spans the historic time period beginning from the end of the American Revolution through the writing of the Constitutional framework itself, including how the newly designed government was intended to function. Throughout the various activities included within, students will gain a deeper understanding of why such a government needed to be instilled as opposed to the government colonists left back in England. They will also have hands-on experiences with the way government works and realize why it is important to become involved in at an early age.

## II. OVERVIEW

### A. Concept Objectives

1. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
2. Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.
3. Students will develop a sense of historical empathy.

### B. Content from the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, pages 94-95

1. Main ideas behind the Declaration of Independence including “all men are created equal,” the natural rights of the people, and the responsibility of the government to protect these rights.
2. Articles of Confederation: weak central government
3. Constitutional Convention
4. Founding Fathers
5. “Republican” type of government
6. Preamble to the Constitution
7. Three branches of government
8. Levels and functions of government (national, state, local)
9. Checks and Balances
10. Bill of Rights

### C. Skill Objectives

1. Students will review the main ideas and principles behind the Declaration of Independence and understand its purpose and importance.
2. Students will discover that the new government under the Articles of Confederation had many problems and that at this time the states were not so united.
3. Students will demonstrate the process of compromising on issues as was done during the Constitutional Convention.
4. Students will familiarize themselves with the events of the Constitutional Convention.
5. Students will create a class translation of the preamble to the Constitution to better understand its meaning.

6. Students will find synonyms for difficult vocabulary within the Constitution.
7. Students will understand that the national, state, and local levels of government are divided into three branches and will list the roles of each.
8. Students will realize ways and the importance of participating in government even at a young age.
9. Students will complete a flow chart of the checks and balances process of government and participate in a recreation of this process in action.
10. Students will demonstrate how the freedoms listed in the Bill of Rights affect their lives with a short skit.
11. Students will illustrate key elements of the Constitution by creating a class mural.

### III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. For Teachers
  1. Fritz, Jean. *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1987. 0-590-41201-9.
  2. Johnson, Linda Carlson. *Our Constitution*. Brookfield, Connecticut: The Millbrook Press, 1992. 1-56294-813-x.
  3. Levy, Elizabeth. *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1987. 0-590-45159-6.
- B. For Students
  1. Grade 2: American Government: The Constitution.
  2. Grade 4: American Revolution

### IV. RESOURCES

- A. Appendices A-E
- B. *Our Constitution*, pages 9-11
- C. *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*
- D. *We the People: The Constitution of the United States of America*
- E. *United States and its Neighbors*, pages 330-333 or *A More Perfect Union*, pages 44-48 or *The Constitution Made Easier*

### V. LESSONS

#### Lesson One: Declaration of Independence (one day)

- A. *Daily Objectives*
  1. Concept Objective(s)
    - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
    - b. Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Main ideas behind the Declaration of Independence including “all men are created equal,” the natural rights of the people, and the responsibility of the government to protect these rights.

3. Skill Objective(s)
  - a. Students will review the main ideas and principles behind the Declaration of Independence and understand its purpose and importance.
- B. *Materials*
  1. Appendix A: We Hold These Truths (one copy for each child)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
  1. Unalienable- not able to be given or taken away
  2. Liberty- condition of being free; independence
  3. Freedom- condition of being free; liberty
  4. Pursuit- striving for; trying to get; seeking
  5. Abolish- do away with completely; to put an end to
  6. Institute- to set up or establish; begin
  7. Principles- fundamental beliefs
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
  1. Have students think back to the Revolutionary War unit. Ask them why Americans felt the need to become independent from Great Britain. Review reasons covered in previous unit. Be sure students realize that this document was a statement of human rights, a list of complaints against the British, and a formal announcement of independence. Review the fact that that members of the Second Continental Congress signed it on July 4, 1776, thus the reason for “Independence Day” on July 4<sup>th</sup>, and that it was written by Thomas Jefferson.
  2. Give students a review worksheet focusing on key elements of the Declaration of Independence (Appendix A). Have students work with a partner to answer questions. When groups are finished, meet back as a whole class to discuss answers.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
  1. Students will complete a review worksheet about the main ideas behind the Declaration of Independence (Appendix A).

**Lesson Two: Articles of Confederation (one day)**

- A. *Daily Objectives*
  1. Concept Objective(s)
    - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
    - b. Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Articles of Confederation: weak central government
  3. Skill Objective(s)
    - a. Students will discover that the new government under the Articles of Confederation had many problems and that at this time the states were not so united.
- B. *Materials*
  1. *Our Constitution*, pages 9-11 (reference book to read aloud)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
  1. Rebellion- armed resistance or fight against one’s government; revolt

2. Confederation- a joining together of a league or alliance
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Let students know that a year after the Declaration of Independence was signed, colonial leaders signed an agreement called the Articles of Confederation. This document united the former thirteen colonies together into one nation against the British. Read pages 9-11 from *Our Constitution*. The reading selection discusses several problems the budding nation was experiencing. It also includes a short excerpt about Shays' Rebellion, which helped fuel existing frustrations about the new government or lack thereof.
  2. After reading the short section, ask students what some of the problems with the government were. List these on the board.
  3. Ask students to choose two of the problems listed to explain further on a sheet of paper. They need to explain what the problem is and give a suggestion to how it could be solved.
  4. Have several volunteers share responses. Make sure all major issues are shared. If certain items weren't addressed, be sure to insert these in the discussion. Such issues include: Congress not having power to raise money, state representatives not attending meetings, states operating as separate nations such as having different units of currency and making their own laws about how trade and business should be run. Also explain that the Shays' Rebellion was a strong message to many leaders that the states needed to work together to form a stronger union.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will define two problems of the government under the Articles of Confederation and pose plausible solutions to these problems.

**Lesson Three: Constitutional Convention (two days)**

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
    - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
    - b. Students will develop a sense of historical empathy.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Constitutional Convention
    - b. Founding Fathers
  3. Skill Objective(s)
    - a. Students will demonstrate the process of compromising on issues as was done during the Constitutional Convention.
    - b. Students will familiarize themselves with events of the Constitutional Convention.
- B. *Materials*
1. Teacher made invitations to Convention (one for each child)
  2. Appendix B: Plans of Government (six student copies)
  3. Appendix C: Movie/Book Quiz (one copy for each child)
  4. *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* (picture book to read aloud)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Ratification- confirmation; approval

2. Compromise- a settlement of a quarrel or difference of opinion in which both sides agree to give up a part of what each demands

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Beforehand prepare student invitations to Philadelphia's Constitutional Convention. Also choose three groups of two students each ahead of time to represent state plans of Virginia, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Have them read about their plan (Appendix B) and decide how to present it to the rest of the class.
2. Hand out invitations to students and designate an area of the room where the convention is to be held. Have students pair up until there are thirteen different groups to represent thirteen colonies.
3. Lead groups to set area convention will be held. Tell students that they are going to represent delegates that were chosen to attend the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Inform delegates that they were asked to attend because presently under the current Articles of Confederation, the government has been experiencing several problems. Ask students if they can share what any of these problems are (remind them of previous lesson if need be). Ask students if they feel the need for a new government. Take a vote from students about whether or not a new plan for government needs to be formed.
4. Tell students that three different states feel that a new plan should be formed and would like to present their plan to everyone else. Have prearranged Virginia group present their plan (Appendix B). Explain that colonists started disagreements against this plan because they felt it was unfair. Next, have New Jersey group present their plan (Appendix B). Again mention that many colonists felt this was not reasonable either.
5. Ask students how they might go about solving this dilemma as colonists. Guide them toward the idea of meeting half way in the middle, or compromising. Define the word "compromise."
6. Finally have the Connecticut group of delegates present their plan (Appendix B). Mention that their means of negotiating this stalemate was called "The Great Compromise." Referring back to the definition, ask why they might have entitled their plan as such. Take a class vote on the best of the three plans. Tell students that it was the Connecticut plan that the majority of delegates agreed on. Interject the fact that not everyone will always agree on all ideas, that many will continue to feel strongly against something even if majority rules against that favor. However, for governments, groups, and institutions to function properly, compromises need to be made and the majority of the groups' votes should counterbalance individual opinions.
7. Inform students that this convention was only the beginning to a long process of revising and redefining a strong government that all people could be able to live with and the majority be happy with.
8. Read Jean Fritz's *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*. This is also available on videocassette for an alternative to reading the book. The book humorously portrays events occurring throughout the process of revamping the government during the Constitutional Convention. Let them know they will have a brief quiz about key elements of the

Convention at the end of the book (or movie). You may wish to let students know quiz questions before reading (or watching) to let them know aspects to focus in on during the story (movie).

9. After completing the read aloud (or movie), give students quiz (Appendix C). Go over responses together when finished. Also review important key historical figures or “Founding Fathers” such as Washington, Madison, Franklin, Hamilton, etc.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Students will participate in a simulation of the Constitutional Convention, and after having three plans presented to them there, will explain why Connecticut’s “Great Compromise” best serves the government’s purpose.
2. Students will complete a quiz on Jean Fritz’s *Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution*, covering main ideas and events of the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

**Lesson Four: Preamble (one day)**

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
  - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
  - b. Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Preamble to the Constitution
3. Skill Objective(s)
  - a. Students will create a class translation of the preamble to the Constitution to better understand its meaning.
  - b. Students will find synonyms for difficult vocabulary within the Constitution.

B. *Materials*

1. Appendix D: Preamble to the Constitution (teacher reference copy)
2. Preamble written on large butcher paper (or transparency of preamble)
3. Large piece of blank butcher paper (or blank transparency)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Constitution- the basic laws and ideas that define a nation’s government
2. Preamble- introduction to a speech or a writing
3. Union- a group of people, states, etc. united for some special purpose
4. Justice- rightfulness; fairness
5. Tranquility- peacefulness
6. Defense- a guarding against attack or harm; protecting
7. Promote- help to grow or develop; help to success
8. Welfare- condition of being or doing well
9. Liberty- freedom
10. Posterity- generations of the future
11. Ordain- pass as a law; appoint
12. Establish- set up on a firm or lasting basis

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Remind students of events occurring at the constitutional convention including James Madison writing up a government plan. Most delegates liked his plan so well that instead of revising the Articles of Confederation, they wished to adopt Madison's premise and formulate it into a new plan of government or a new "constitution." Explain that this is why he is commonly referred to as the "Father of the Constitution." Within the revision process of a better government plan, leaders felt it necessary to clearly state the new nation's goals and functions. The former is stated within the Preamble.
2. Display and read aloud a copy of the preamble to the Constitution on a large piece of butcher paper or a transparency. You may wish to use Appendix D as a guide. It is merely a copy of the preamble, with suggested vocabulary words in bold type. On your chart paper or transparency, have bold words from Appendix D written in a different color for easy student visibility. The number of students in your classroom will determine if other words need to be outlined in color as well. For example, there are presently ten bold words. Students will be working in partners with these words, allowing enough words for twenty students. If you have more than this amount of students, assign additional words to pairs. Additional word selections may include: *perfect*, *domestic*, *provide*, *general*, *secure*, and *blessings*.
3. Ask students what makes the document difficult to read. Discuss how language can be a barrier if not understood. Let students know that the goal is to make sense of the preamble by breaking through the language barrier. Pair students with a partner. Assign each set of students one vocabulary word marked in color on butcher paper or transparency to define and find synonyms for. The ten words as marked on Appendix D are *union*, *justice*, *tranquility*, *defense*, *promote*, *welfare*, *liberty*, *posterity*, *ordain*, and *establish*.
4. Once students have completed this, reconvene as a class and reread the preamble on butcher paper (transparency), stopping at colored words and discussing meanings and alternative word choices. Decide as a class which of the volunteered synonyms should be used to replace the difficult words. When finished, rewrite the class translation onto a new piece of butcher paper (transparency).

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Students will collectively create a new preamble to the Constitution in which difficult vocabulary is replaced by newly discovered synonyms of their choice.

**Lesson Five: Branches/Levels of Government (two days)**

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
  - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
  - b. Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.

2. Lesson Content
    - a. “Republican” type of government
    - b. Three branches of government
    - c. Levels and functions of government (national, state, local)
  3. Skill Objective(s)
    - a. Students will understand that the national, state, and local levels of government are divided into three branches and will list the roles of each.
    - b. Students will realize ways and the importance of participating in government even at a young age.
- B. *Materials*
1. Resources from local library about government for the state and city in which you live
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Republic- a type of government in which the people elect representatives to run the country
  2. Legislative Branch- lawmaking branch also known as congress
  3. Executive Branch- branch carrying out laws and running government headed by the president
  4. Judicial Branch- branch deciding the meaning of laws comprised of the Supreme Court
  5. Municipal court- court dealing with affairs of the city or town (city court)
  6. Veto- to refuse to approve
  7. Bill- a proposed law presented to a lawmaking body for its approval
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Remind students that the preamble outlines the new government’s goals, but that it does not mention how the government should function. Ask students why it might be important to have a list of rules to follow in various situations. Let them know that there also needed to be a set of instructions on how the government should be run as well. Without these, things could easily fall apart. Remind them of several problems the nation was having under the Articles of Confederation. This weak government truly caused people to realize that the government needed a strong framework to not fall apart. Many people were also worried about losing freedoms or giving too much power to the government. The Founding Fathers realized that a concrete plan needed to be drafted to make sure these things did not happen. They also agreed that the government should be a “republic,” a type of government in which the people elect representatives to run the country. This way they could ensure that the country belonged to all people and not just the government. After separating from Britain, the last thing the people or delegates wanted was for one institute to have too much power.
  2. Now that the delegates agreed on what the country was to be about, they were ready to start filling in all the details of how things should run. These were written as Articles within the Constitution. Remind them of the Virginia Plan that was proposed during the convention. Let them know that not only did this plan suggest the controversial idea of representation according to population as discussed in lesson three, but it

also recommended the notion of dividing governmental powers among three branches. These powers would be protected against attempts by the other branches to undermine them. At the same time, however, each branch would have a check on the other two to keep them within certain limits. This system of checks and balances was designed to lessen the chance of tyranny and corruption in the government. (Let students know that they will learn more about checks and balances in a later lesson.) Although several ideas of the Virginia Plan were denied, this idea of government branches and checks and balances was widely accepted among most of the delegates at the convention.

3. Tell students that each of the governmental branch has its function, a list of duties and responsibilities it holds, and a leader or head in charge of others within the branch. Have student take notes on the three branches of government including the following information:
  - a. **Legislative Branch:** This is the lawmaking branch of the government also known as congress. They make laws and raise money for the government. Congress is divided into two parts (as decided by the Great Compromise to fairly represent people of each state): the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the House of Representatives (“lower” house), each state is represented according to its population. In the Senate (“upper” house), each state has two senators regardless of population. Some duties of the legislative branch include writing laws, passing taxes, approving treaties, and declaring war. They can check the executive branch by passing laws over the President’s veto, rejecting the President’s appointments, and can charge the President with wrongdoing. They can check the judicial branch by charging the Supreme Court justices with wrongdoing or rejecting appointments of justices. Any suggested law (or bill) has to pass both the House and Senate before being sent to the president for approval. If the president approves and signs the bill, it becomes a law. However, if he refuses to sign (or vetoes) the bill, it may only become a law if 2/3 of the members of both the House and the Senate vote in favor of it.
  - b. **Executive Branch:** This is the branch that carries out the laws and runs the government. It is headed by the President. Some of the President’s powers include managing the government, being the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, appointing government leaders, and making treaties. He can check the legislative branch by vetoing laws passed by congress and may check the judicial branch by granting pardons or appointing Supreme Court justices.
  - c. **Judicial Branch:** This branch decides the meaning of the laws. It is headed by a Supreme Court. This court consists of nine judges appointed by the president and approved by the Senate. The lead judge is called the Chief Justice. The Supreme Court is responsible for hearing and passing judgments in legal cases on the national level. They have the power to decide whether a law should be allowed under the Constitution. Its duty is to explain the meaning

of laws and treaties. It checks the executive branch by ruling whether the President's actions are constitutional and checks the legislative branch by ruling whether laws passed by Congress are constitutional. If Congress passes a law, a citizen who feels that the law is unfair may go to court. If the court deems that law unconstitutional, the law is taken out or changed, and people no longer have to obey it.

*Suggestion for notetaking:* One style of notes students may use here is two-column notetaking. For these notes, students make a vertical crease in their paper (hot dog style) about a third of the way from the left edge. This way the region to the right of the crease is larger. They write subheadings to the left of the crease and details to the right. This is merely an organizational tool for informational notes and is one of many options that may be employed. Another thing that may vary is the amount of detail to include about each of the three branches. You may wish to save information on how each of the branches checks each other for the next lesson. However, you may wish to seek other choices for additional information as well if you would like to go into more depth.

4. Tell students that this system of government is also applied at the state and local levels as well and they too have a legislative, executive, and judicial branch. Ahead of time you will want to find resources on your own state and city government to provide details for the branches under each. Let them know that each state has its own constitution, although it is subordinate to the national constitution, the highest law of the land. Inform students of what year your state's constitution was set up. Then list the duties and responsibilities of each of the branches at the state level. Let them know that again the legislative branch is divided into a Senate and House of Representatives, but instead of Congress, this lawmaking group is called the General Assembly. Instead of a president and vice president, each state has a governor and lieutenant governor as head of the executive branch. In the judicial branch, there are city and county courts rather than a supreme court. At the local level, the head of the executive branch is called the mayor, the legislature is made up of city council, and the judicial branch is comprised of a municipal court rather than a supreme court. Be sure students know their current government officials at all levels: national, state, and local including the president, vice president, state governor, lieutenant governor, and city mayor. These members may be mentioned when duties are listed for the executive branches of the different levels.
5. Ask students to brainstorm ways in which people can participate in government, whether at the national, state, or local level (voting, keeping informed on issues, supporting representatives, paying taxes, buying U.S. goods and trade items, etc.) Have students pair up with partners to design and present a clever way to promote one of the options on the brainstorming list. Ideas include a poster showing people buying U.S. made goods, a chant about why it is important to vote, a short skit about paying taxes, etc. After presentations, tell students that they are already participating in government in some ways and that it is important to stay

informed and involved throughout their lifetime. Encourage them to always vote when they become of age and mention that their vote does count and can make a difference on decisions being made.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Students will take two column notes about the three branches of government of the nation, their state, and the city in which they live.
2. Students will list ways to participate in government and demonstrate one of these through a short skit, chant, song, poster, or other creative method of their choice.

**Lesson Six: Checks and Balances (one day)**

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
  - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Checks and Balances
3. Skill Objective(s)
  - a. Students will complete a flow chart of the checks and balances process of government and participate in a recreation of this process in action.

B. *Materials*

1. Appendix E: Checks and Balances (one copy for each child)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Checks and balances- the system in which the power of each branch of government is balanced by the powers of the other branches
2. Chief Justice- a presiding judge of the United States Supreme Court

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Review the three branches of government. Display a flow chart on the overhead of how these branches keep each other in check. Hand out student copies of this chart as well. Color information about the legislative branch red, including the arrows leading to and away from the box containing the data. Color information and arrows about the executive branch green. Color judicial branch information purple. Show how this balance of power keeps any one branch from gaining too much control.
2. Divide the class into three groups. Each group will represent a separate government branch. The legislative group will need to be split up into the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the executive group, appoint a president. Select only nine students to be in the judicial group, since the judicial branch is composed of nine justices. Then select a Chief Justice among this group.
3. Choose an issue to use in this reenactment of passing a bill into a law using checks and balances. An example could be whether or not the school week should be shortened into four days with longer hours. Any other issue could be used, but directions will be explained in accordance to this sample issue. On three large index cards (one card per group), you

will write out a set of instructions of how each group will respond to this issue.

- a. The following set of instructions can be written on the card for the **legislative group**: “You are the legislative branch. Your duty is to write a bill that allows your school to change the school week to four days instead of the present five. You will need to propose a law that states the new school day hours, so that the requirements are still met for number of contact hours in the classroom. You will need to write out this bill and be ready to debate the bill in class and vote on it. (Although in real life many issues are voted down before reaching the president, for classroom purposes, the final result of this bill will be to make it to the president. If the president vetoes the bill, you, as congress, will need to make amendments (adjustments so that it will pass) to the bill and resubmit it to the president.”
  - b. Write the following instructions on the card for the **executive group**: “You are the executive branch. Congress is going to submit a bill that will make it legal to have a four day school week rather than the traditional five day week. Your job is to decide whether the president should veto or accept this bill. All students in this group, with exception of the president, are the president’s advisors. You advisors must write a memorandum to the president stating your position on the bill with a recommendation whether or not it should be vetoed. If the president vetoes this bill, you will need to send it back to congress for them to amend for resubmittal. The bill will need to ultimately be accepted by the president, but you may allow for one veto.”
  - c. The following instructions may be written on the card for the **judicial group**: “You are the Supreme Court. Presently, Congress is considering a bill that will legalize a four day school week. If the bill is approved by Congress and the president, you must be ready to ask Congress questions about the bill in order to learn facts leading to a decision if a lawsuit is brought up by the press (parents) against the bill. Brainstorm questions you think the press (parents) will have concerns about and want answers to. Examples may be: How long is the learning time in the classroom? How long are the school days? How many total school days will there be? Prepare a list of 5-7 of these questions you wish to present. After listing these questions, take a vote on who agrees and disagrees with the bill. The group with more justices (students) becomes the majority opinion and needs to write down reasons why they feel how they do. The other group becomes the minority opinion and must also summarize on paper reasons behind their vote. The chief justice must present the majority vote (regardless of how he/she voted) to the rest of the class.”
4. Hand out prewritten cards to the three different groups. Tell students that they are to follow the directions as stated on their card. Give them about 5-10 minutes to do so. Then have the legislative group give their

handwritten bill to the executive branch. Once the executive group has read this, have the legislative group state to the class what their proposed bill was.

5. Give the executive group a few minutes to decide if they wish for the president to veto or accept the bill. When they have written up their decision, they are to give it to the president to read over and accept or veto. While the president does this, they can tell the class whether or not they recommended this bill to pass. After the president makes a decision, he/she is to tell Congress and the class what he/she decided. If he vetoes the bill, Congress will need to rework it so it will pass. Throughout this exchange between executive and legislative groups, be sure the rest of the class is told what is transpiring, whether the groups state the details or the teacher does.
6. Once it has been determined and made clear that the president has accepted the bill and that it will become law, tell students that a problem has arisen. A parent has stepped forward and has declared the law unconstitutional and wants to take the complaint to the Supreme Court. At this time let students know that the judicial group has posed a list of questions to ask the legislative group to help in determining whether or not the law indeed is constitutional. (Let them know that in reality the Supreme Court would pose the questions to the lawyers representing the legislature for background information. Then they would ask lawyers of the disgruntled parent how their rights have been infringed. After gaining all the information and reviewing the Constitution, they can then make a decision.) Have members of legislature (and even some from the executive branch if desired) answer the questions asked by the judicial group. Tell students a few reasons the parent might have for finding the law unconstitutional.
7. Have the judicial group then reconvene to decide whether or not the law upholds and abides by the Constitution. They will need to follow instructions as outlined on their task card, take a vote on constitutionality, and write up the majority and minority vote. Once they have finished all these formalities, have the Chief Justice present the majority vote to the rest of the class.
8. Let students know that although the actual process is much more involved, the simulation did show the steps for turning a bill into a law. It also demonstrated duties and responsibilities of each branch, along with the system of checks and balances at work. Ask students how they felt about the class activity. Determine opinions about whether the Founding Fathers put together a pretty solid system of government. Tell them that the American government is the oldest written set of rules for running a country still in use in the world. Our government has worked better and longer than any other in history. Also mention that several changes and amendments have been added, but these changes are relatively minor. Due to changing times, amendments have needed to be added, and surely more are yet to come. However, during the past two hundred years, only sixteen additional amendments have been included.

- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will complete a blank flow chart of the three branches of government and their duties with guided assistance (Appendix E).
  2. Students will write a summary of ways they saw checks and balances displayed within the classroom simulation.

**Lesson Seven: Bill of Rights (two-three days)**

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
  - a. Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.
  - b. Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.
  - c. Students will develop a sense of historical empathy.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Bill of Rights
3. Skill Objective(s)
  - a. Students will demonstrate how the freedoms listed in the Bill of Rights affect their lives with a short skit.
  - b. Students will illustrate key elements of the Constitution by creating a class mural.

B. *Materials*

1. *We the People: The Constitution of the United States of America* (picture book for read aloud)
2. *United States and its Neighbors*, pages 330-333 or *A More Perfect Union*, pages 44-48 or *The Constitution Made Easier* (one packet for each child)
3. Red, white, blue large construction paper (approximately 10 sheets per color)
4. Typing paper (one sheet for each child)
5. Large white construction paper (seven sheets)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Mural- a picture painted on a wall
2. Article- a clause in a contract, treaty, statute, etc.
3. Bill of Rights- the first ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States
4. Amendment- an addition to the Constitution

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Read *We the People: The Constitution of the United States of America*. You may wish to skip the first four pages, as it gives background information about the Constitution already covered in the unit thus far. The remaining pages divide the preamble into ten parts, each part containing a short phrase. Read aloud a phrase at a time and ask students to explain several of the small pictures that encompass it.
2. When finished reading the picture book, ask students what this section of the Constitution is called. They should recall it as the preamble.
3. Tell students that the author did a great job letting us visualize what the preamble means. Inform them that they will be doing the same thing for all the different parts of the Constitution by creating a classroom mural.

(Explain to them what a mural is. They won't be painting a picture on a wall, but will be making small pictures that they will collectively put together to make a whole display.) By glancing at this depiction, others should be able to understand its meaning more clearly.

4. Beforehand, make copies of a simplified version of the constitution. A great resource for this is *United States and its Neighbors*, pages 330-333. Other optional sources include *A More Perfect Union*, pages 44-48 or *The Constitution Made Easier*.
5. Give each student a copy of the constitution (pages 330-333 *United States and its Neighbors* preferably). Point out the already familiar parts such as the preamble and the Articles. Briefly read these sections aloud. Ask if they can figure out what the rest of the Constitution is called and why it was added. Tell them that they are amendments to the Constitution and that the first ten are called the Bill of Rights. Give them a bit of background as to why they were added onto the drafted Constitution. Let them know that when many of the states ratified the Constitution, they attached a list of proposed amendments to ensure the rights of individuals and of the states. Although Madison did not think such additions were necessary, Thomas Jefferson later convinced him that the people were entitled to a Bill of Rights. He took the suggestions sent in from various individuals and states (over 200 different rights), along with his own ideas, and narrowed it down to seventeen. The Senate and House of Representatives reviewed them and accepted twelve of them to send to the states for ratification. Finally two of them were defeated and ten remained. These ten are what we call the Bill of Rights. Since this time, only sixteen have been added, but there will surely be more in years to come.
6. Let students know they will be working on three different projects, two of them for the mural and one of them for a skit. They will each do an individual picture, a group picture, and be in a skit. First divide the class into seven groups. Assign each group a different Article of the Constitution. Depending on class size this will come out to 3-4 students per group. In their group they will need to reread their assigned Article. Then they need to write the title of their Article on large white construction paper and create an illustration that depicts what their Article is about.
7. Next, students will work on the individual portion of the mural. Divide up the preamble into five sections and chose one person to illustrate each section. They may do this on white typing paper. They will write out the words to their section at the top of the paper and have their picture underneath. Then, assign the rest of the students one of the Bill of Rights amendments to do this for. They will write out the number of the amendment and its title at the top of the plain typing paper and draw a picture underneath to depict their assigned amendment. For the remaining students, give them one of the first ten amendments as well, however, each student is making their own. Thus there should be five students working on portions of the preamble and twenty working on the bill of rights (two per amendment). If you have less than twenty-five students, chose

volunteers to do additional pictures for the ones lacking. If you have more students, they can choose one of the additional sixteen amendments to depict.

8. For the final project, once students have finished their group and individual illustrations for the Constitution mural, have each student pair up with the other student assigned to the same amendment. With their partner, they need to create a short skit about what life would be like without that amendment. The group who worked on parts of the preamble can work together on a skit portraying life without the outlined goals as stated in the preamble. They should need no more than 10 minutes to prepare their short skits.
9. Have students present their illustrations and skits to the class. Begin with the preamble group. They are to show their pictures and then perform their skit. Next have each of the groups assigned to the Articles show and explain their illustrations. Then have the two students for Amendment One come forward and show their illustrations and perform their skit, followed by the other pairs of students for the next nine amendments. When all presentations are finished, discuss how fortunate we are that the Founding Fathers were so thorough when writing the Constitution, and that the Bill of Rights truly ensures the rights we have as individuals.
10. Display the mural in the hall with the preamble pictures next to each other in order in a row. Underneath, line up the seven Article illustrations. The bottom row will include one (or both) of the illustrations of the first ten amendments in consecutive order. For decoration, mount the pictures on red, white, and blue construction paper and add a title "The Constitution of the United States of America."

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Students will perform a short skit about what life would be like without one of the amendments in the Bill of Rights.
2. Students will work in groups to illustrate and present to the class one of the seven Articles of the Constitution.
3. Students will create their own illustration of one of the Bill of Rights or section of the preamble and then present these pictures to the class.

## **VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

- A. For culmination take a field trip to the state capitol. Try to make arrangements to sit in on a committee meeting or to observe the House of Representatives or Senate from the gallery to see government in action. If possible try to visit several government officials as well. You may wish to include a questionnaire that students can answer while taking their tour.

## **VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS**

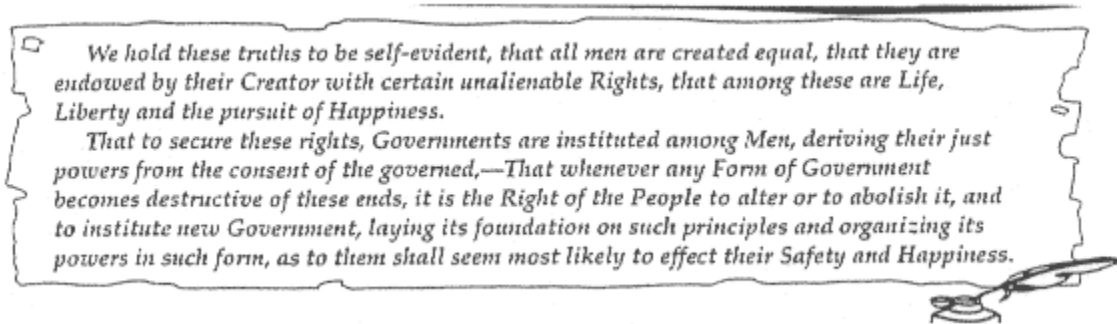
- A. Appendix A: Declaration of Independence
- B. Appendix B: Plans of Government
- C. Appendix C: Movie/Book Quiz
- D. Appendix D: Preamble to the Constitution
- E. Appendix E: Checks and Balances

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## We Hold These Truths

Thomas Jefferson was asked to write one of America's most important documents. Known as the Declaration of Independence, it was a statement of human rights, a list of complaints against the British, and an announcement of independence. On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence. The opening says:



Reread the opening above. See if you can determine the meanings of Jefferson's words. Answer these questions in the space provided.

1. What words are about equality?

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2. What words mean that governments belong to the people?

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3. What words mean that all people have the right to live, to be free, and to try to be happy?

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**Appendix A, page 2-A More Perfect Union**

4. What words mean that God gave all people certain rights that cannot be taken away by a king or any kind of government?

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5. What words mean that governments should be set up to protect the rights of people?

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6. Is the Declaration of Independence as important to people today as it was to people in 1776? Why?

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## Appendix B-A More Perfect Union

### Plans of Government

#### The Virginia Plan

A new government consisted of:

A government elected by the people.

Three parts to the government: a President, a congress or group of people to make laws, and a law court to make decisions about those laws.

Each state would choose delegates to serve in Congress and the number of delegates would depend on the size of the state.

Representatives of the larger states liked this plan but representatives from the smaller states did not.

#### The New Jersey Plan

Each state should have the same number of delegates.

#### The Connecticut Plan

There would be a new government.

Each state would get two representatives regardless of the size of the state.

Each state would also get to send some other representatives depending on the size of the state.

**This plan was called the Connecticut Compromise.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Constitution Movie Quiz

1. What is a delegate?
2. Who was oldest at the convention?
3. Who was told he had to be there or else the convention would fail without him?
4. Who was best prepared at the convention?
5. When did the convention begin?
6. Who was elected president of the convention?
7. Why did the delegates decide to keep the meetings secret?

**Appendix C, page 2-A More Perfect Union**

- 8. How do we know what went on each day at the convention?**
  
- 9. What plan was accepted to replace the Articles of Confederation?**
  
- 10. In planning a new government, the delegates divided it into 3 parts or branches. Name them:**
  
- 11. What is a republic?**
  
- 12. What was the main disagreement at the convention during that hot summer, and how was it solved?**
  
- 13. What is a Federal government?**
  
- 14. How successful was the Constitution?**
  
- 15. When was the Constitution approved?**

## Appendix D-A More Perfect Union

### We the People...

The United States Constitution consists of three main parts. The **preamble** introduces the Constitution and states its purpose. The seven **articles** outline how our government is organized. The **amendments** are changes in or additions to the original Constitution.

Read the preamble to our Constitution. Write a synonym for each boldfaced word in the preamble.

#### Preamble

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect **union**, establish **justice**, insure domestic **tranquility**, provide for the common **defense**, **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.

Appendix E-A More Perfect Union

Checks and Balances

