

Directions for Democracy

Time Needed: One Class Period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets, projector, scissors, and tape/glue

Copy Instructions:

Student Packet (*4 pages double-sided; class set*)

Cut and Paste Activity (*1 page; class set*)

Transparency of Preamble

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution.
- identify the rights protected in the Bill of Rights.
- Describe the compromise behind the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution.
- explain the organization of the U.S. Constitution.

STEP BY STEP

- 1) ANTICIPATE** by asking students where the government gets its instructions. How does Congress, the President, or federal judges know what to do? Give students a moment to think, then randomly call on students to share their thoughts.
- 2) DISTRIBUTE** one "Directions for Democracy" packet to each student.
- 3) READ** through page one together as a class.
- 4) DISPLAY** the *Breaking It Down: The Preamble* transparency and explain the statement, phrase by phrase. The students should add the annotations to their reading. Also note that people living in the 1700s had different rules about capitalization than we do today.
- 5) READ** page two, stopping to clarify the idea of 'checks and balances' with the students. Also, at the end of the reading, ask the class if they think is it easy or difficult for a proposed amendment to receive 3/4 of the states' support.
- 6) READ** page three with the class.
- 7) ASSIGN** students to complete the items on the Activity page.
- 8) REVIEW** their answers and discuss any problems or questions as a class. The Categorize section may have more than one 'correct' answer. This is a great conversation starter.
- 9) DISTRIBUTE** the Bill of Rights cut-and-paste activity to the class and read through directions.
- 10) ASK** students to remove the bottom half of the page, then carefully cut out each box, and paste it on top of the appropriate amendment number.
- 11) REVIEW** answers to the cut-and-paste.
- 12) CLOSE** by asking students to silently recall one purpose of the U.S. government, based on the Preamble. Call on students until all 6 goals discussed in the lesson have been named- without looking at the packet.

This lesson plan is part of the *Road to the U.S. Constitution* series by iCivics, Inc. a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing civic education. For more teaching resources, please visit www.icivics.org/teachers, where you can access the state standards aligned to this lesson plan.

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Directions for Democracy

Name: _____

If at first you don't succeed...

After gaining independence in 1777, the Framers drafted the Articles of Confederation. This document formed a loose organization of 13 separate state governments and a legislative branch with very limited power. It created a government very different from the one we have today. There was no president or executive branch and no national judicial system! But this government didn't work as well as they had hoped, so ten years later they held a convention to revise the Articles. After much debate, the Framers decided to scrap the old plan and start a new one. This new plan became the Constitution we have today.



Writing the Rule Book

A *constitution* is a document that gives instructions for how a government should run. It is kind of like a rule book for creating the laws for an entire country. When the Framers went back to the drawing board, they had many questions to consider:

What is the purpose and function of our new government? What powers should the government have, and what limits should be placed on the government? How do we protect the rights of the people? Can we make a document that will be useful to future generations?

Introducing... The Preamble

The United States Constitution is one of the shortest constitutions in the world! It has a little over 4,500 words and covers only four sheets of paper. It is also the oldest written constitution that is still in use today.

Our Constitution is divided into nine parts. The first paragraph is called the *Preamble*. Its job is to introduce the Constitution, explain what the Constitution is meant to do, and describe the purpose of the new government.



The Constitution on display at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

Breaking It Down: What does each phrase in the Preamble really mean?

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union,
establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility,
provide for the common 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.

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Organizing a Government

The Preamble is followed by the seven *articles*, or chapters, that give directions for how the government should work. The first four articles cover a lot of information, so they are broken up into *sections*.

Articles I, II, and III show us how the three branches work. They also tell how each branch can keep the other branches from getting too powerful. (We call this the system of *checks and balances*.)

The remaining articles set up other details about the government, including instructions for getting the Constitution *ratified* (passed by the states) and how the original document can be changed through amendments. The Framers knew that they were writing for the people of their day, but they also knew that the Constitution would need to be useful for future citizens.



Constitutional Table of Contents

Section	Answers these questions...
Preamble	What does the Constitution do?
Article I	How does the <i>legislative</i> branch work? What powers do the states have?
Article II	How does the <i>executive</i> branch work?
Article III	How does the <i>judicial</i> branch work?
Article IV	How should the states get along with each other?
Article V	How can the Constitution be amended, or changed?
Article VI	Can the U.S. be in debt? Is federal law superior to state law? What do officials say when they are sworn into office?
Article VII	How did they make the Constitution law?
Amendments	What changes have been made to the Constitution?

Approval By The States

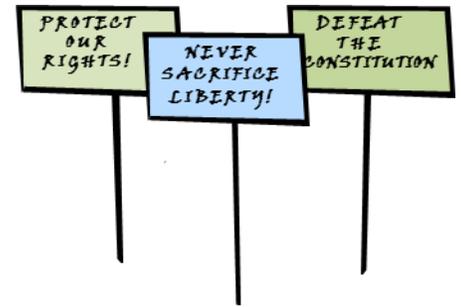


One More Thing...

After the Constitution outlines how the government works, it lists 27 amendments. The *amendments* are changes that were made after the Constitution became law. They are broken down into the Bill of Rights (amendments 1-10) and the later amendments (11-27). An amendment can only become a part of the Constitution if many people support it. Three-fourths (3/4) of the states must approve an amendment before it can be ratified.

Constitutional Conflict

Before the Constitution could take effect, it had to be ratified by the states. Without the first 10 amendments—the Bill of Rights—the Constitution might never have been approved! People disagreed about whether the Constitution did enough to protect peoples' rights. One group, the Federalists, thought the Constitution gave people enough protection. But another group, the Anti-Federalists, feared the national government might become too strong and violate peoples' rights. They threatened to stop the Constitution from being approved unless a list of protected rights was added.



Constitutional Compromise

The two sides compromised by adding the Bill of Rights as the first ten amendments to the Constitution. The rights listed here fall into three categories: individual freedoms, protections against government abuse and power, and rights of people accused of crimes. In the United States, we are used to having these kinds of rights. But in many parts of the world, people live without them.

The Bill of Rights

Here are the ten amendments that saved the Constitution!

1ST AMENDMENT	Guarantees freedom of religion, speech, and the press; the right to assemble peacefully; and the right to petition the government
2ND AMENDMENT	Protects the right to have regulated state militias and the people's right to bear arms
3RD AMENDMENT	Says that the government cannot require people to provide housing for soldiers at peacetime
4TH AMENDMENT	Protects people from unreasonable searches and seizures
5TH AMENDMENT	Declares that no one can be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law
6TH AMENDMENT	Guarantees the right to a trial by jury in criminal cases
7TH AMENDMENT	Guarantees the right to a trial by jury in most civil cases
8TH AMENDMENT	Prohibits excessive bail, fines, and punishments
9TH AMENDMENT	The rights not mentioned in the Constitution belong to the people
10TH AMENDMENT	The powers not given to the national government belong to the states or the people



Voters in Louisiana

Times are Changing

The amendments allow the Constitution to meet the changing needs and attitudes of the country. After the Bill of Rights, 17 more amendments were added to the Constitution. One thing that changed over time was the idea of who could vote. Between 1870 and 1971, five amendments expanded voting rights to different groups of people who could not vote before. Voting rights were given first to African American men, then to women, then to people living in Washington D.C., and finally to people as young as 18 years old.

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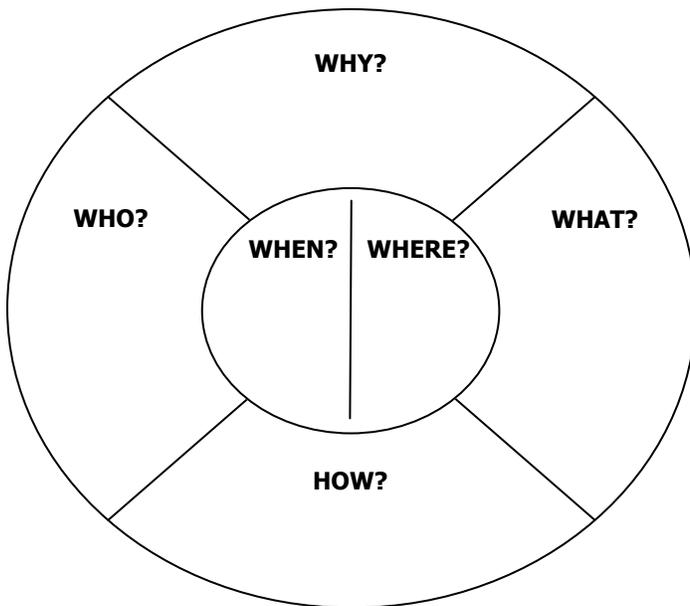
Vocabulary. Match the definitions with the correct term from the lesson.



- ___ 1. official changes made to the Constitution
- ___ 2. paragraph that introduces the Constitution and explains the purpose of the U.S. government
- ___ 3. to pass or approve
- ___ 4. an official document that gives the rules for how a government runs
- ___ 5. the Constitution is divided into seven of these sections

- A) constitution
- B) Preamble
- C) articles
- D) ratify
- E) amendments

Five W's and an H. The Preamble does a lot of heavy lifting for the Constitution! Fill in the missing parts of the 5W+H chart with pieces of the Preamble given below.



- A) In Order to form a more perfect Union
- B) We the People
- C) The State House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- D) Do *ordain* and *establish* this Constitution for the United States of America
- E) The Constitution was ratified on June 21, 1788
- F) 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

Categorize. The rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights can be divided into three basic categories. For each amendment, write *I* if it gives an individual freedom, *P* if it protects against government abuse or power, and *C* if it deals with the rights of people involved with the court system. (You may have more than one answer.)

- ___ **1st Amendment:** freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press; the right to assemble peacefully, and the right to petition the government
- ___ **2nd Amendment:** people have the right to keep and bear arms
- ___ **3rd Amendment:** the government cannot force people to house soldiers during peacetime
- ___ **4th Amendment:** the government cannot conduct unreasonable searches and seizures
- ___ **5th Amendment:** the government cannot take away someone's life, liberty, or property without due process of law
- ___ **6th Amendment:** accused criminals have the right to a jury trial
- ___ **7th Amendment:** protects the right to a jury trial for most non-criminal cases
- ___ **8th Amendment:** prohibits cruel punishments and excessive bail or fines
- ___ **9th Amendment:** says that any rights not mentioned in the Constitution belong to the people
- ___ **10th Amendment:** says that powers not given to the national government belong to the states or the people

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Matching Activity. Use this page to organize the 10 amendments in the Bill of Rights.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

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Amendment Matching– Paste



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Activity. Cut each box out and read the statement. Paste it on the amendment that is the best match.

No unreasonable searches and seizures.

The right to have a jury hear your case in a *criminal* trial.

The government cannot deprive you of life, liberty or property without due process of law.

Bail, fines and punishments must not be excessive

Did you find a *right* not listed in the Constitution? It still belongs to the people!

You don't have to house soldiers in your home during peacetime.

The right to have a jury hear your case in most *civil* trials.

Citizens can keep and bear arms.

You have the freedoms of religion, speech, press; and the right to assemble peacefully and petition the government.

If a *power* isn't given to the federal government, it goes to the states or the people.

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Amendment Matching– Cut

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Name: **TEACHER KEY**

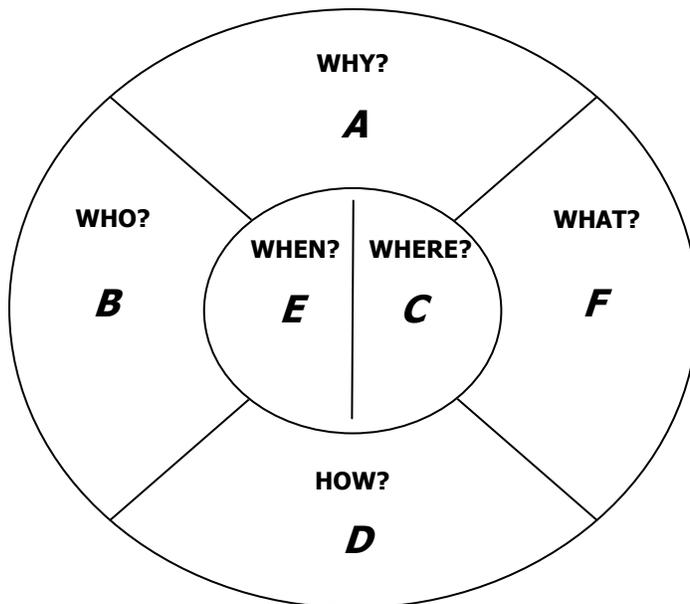
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- D 3. to pass or approve
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