

WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION

Grade Level or Special Area: 4th Grade

Written by: Krystal Kroeker, The Classical Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Length of Unit: Eight lessons (approximately nine days, one day = 45 minutes)

I. ABSTRACT

This unit is intended to provide fourth graders with an overview of the Constitution and the United States Government and to provide teachers with lessons to cover the requirements in the *Core Knowledge Sequence* by E. D. Hirsch Jr. Through reading, class discussion, and activities, the students will gain a foundational knowledge of many of the values and principals of American democracy. This unit uses a variety of approaches to learning, including writing, memorization, making diagrams and flowcharts, and developing a History copybook (or notebook).

II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept Objectives

1. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
2. Understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 3)
3. Understand the purposes of government, and the basic Constitutional principles of the United States republican form of government. (Colorado Civics Standard 1)

B. Content from the *Core Knowledge Sequence* (page 95)

1. Making a New Constitution: From the Declaration to the Constitution
 - a. Definition of “republican government: republican = government by elected representatives of the public
 - b. Articles of Confederation: weak central government
 - c. “Founding Fathers”: James Madison as “Father of the Constitution”
 - d. Constitutional Convention
 - i. Arguments between large and small states
 - ii. The divisive issue of slavery, “three-fifths” compromise
2. The Constitution of the United States
 - a. Preamble to the Constitution: “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 blessing of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”
 - b. The separation and sharing of powers in American government: three branches of government.
 - i. Legislative branch: Congress = House of Representatives and Senate, makes laws
 - ii. Executive branch: headed by the president, carries out laws
 - iii. Judicial branch: a court system headed by the Supreme Court (itself headed by the Chief Justice), deals with those who break laws and with disagreements about laws
 - c. Checks and balances, limits on government powers, veto
 - d. The Bill of Rights: first ten amendments to the Constitution, including:
 - i. Freedom of religion, speech, and the press (First Amendment)
 - ii. Protection against “unreasonable searches and seizures”

- iii. The right to “due process by law”
 - iv. The right to trial by jury
 - v. Protection against “cruel and unusual punishments”
- C. Skill Objectives
1. Identify the important differences between the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions.
 2. Compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions.
 3. Identify and describe three of our founding fathers – James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington.
 4. Explain the reasons why Madison, Hamilton, and Washington wanted to strengthen or replace the Articles of Confederation.
 5. Visualize and draw the setting of the Constitutional Convention.
 6. List the functions of a central government, as agreed upon by the delegates of the Constitutional Convention.
 7. Explain the compromised agreed upon in the Constitution and articulate the various viewpoints held by the delegates.
 8. Explain and rewrite the preamble to the Constitution.
 9. Begin to memorize the preamble.
 10. Identify and define the three branched of the federal government and their responsibilities.
 11. Create a flowchart explaining how a bill becomes a law.
 12. Explain the Anti-Federalist position.
 13. Explain the basic rights included in the Bill of Rights.
 14. Write a letter stating why the Bill of Rights was needed in the Constitution.
 15. Identify correct answers to matching, true/false, and multiple-choice questions.
 16. List correct responses to short answer questions.

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. For Teachers
1. Fritz, Jean. *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*. New York, NY: PaperStar Books, 1987. (ISBN 0-698-11624-0)
 2. Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History & Geography Level Four*. Parsippany, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2002. (0-7690-5025-5)
 3. Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History & Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher's Guide*. Parsippany, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2002. (0-7690-5069-7)
 4. Levy, Elizabeth. *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1987. (0-590-45159-6)
- B. For Students
1. The students will have knowledge about American Government: The Constitution from studying it in second grade.
 2. The students will have knowledge about the Declaration of Independence from previous study in fourth grade.

IV. RESOURCES

- A. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* by E. D. Hirsch Jr.-a class set is preferable, but at least one copy for the teacher is needed; note: if these are not available to your school, you may also use *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution* (all lessons except Lesson Three)

- B. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher's Guide* by E. D. Hirsch Jr. (all lessons except Lesson Three)
- C. *What Your Fourth Grader Needs to Know* by E. D. Hirsch Jr. (Lesson Six)
- D. *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy (Lessons Two, Three, and Five)
- E. *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution* by Betsy and Giulio Maestro (Lesson Seven)
- F. Various books on the Constitution – for example, *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* by Jean Fritz and *Cornerstones of Freedom: The Constitution* by Marilyn Prolman (Lesson Three)
- G. Student copybooks-these are black and white composition books created by the students as individual History books; regular paper in a folder or notebook will also work (every lesson)

V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Articles of Confederation (approximately 45 minutes)

- A. *Daily Objectives*
 - 1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
 - b. Understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 3)
 - 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Definition of “republican government: republican = government by elected representatives of the public
 - b. Articles of Confederation: weak central government
 - 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Identify the important differences between the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions.
 - b. Compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions.
 - c. Explain the major weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
- B. *Materials*
 - 1. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* (one copy per student)
 - 2. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher's Guide* (to help guide and facilitate discussion if needed)
 - 3. Student copybooks or notebooks
 - 4. Butcher Paper
 - 5. Appendix A - grading rubric (one copy per student)
 - 6. Appendix B (one copy for the teacher)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
 - 1. Government – those who direct the affairs of a city, state, nation, etc.
 - 2. Republican government – a government by elected representatives of the people
 - 3. Articles – sections of a document
 - 4. Confederation – to unite by a league; alliance
 - 5. Venn Diagram – a chart used to list differences and similarities between two or more things
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
 - 1. Begin by orally reviewing what the students have learned about the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence.

2. Make a “KWL” chart about the Constitution. Create a chart with three columns on a piece of butcher paper. One column is for what students already Know, one is for what the Want to learn, and the third is for what they have Learned. As a class, fill out the first two columns, by letting the students state what they already know about the Constitution and what they hope to learn in this unit. The third one will be filled in as the unit progresses. Have students copy the chart into their copybooks.
 3. On the next page of their copybooks, have students create a vocabulary page for this unit (they may need two pages for this). On the overhead, list the day’s vocabulary words and their definitions. Talk about the words to make sure students understand them. Discuss the fact that the United States was created as a republican government.
 4. Read pages 257-259 (“The Articles of Confederation”) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book. As you read, discuss what some of the problems with the Articles of Confederation were. (Large states felt it was unfair that each state had only one vote, Congress could not tax so it was always broke, all 13 states had to approve amendments, Congress had no power to raise an army, and no one person was in charge of the government. Overall, the Articles gave Congress very little power.) Note – the *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher’s Guide* is a great resource to help facilitate discussion.
 5. Have the students create a Venn Diagram in their copybooks, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions. They will need to have one similarity and two differences (see Appendix B for an example).
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will be assessed by the Venn Diagrams in their copybooks or notebooks (using Appendices A and B). Note – you can either grade each individual assignment on a daily basis or collect and grade the copybooks or notebooks at the end of the unit.

Lesson Two: Founding Fathers (approximately 45 minutes)

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. “Founding Fathers”: James Madison as “Father of the Constitution”
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Identify and describe three of our Founding Fathers - James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington.
 - b. Explain the reason why Madison, Hamilton, and Washington wanted to strengthen or replace the Articles of Confederation.
- B. *Materials*
1. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* (one copy per student)
 2. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher’s Guide* (to help guide and facilitate discussion if needed)
 3. Student copybooks or notebooks
 4. *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy
 5. Appendix A (one copy per student)

6. Appendix C (one copy for the teacher)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Ordinance – a law
 2. Politics – the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing the government
 3. Founding Fathers – the men who helped bring our nation into being
 4. Bust – a sculpture of a person’s head and shoulders
 5. Web - to list facts about a person in such as way that they form a “web” around the picture
 6. Delegate – a representative who is authorized to act for others
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. As a quick review from the previous lesson, ask the students to identify several of the problems with the Articles of Confederation. (Large states felt it was unfair that each state had only one vote, Congress could not tax so it was always broke, all 13 states had to approve amendments, Congress had no power to raise an army, and no one person was in charge of the government. Overall, the Articles gave Congress very little power).
 2. Check the KWL chart to see if any new information needs to be added. (Note: this will vary by each class, as some may have had more prior knowledge before beginning the unit than others.)
 3. Add the day’s vocabulary words (and definitions to the vocabulary page in the copybooks (write out on an overhead).
 4. Read pages 260-263 (“Planning a New Constitution”) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book.
 5. As you are reading, ask the students what were the three important points that were included in the Articles of Confederation. (It gave people in the Northwest Territory the same rights as people in the states, it set up a process for territories to become states, and prohibited slavery within the Territory.)
 6. Have the students identify three of the important leaders of our nation at this time (Madison, Hamilton, and Washington). If you need more information on these men, read pages 32, 34, and 36 in *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy out loud to class. Make sure they know that James Madison is called the “Father of the Constitution.”
 7. Tell the students they will draw and describe these men in their copybooks. They will also list the reason why these men wanted to change or strengthen the Articles of Confederation. (They all felt the Articles of Confederation did not give the national government enough power.)
 8. Using Appendix C as an example, (note – Appendix C is just to be used as an example for the teacher, so do not make it into an overhead. Students will be drawing the men, not copying the clipart that is on Appendix C). Guide the students in drawing busts for these three men and webbing information about them. First web three facts about each man. (Madison – spent his life studying government and politics, from a well-to-do Virginia family, served as one of Virginia’s delegates to the Congress. Hamilton – grew up in the West Indies, served as one of George Washington’s closest aides in the Revolutionary War, served as one of New York’s delegates to Congress. Washington – was a General in the Revolutionary War, from Virginia, feared that people might become frustrated with the government and want a king)
 9. On the bottom of the page, write the reason these men wanted to change or strengthen the Articles of Confederation – they did not give the national government enough power.

- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will be assessed by the completion of this page in their copybooks or notebooks (using Appendices A and C).

Lesson Three: Constitutional Convention (approximately 90 minutes)

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
2. Lesson Content
 - a. Constitutional Convention
 - i. Arguments between large and small states
 - ii. The divisive issue of slavery, “three-fifths” compromise
3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Visualize and draw the setting of the Constitutional Convention.
 - b. State the functions of a central government, as agreed upon by the delegates of the Constitutional Convention.
 - c. Explain the compromises agreed upon in the Constitution and articulate the various viewpoints held by the delegates.

B. *Materials*

1. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* (one copy per student)
2. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher’s Guide* (to help guide and facilitate discussion if needed)
3. Student copybooks or notebooks
4. *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy
5. Colored pencils or crayons (needed for each student)
6. Various books on the Constitution, especially those listed in the bibliography
7. Appendix A (one copy per student)
8. Appendix D (one copy for the teacher)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Constitution – a document stating the specific laws of a government and society
2. Convention – an assembly or meeting
3. Ambassador – an official of high rank sent by a country to represent it in another country
4. Compromise – a settlement of differences between two or more sides reached by each side giving up some of what it wanted
5. Northern states – the states located in the north of the United States (such as New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey)
6. Southern states - the states located in the south of the United States (such as Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia)

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Quickly review the three men studied in Lesson Two and the reason they wanted to change or strengthen the Articles of Confederation. (Madison, Hamilton, and Washington. They felt the Articles did not give the central government enough power.)
2. Review KWL chart and add any needed information.
3. Write the day’s vocabulary words and their definition on the vocabulary page in student copybooks.
2. Read pages 264-269 (“Waiting in Philadelphia” and “Some Major Decisions”) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book.

- Ask student what the delegates agreed were the functions of a central government (protect the people against enemies, protect the liberties of the people, control trade between the states, and provide for the good of all people).
3. Discuss with the students which three important American leaders were not at the Convention and why. (Thomas Jefferson was serving as ambassador to France, John Adams was the ambassador to Great Britain and Patrick Henry was opposed to strengthening the central government.)
 4. Have the students visualize the setting of the convention. For more information, read pages 40-42 in ...*If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy.
 5. In their copybooks, have students draw and label a diagram of the East Chamber of the Pennsylvania State House, where the convention was held (see Appendix D).
 6. Read pages 271-273 (the section “Compromises”) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book. Discuss the compromises that were included in the Constitution. (The Great Compromise, which was between the large and small states. They agreed that there would be two houses in Congress. The House of Representatives would have membership based on the population of the states and in the Senate all the states would be equally represented with two Senators from each state. The Three-Fifths Compromise was between the Northern and Southern states. This dealt with how slaves would be counted in the state’s population. They agreed that five slaves would count as three persons. The compromise on the issue of slave trade was also between the Northern and Southern states. They agreed that slave trading would be allowed to continue for another twenty years, and would then be stopped.)
 7. Divide the class into four small groups. Group One will represent the large states, Group Two will represent the small states, Group Three will represent the Northern states, and Group Four will represent the Southern states. Students from each group will pretend they are delegates to the convention. They will be responsible for defending their viewpoint to the other “delegates” at the convention. (The Northern and Southern states need to not only debate how the slaves will be counted in their state’s population, but also the issue of slave trade.) Allow time for students to do a bit of research in class on what their side believed (provide books for the students to use for this purpose – see bibliography for a list of suggested books. ...*If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy is a great resource). Have each student write notes (in their copybooks or notebooks) defending their position (see examples below).
 - a. Large states (mainly Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania) – called for two houses of Congress. The first house would be based on the state’s population. The members of this house would elect members to the other, smaller house.
 - b. Small states (mainly Delaware and New Jersey) – called for a Congress with just one house with each state equally represented.
 - c. Northern states (mainly New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey) – did not want to count the slaves because they were viewed only as property. They also wanted to stop the slaves trade and not allow any more slaves to enter the country.
 - d. Southern states (mainly Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia) – did want to count the slaves as people, because this would

allow their states to have a larger population. They wanted the slave trade to continue on indefinitely.

8. Let each side debate their issue(s) in front of the class and agree as a class which side was more persuasive on each issue. Begin with the large and small states. Give each side five-ten minutes to present their view (they may all speak or elect a spokesperson). Repeat with the Northern and Southern states.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. The diagram of the East Room in copybooks or notebooks (using Appendices A and D).
2. Check students' notes to make sure they did the research on their side's viewpoint (use Appendix A as a grading rubric).

Lesson Four: Preamble to the Constitution (approximately 45 minutes)

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
2. Lesson Content
 - a. Preamble to the Constitution: "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 blessing of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."
3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Explain and rewrite the preamble to the Constitution in language that is easily understood.
 - b. Begin to memorize the preamble.

B. *Materials*

1. Student copybooks or notebooks
2. Appendix E (one copy made into an overhead transparency)
3. Appendix F (one copy to show as an example)
4. Appendix G – copy this appendix and cut the phrases into strips before this lesson

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Preamble – an introduction
2. Union – a group of states that are united into one
3. Justice – fairness or righteousness
4. Insure – to make certain; to guarantee
5. Domestic – one's own country
6. Tranquility – peacefulness
7. Welfare – having health, happiness, and being free from want
8. Posterity – all future generations

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Quickly review the compromises that were made in the Constitution with students. (The Great Compromise, which was between the large and small states. They agreed that there would be two houses in Congress. The House of Representatives would have membership based on the population of the states and in the Senate all the states would be equally represented with two Senators from each state. The Three-Fifths Compromise was between the Northern and Southern states. This dealt with how slaves would be counted in the state's

population. They agreed that five slaves would count as three persons. The compromise on the issue of slave trade was also between the Northern and Southern states. They agreed that slave trading would be allowed to continue for another twenty years, and would then be stopped.)

2. Add any necessary information to the KWL chart.
3. Enter vocabulary words and definitions into copybooks. Talk about these definitions with the students and tell them all these words are found in the preamble (introduction) to the Constitution.
4. Put Appendix E on the overhead and read the preamble out loud as a class. Tell the students they will be responsible for memorizing and reciting the preamble by the end of the unit.
5. Have the students copy the preamble into their copybooks. If they would like, have them draw what looks like an unrolled “scroll” into their books and copy the preamble onto the scroll (see Appendix F as an example).
6. As the students are working in their copybooks, write the preamble on the board. Tell students that as a class we are going to rewrite the preamble into language that is more easily understood.
7. Divide the class into seven different groups and give each group one of the phrases that was cut from Appendix G.
8. Begin to read the preamble out loud as a class. When you get to the first phrase that will be rewritten, stop. Ask which group thinks they have the matching phrase (see below). Have them come up, erase the phrase on the board, and tape up their phrase in its place (or use magnets if your board is magnetic). Keep going until all seven phrases are rewritten. Read the “new” preamble out loud together. (It will read, We the People of the United States, in order to set up a better country, create fairness, guarantee peace in our land, give protection to our nation, encourage the happiness and health of our people, guard the gift of freedom for ourselves and all our descendants, do order and appoint this document for the United States of America.)
 - a. To form a more perfect Union = to set up a better country
 - b. Establish Justice = create fairness
 - c. Insure domestic Tranquility = guarantee peace in our land
 - d. Provide for the common defense = give protection to our nation
 - e. Promote the general Welfare = encourage the happiness and health of our people
 - f. Secure the blessing of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity = guard the gift of freedom for ourselves and all our descendants
 - g. Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America = do order and appoint this document for the United States of America

Note: it may be fun to copy this onto butcher paper, have the class sign it, and display it in the classroom.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Students will be assessed by their copy of the preamble in their copybooks or notebooks (see Appendices A and E for grading).
2. At the end of the unit, students will be graded on if they memorized the preamble or not (see Appendices A and E for grading).

Lesson Five: Three Branches of Government (approximately 45 minutes)

A. Daily Objectives

1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand the purposes of government, and the basic Constitutional principles of the United States republican form of government. (Colorado Civics Standard 1)
2. Lesson Content
 - a. The separation and sharing of powers in American government: three branches of government.
 - i. Legislative branch: Congress = House of Representatives and Senate, makes laws
 - ii. Executive branch: headed by the president, carries out laws
 - iii. Judicial branch: a court system headed by the Supreme Court (itself headed by the Chief Justice), deals with those who break laws and with disagreements about laws
3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Identify and define the three branches of the federal government and their responsibilities.

B. Materials

1. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* (one copy per student)
2. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher's Guide* (to help guide and facilitate discussion if needed)
3. *...If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy
4. Student copybooks or notebooks
5. Appendix A (one copy per student)
6. Appendix H (one copy for the teacher)
7. Appendix I (one copy made into an overhead transparency)

C. Key Vocabulary

1. Federal – a political organization in which power is shared between a central authority and a number of areas or states
2. Legislative – having the power to make laws
3. Executive – having the power to run the government and carry out laws
4. Judicial – having the power to enforce laws
5. Separation of Powers – each governmental branch has its own separate powers and duties

D. Procedures/Activities

1. Review by reading the preamble from the copybooks. Remind students it needs to be memorized (and recited) by the end of the unit.
2. Fill in new information in the KWL chart.
3. Record vocabulary words and definitions in copybooks or notebooks.
4. Read page 270 (the sections “Federal System” and “Separation of Powers”) and page 275 (the section “More Questions”) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book.
5. Put up Appendix I on the overhead. Guide the students in copying it into their copybooks and filling in the information (use Appendix H as an example). The three branches and the responsibilities and terms of each need to be recorded.
 - a. Legislative Branch – Congress, which makes laws. The House of Representatives is based on population and representatives are elected by the people to serve for two years. The Senate has equal representation

from each state (two Senators/state) and the Senators are elected by the people to serve for six years.

- b. Executive Branch - headed by the President, who carries out the laws, and suggests new laws. The President is elected by the people to serve for four years.
- c. Judicial Branch – made up of the Supreme Court. The Justices of the Supreme Court (there are nine) are appointed by the President to serve for life. The Court settles arguments about the law and decides if laws that are passed are Constitutional.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. The students will be assessed by the completion of this page in their copybooks or notebooks (see Appendices A and H for grading).

Lesson Six: Governmental Powers and Limitations (approximately 45 minutes)

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand the purposes of government, and the basic Constitutional principles of the United States republican form of government. (Colorado Civics Standard 1)
2. Lesson Content
 - a. Checks and balances, limits on government powers, veto
3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Create a flowchart explaining how a bill becomes a law.

B. *Materials*

1. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* (one copy per student)
2. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher's Guide* (to help guide and facilitate discussion if needed)
3. *What Your Fourth Grade Needs to Know* by E.D. Hirsch Jr.
4. Student copybooks or notebooks
5. Appendix A (one copy per student)
6. Appendix J (one copy for the teacher)
7. Appendix K (one copy made into an overhead transparency)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Checks and balances – a system in which the three branches of government can stop, or check, each of the other two branches from doing what it wants
2. Veto – to reject or disapprove

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Orally review the three branches of government.
 - a. Legislative Branch – Congress, which makes laws. The House of Representatives is based on population and representatives are elected by the people to serve for two years. The Senate has equal representation from each state (two Senators/state) and the Senators are elected by the people to serve for six years.
 - b. Executive Branch - headed by the President, who carries out the laws, and suggests new laws. The President is elected by the people to serve for four years.
 - c. Judicial Branch – made up of the Supreme Court. The Justices of the Supreme Court (there are nine) are appointed by the President to serve for life. The Court settles arguments about the law and decides if laws that are passed are Constitutional.

2. Fill in any new information in the KWL chart.
 3. Record and define vocabulary words in copybooks or notebooks.
 4. Read page 271 (the section Checks and Balances) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book. Ask the students how the three branches of the government are a system of checks and balances. (Power is balanced equally among the three branches and each branch has the power to check, or stop, the other two branches.)
 5. Read pages 185-186 (Checks and Balances) in *What Your Fourth Grader Needs to Know* by E. D. Hirsch Jr.
 6. Read pages 63-65 in ...*If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy out loud to the class.
 7. Create a flow chart on how a bill becomes a law (see Appendix J as an example). A bill begins with a proposal. It then starts either in the House or the Senate. Before the bill becomes a law, both branches of Congress must vote to approve it. It then goes to the President. If he signs it, it becomes a law. If he vetoes it, it goes back to Congress. If two-thirds of both the House and Senate approve it, it becomes a law. The final check is with the Supreme Court. They can decide a law is unconstitutional. If so, it will not longer be valid. Put Appendix K on the overhead and guide the students in copying the flow chart into their copybooks or notebooks.
 8. At the end of class, review the preamble with the students. Remind them it will need to be memorized (and recited) by the end of the unit!
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will be assessed on the completion of the flow chart in their copybooks or notebooks (use Appendices A and J for grading).

Lesson Seven: Bill of Rights (approximately 45 minutes)

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
 - b. Understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 3)
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. The Bill of Rights: first ten amendments to the Constitution, including:
 - i. Freedom of religion, speech, and the press (First Amendment)
 - ii. Protection against “unreasonable searches and seizures”
 - iii. The right to “due process by law”
 - iv. The right to trial by jury
 - v. Protection against “cruel and unusual punishments”
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Explain the Anti-Federalist position.
 - b. Explain the basic rights included in the Bill of Rights.
 - c. Write a letter stating why the Bill of Rights was needed in the Constitution.
- B. *Materials*
1. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* (one copy per student)
 2. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher’s Guide* (to help guide and facilitate discussion if needed)

3. *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution* by Betsy and Giulio Maestro
 4. Student copybooks or notebooks
 5. Appendix L (one copy per student)
 6. Appendix A (one copy per student)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Right – something due to one by law, custom, or nature
 2. Ratify – to approve
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Review how a bill becomes a law. (A bill begins with a proposal. It then starts either in the House or the Senate. Before the bill becomes a law, both branches of Congress must vote to approve it. It then goes to the President. If he signs it, it becomes a law. If he vetoes it, it goes back to Congress. If two-thirds of both the House and Senate approve it, it becomes a law. The final check is with the Supreme Court. They can decide a law is unconstitutional. If so, it will not longer be valid.)
 2. Fill in any new information in the KWL charts.
 3. Record and define vocabulary words in copybooks or notebooks.
 4. Read pages 278-282 (“The States Ratify”) in *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History and Geography Level Four* book. Discuss what the arguments against ratification were. (The convention had gone beyond what it had been asked to do, the Constitution made the central government too powerful and did not contain a Bill of Rights.) Ask who led the Anti-Federalists (Patrick Henry). Who led the Federalists (Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay)?
 5. Read the summary of the first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) out loud to the class from *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution* by Betsy and Giulio Maestro. Ask students why they think it was important to include these rights in the Constitution (some reasons may include that without a Bill of Rights, the central government had too much power, the liberties of the people would be threatened, and they might lose many of the rights they had fought England to obtain). Which one do they think is the most important and why (there will be no right or wrong answer)?
 6. Have the students pretend they are ordinary citizens of one of the thirteen states. Ask them to write a letter (in their copybooks or notebooks) to James Madison stating why they feel it is important to have a Bill of Rights included in the Constitution (some reasons may include that without a Bill of Rights, the central government had too much power, the liberties of the people would be threatened, and they might lose many of the rights they had fought England to obtain). These will be graded for spelling/grammar/punctuation and by whether or not the student can defend their position (use Appendix A to record their grades).
 7. At the end of class, review the preamble with the students. Remind them they need to have it memorized (and recited) by the end of the unit.
 8. Hand out the final test study guide (Appendix L). Tell students all the information they need to study for the test that is listed on the study guide is in their copybooks (or notebooks). Note – you may pass out the study guide earlier in the unit if you want to give your student more time to study.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will be assessed by the article they write in their copybooks or notebooks either for or against ratification (use Appendix A for grading).

Lesson Eight: Test (approximately 45 minutes)

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 5)
 - b. Understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (Colorado History Standard 3)
 - c. Understand the purposes of government, and the basic Constitutional principals of the United States Republican form of government. (Colorado Civics Standard 1)
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Making a Constitutional Government
 - i. Making a New Government: From the Declaration to the Constitution
 - ii. The Constitution of the United States
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Identify correct answers to matching, true/false, and multiple-choice questions.
 - b. List correct responses to short answer questions.
- B. *Materials*
1. Appendix A (one copy per student)
 2. Appendix M (one copy per student)
 3. Appendix N (one copy for the teacher)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
- None
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Pass out the test to the students (Appendix M).
 2. Review directions and answer any questions.
 3. As the students are taking the test, call them back one by one to hear them recite the preamble from memory (use Appendix A to grade).
 4. Collect the tests at the end of the class period.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Students will be assessed by their correct recitation of the preamble performance on the test (use Appendix A to grade).
 2. Students will be assessed by their correct responses on the test (use Appendix N to grade).

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- A. Set up your room to resemble the East Room of the Pennsylvania State House. Group the students' desks in groups of three or four and cover with green tablecloths (or butcher paper). Put nametags on the tables with the label of delegate before their last name (Delegate Smith, for example). Turn out the lights, and close and lock all the windows and doors. Have candles burning around the room (but away from the students!) Turn up the heat to recreate the hot summer. When the students come in, choose one or two to guard the doors. Choose one to be George Washington – the leader of the Constitutional Convention. Choose another to be James Madison, and make him or her take notes. As a class, write a class Constitution. What rules do they want to include? Do they want to include a Bill of Rights? After the "Convention" is over, choose a few students (including James Madison) to write the final draft of the Constitution (you may want to give these students some extra credit for this!) When it is complete, have everyone in the class sign it and post it in a prominent place in the classroom. Note – if time does not

allow for this activity, you can modify it to use during Lesson Three. Recreate the setting of the Constitutional Convention as listed above. You will not create a class Constitution, but will simply conduct the lesson as written, only your classroom will resemble the setting of the Constitutional Convention.

VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

- A. Appendix A: Grading Rubric
- B. Appendix B: Venn Diagram
- C. Appendix C: Webs
- D. Appendix D: Diagram of East Room
- E. Appendix E: Preamble
- F. Appendix F: Sample Scroll
- G. Appendix G: Phrases for the Preamble
- H. Appendix H: Three Branches of Government Example
- I. Appendix I: Three Branches of Government
- J. Appendix J: How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart Example
- K. Appendix K: How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart
- L. Appendix L: Final Test Study Guide
- M. Appendix M: Final Test
- N. Appendix N: Final Test Key

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. Fritz, Jean. *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*. New York, NY: PaperStar Books, 1987. (ISBN 0-698-11624-0)
- B. Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History & Geography Level Four*. Parsippany, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2002. (0-7690-5025-5)
- C. Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History & Geography: The United States Constitution*. Parsippany, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2002. (0-7690-5102-2)
- D. Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge History & Geography: The United States Constitution Teacher's Guide*. Parsippany, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2002. (0-7690-5069-7)
- E. Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *What Your Fourth Grader Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Dell Publishing, 1992. (0-385-31260-1)
- F. Johnson, Linda Carlson. *I Know America: Our Constitution*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1992. (1-56294-813-X)
- G. Levy, Elizabeth. *...IF You Were There When They Signed the Constitution*. New York NY: Scholastic Inc., 1987. (0-590-45159-6)
- H. Maestro, Betsy and Giulio. *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution*. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard Books, 1987 (0-688-06839-1)
- I. Prolman, Marilyn. *Cornerstones of Freedom: The Constitution*. Chicago, IL: Childrens Press, 1995. (0-516-46692-5)
- J. Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *A True Book: The Constitution*. New York, NY: Childrens Press, 1998. (0-516-26429-X)

Appendix A – Grading Rubric

Lesson One – The Articles of Confederation Venn Diagram

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Labeled correctly	_____ / 5 pts
One similarity listed	_____ / 5 pts
Two differences listed	_____ / 10 pts
Total	_____ / 25 pts

Lesson Two – Founding Fathers Webs

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Labeled correctly	_____ / 5 pts
Three facts listed for each	_____ / 15 pts
Reason written at bottom of page	_____ / 5 pts
Total	_____ / 30 pts

Lesson Three – Constitutional Convention (diagram)

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Labeled correctly	_____ / 5 pts
Colored (green tablecloths)	_____ / 5 pts
Total	_____ / 15 pts

Lesson Three – Constitutional Convention (notes)

Were notes supportive of their view?	_____ / 10 pts
Total	_____ / 10 pts

Lesson Four – The Preamble

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Copied correctly	_____ / 5 pts
Total	_____ / 10 pts

Appendix A continued – Grading Rubric

Lesson Five – Three Branches of Government

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Copied correctly	_____ / 5 pts
All facts listed	_____ / 10 pts
Total	_____ / 20 pts

Lesson Six – Governmental Powers and Limitations

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Copied correctly	_____ / 5 pts
All facts listed	_____ / 10 pts
Total	_____ / 20 pts

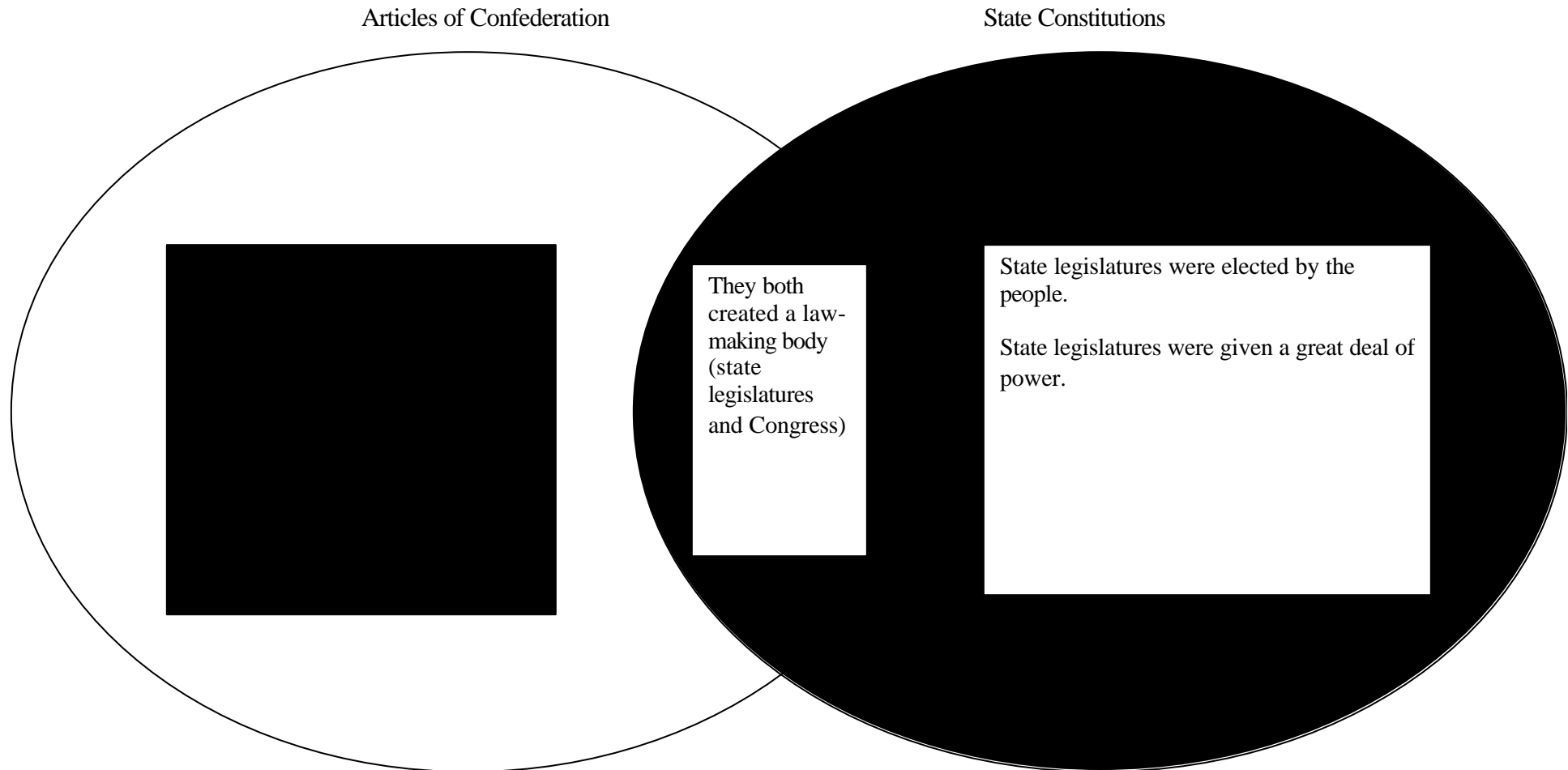
Lesson Seven – Bill of Rights (letter to James Madison)

Neatness	_____ / 5 pts
Spelling/Grammar/Punctuation	_____ / 10 pts
Supported their position	_____ / 10 pts
Total	_____ / 25 pts

Lesson Seven – Bill of Rights (memorization of the preamble)

Was it memorized?	_____ / 10 pts
Total	_____ / 10 pts

Appendix B – Venn Diagram



Appendix C – Webs



James Madison

Spent his life studying government and politics

From a well-to-do Virginia family

Served as one of Virginia's delegates to the Congress



Alexander Hamilton

Grew up in the West Indies

Served as one of George Washington's
Closest aides in the Revolutionary War

Served as one of New York's delegates to
Congress



George Washington

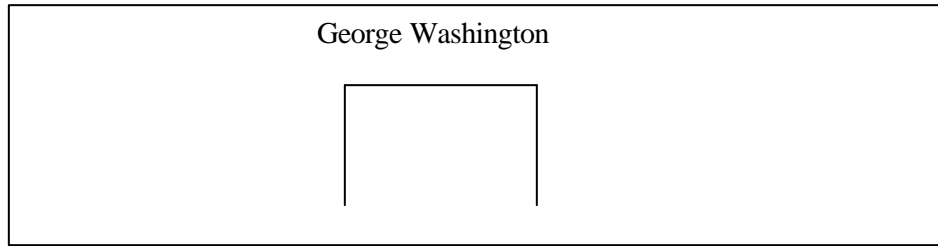
Was a General in the Revolutionary War

From Virginia

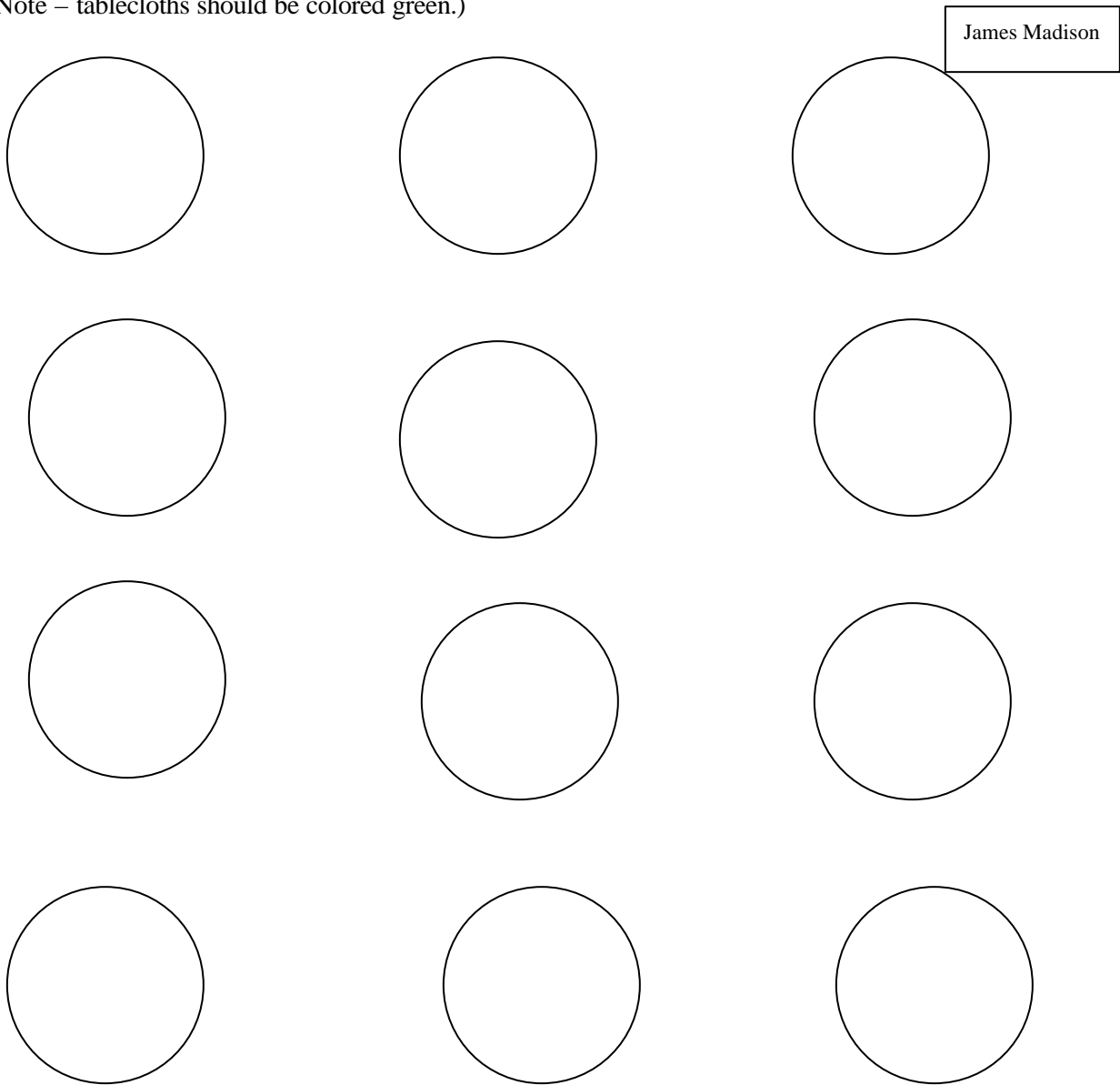
Feared that people might become frustrated with the government and want
a king

These men all agreed that the Articles of Confederation did not give the national government enough power.

Appendix D – Diagram of East Room



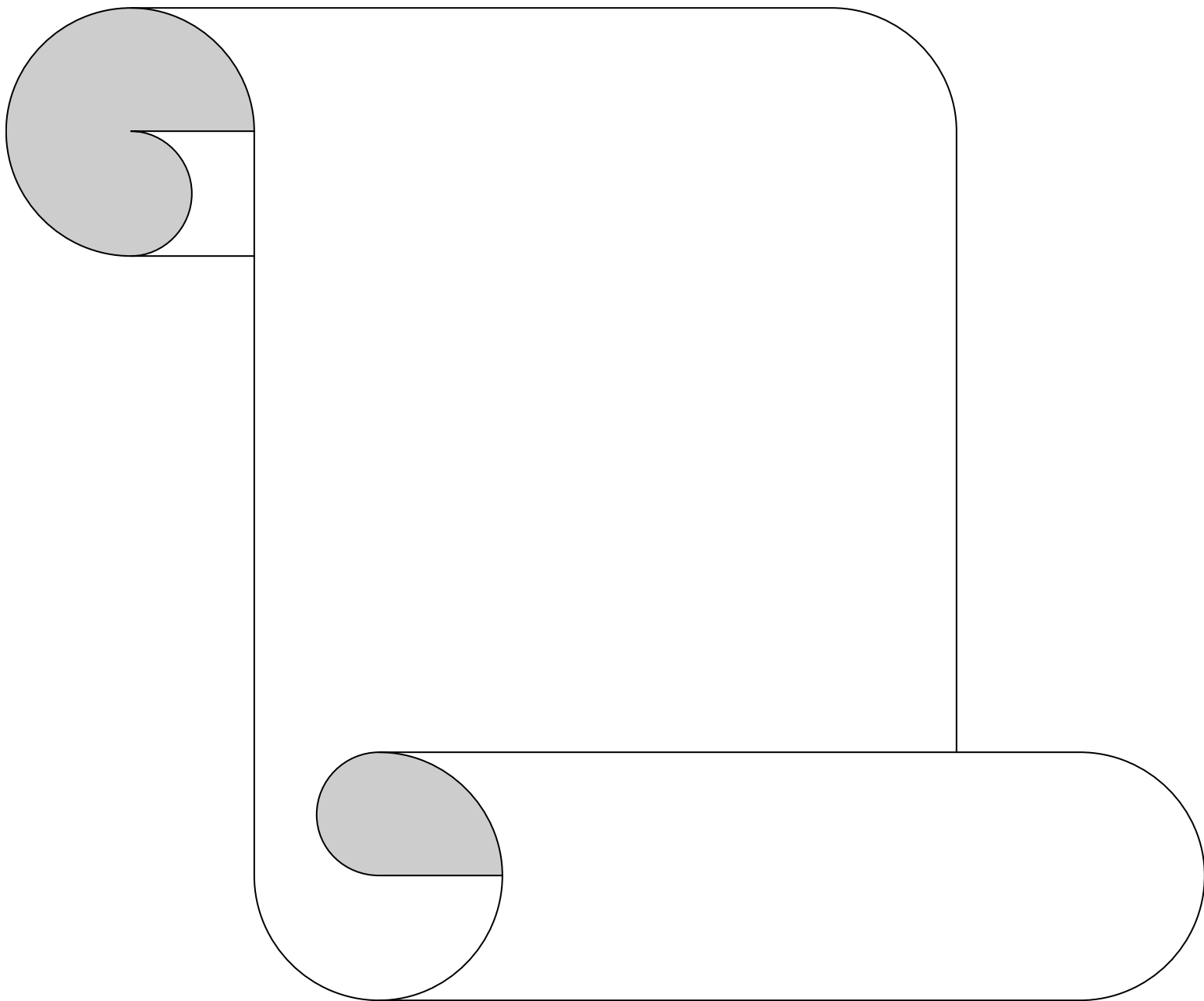
(Note – tablecloths should be colored green.)



Appendix E – 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 F – Sample Scroll



Appendix G – Phrases for the Preamble

to set up a better country

create fairness

guarantee peace in our land

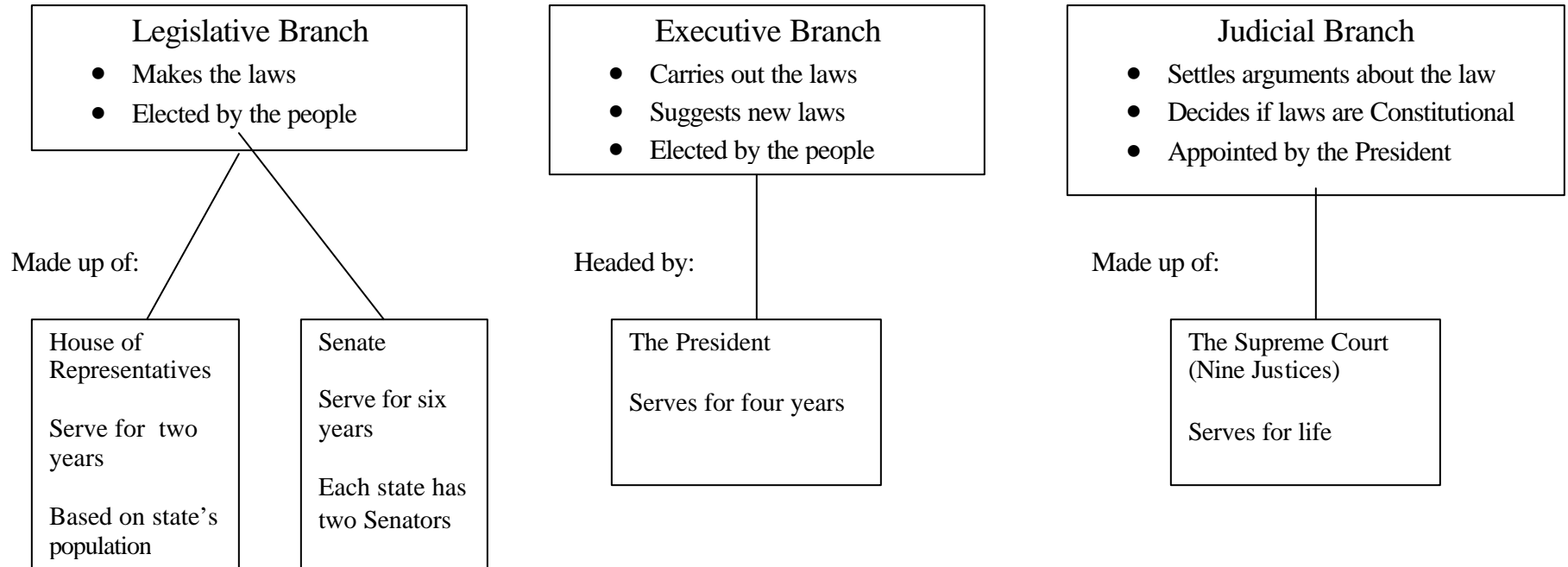
give protection to our nation

encourage the happiness and health of
our people

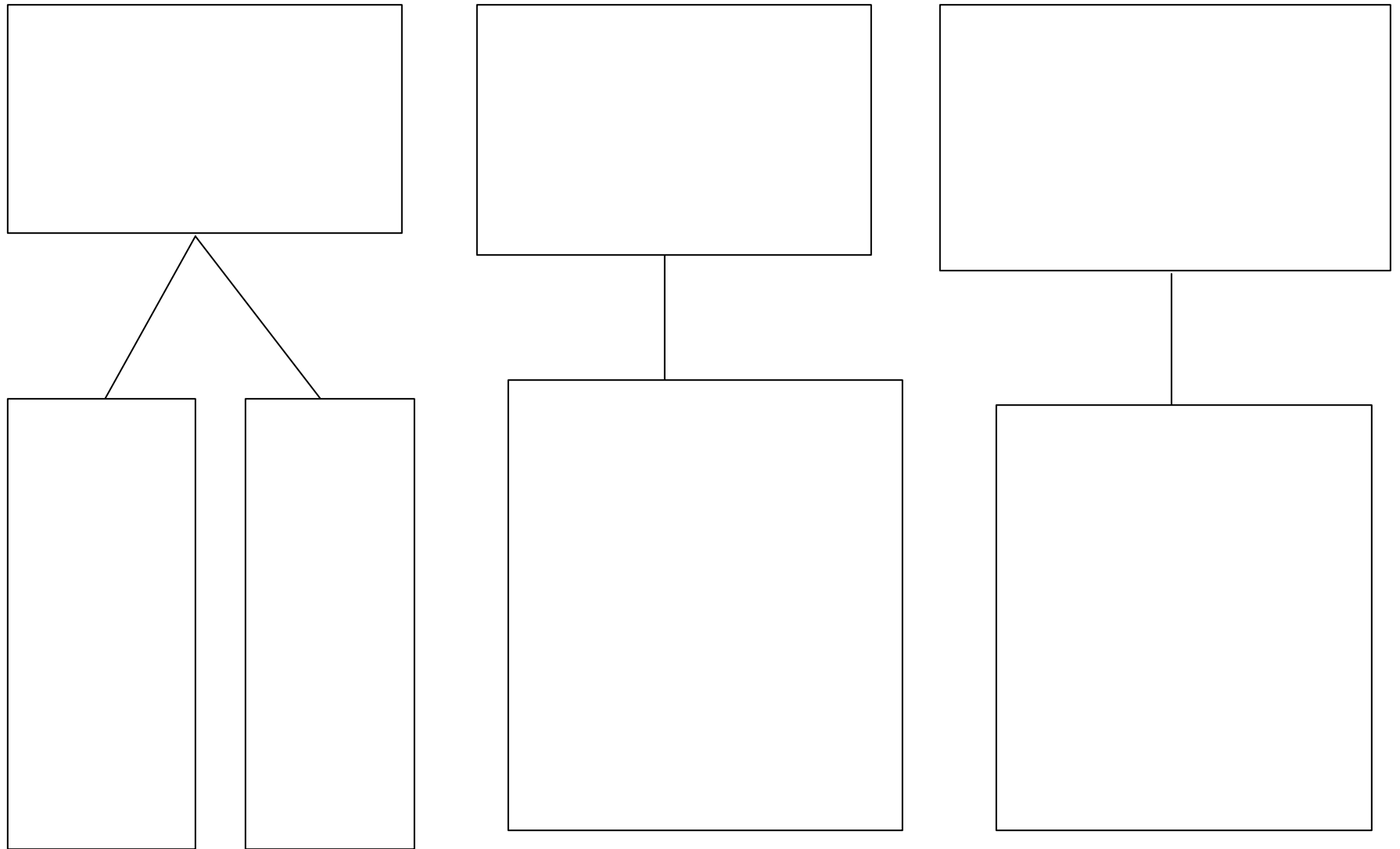
guard the gift of freedom for ourselves
and all our descendants

do order and appoint this document for
the United States of America

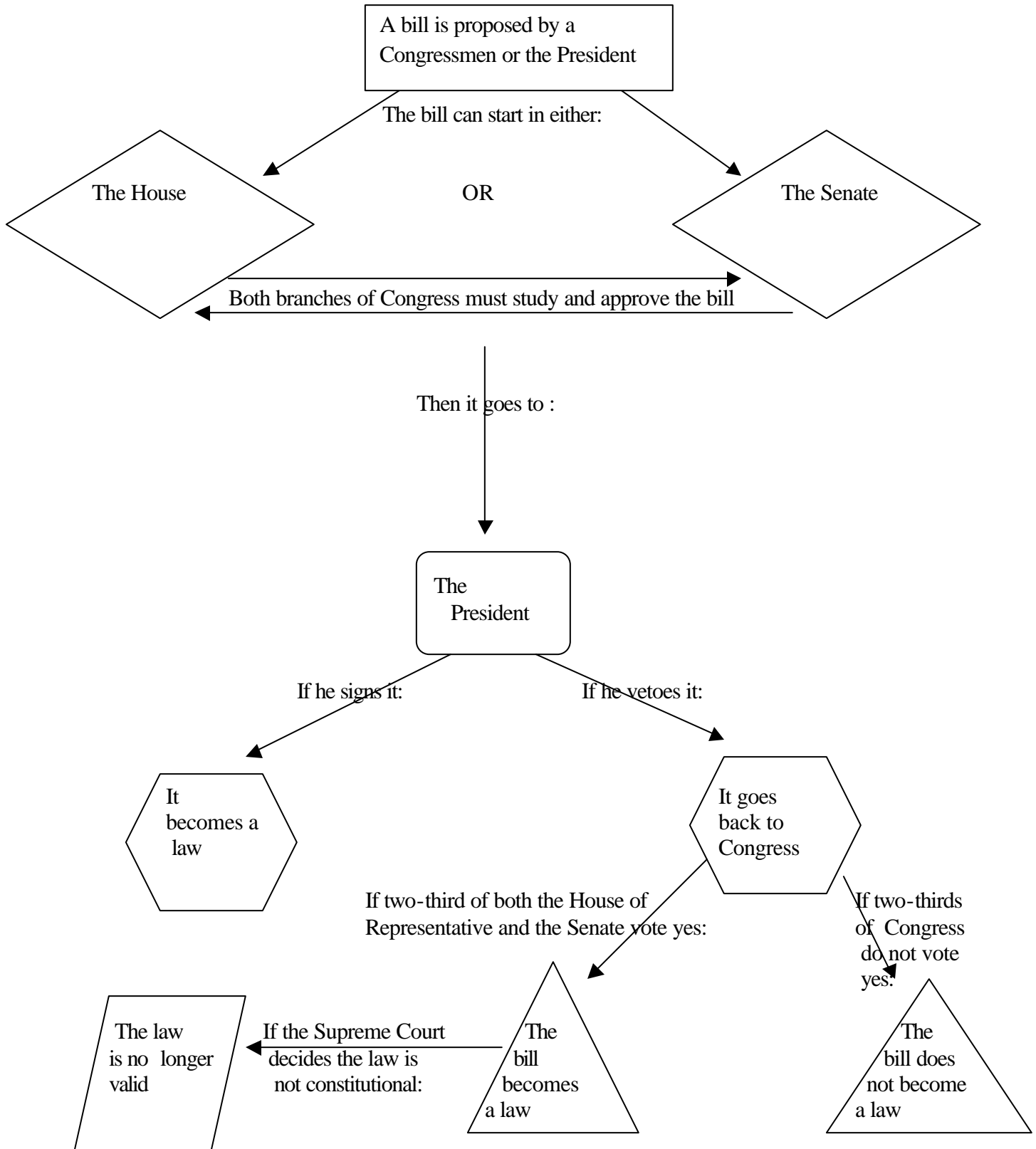
Appendix H – Three Branches of Government Example



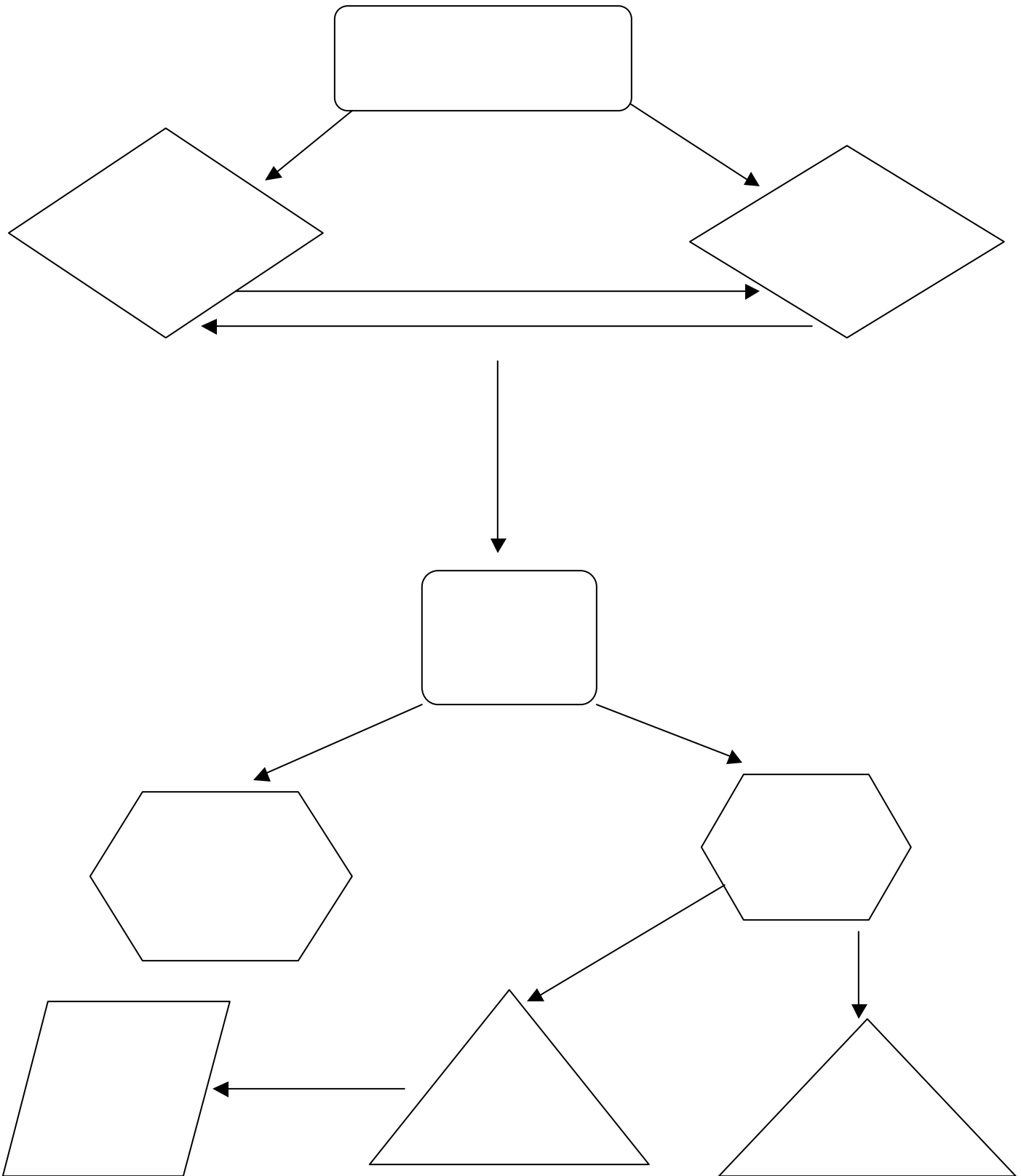
Appendix I – Three Branches of Government



Appendix J – How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart Example



Appendix K – How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart



Appendix L – Final Test Study Guide

Be sure you know the following definitions:

- Constitution
- Republican government
- Veto
- Preamble
- Convention

Know:

- How a bill becomes a law
- The powers and limits of the three branches of government
- The terms of President, the Supreme Court Justices, and Congressmen
- Why Madison, Hamilton, and Washington wanted to change or strengthen the Articles of Confederation
- What the Articles of Confederation and the states constitutions had in common
- The information on Madison, Hamilton, and Washington

Know why it was important to include the Bill of Rights in the Constitution

Be able to explain the preamble to the Constitution in your own words.

*****All this information is in your copybooks (or notebooks)!!**

*****Remember you will also be required to recite the preamble by memory!!**

Appendix M – Final Test

Name _____

Matching (one point/each): Please match the following words to their correct definitions by writing the letter of the correct definition next to the vocabulary word.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| _____ Constitution | A. to reject or disapprove |
| _____ convention | B. an introduction |
| _____ preamble | C. an assembly or meeting |
| _____ republican government | D. a document stating the specific laws of a government or society |
| _____ veto | E. a government by elected representatives of the people |

True/False (one point/each): If the statement is True, put a T on the line, if it is false, put an F.

- _____ According to James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington, the Articles of Confederation gave the central government too much power.
- _____ Both the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions created a law-making body.
- _____ Once the President vetoes a bill, it can never become a law.
- _____ George Washington served as one of Virginia's delegates to Congress.
- _____ The Supreme Court has the power to declare a law unconstitutional.

Multiple Choice (one point/each): Choose the best answer to the question by writing the correct letter in the blank.

- _____ The Legislative Branch has the power to:
- settle arguments about laws
 - appoint Supreme Court Justices
 - make laws
 - carry out laws

Appendix M continued – Final Test

_____ The President serves for:

- a. life
- b. 4 years
- c. 2 years
- d. 6 years

_____ For a bill to become a law:

- a. the Senate must approve it
- b. the House of Representatives must approve it
- c. the President must sign it
- d. all of the above

_____ The Judicial Branch:

- a. is made up of 9 justices
- b. is elected by the people
- c. serves for 8 years
- d. suggests laws

_____ James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington:

- a. were Anti-Federalists
- b. attended the Constitutional Convention
- c. liked the Articles of Confederation
- d. were all from New York

Short Answer (five points/each): Answer each question as thoroughly as possible. Be sure to use complete sentences!

Why do you feel it was important to add the Bill of Rights to the Constitution?

Summarize the preamble to the Constitution in your own words.

Appendix N – Final Test Key
25 points total

Name _____

Matching (one point/each): Please match the following words to their correct definitions by writing the letter of the correct definition next to the vocabulary word.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <u> D </u> Constitution | A. to reject or disapprove |
| <u> C </u> convention | B. an introduction |
| <u> B </u> preamble | C. an assembly or meeting |
| <u> E </u> republican government | D. a document stating the specific laws of a government or society |
| <u> A </u> veto | E. a government by elected representatives of the people |

True/False (one point/each): If the statement is True, put a T on the line, if it is false, put an F.

- F According to James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington, the Articles of Confederation gave the central government too much power.
- T Both the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions created a law-making body.
- F Once the President vetoes a bill, it can never become a law.
- F George Washington served as one of Virginia's delegates to Congress.
- T The Supreme Court has the power to declare a law unconstitutional.

Multiple Choice (one point/each): Choose the best answer to the question by writing the correct letter in the blank.

- C The Legislative Branch has the power to:
- a. settle arguments about laws
 - b. appoint Supreme Court Justices
 - c. make laws
 - d. carry out laws

Appendix N continued – Final Test Key

 B The President serves for:

- a. life
- b. 4 years
- c. 2 years
- d. 6 years

 D For a bill to become a law:

- a. the Senate must approve it
- b. the House of Representatives must approve it
- c. the President must sign it
- d. all of the above

 A The Judicial Branch:

- a. is made up of 9 justices
- b. is elected by the people
- c. serves for 8 years
- d. suggests laws

 B James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington:

- a. were Anti-Federalists
- b. attended the Constitutional Convention
- c. liked the Articles of Confederation
- d. were all from New York

Short Answer (five points/each): Answer each question as thoroughly as possible. Be sure to use complete sentences!

Why do you feel it was important to add the Bill of Rights to the Constitution?

Some reasons may include that without a Bill of Rights the central government had too much power, the liberties of the people would be threatened, and they might lose many of the rights they had fought England to obtain

Note – give two points for using complete sentences, and one point for each correct answer given.

Summarize the preamble to the Constitution in your own words.

The preamble states that the Constitution was written in order to make a better country, one with fairness, peacefulness, a land where the people would be safe, healthy, and happy, and where freedom would last for all of the people and all their descendants.

Note – give two points for using complete sentences, and use the other three points at your discretion – did they summarize the key point of the preamble? Can you tell they understand the concepts written in the preamble?