



Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

Current Constitutional Issues - Voting in America

This lesson focuses on proposed current changes to voting in the United States. The lesson highlights the constitutional changes made to voting rights by amending the U.S. Constitution. It also asks the students to consider proposed changes to voting procedures in regard to the U.S. Constitution.

How voting has changed in the US: From the Constitution to today

Enduring Understanding:

The U.S. Constitution is a living document and changes have been made as society's views change.

The U.S. Constitution balances power between the federal government and the states.

Essential Questions:

What changes have occurred in voting rights from 1789 to the present?

What restrictions have been placed on voting?

How can we make it easier for the people who don't vote?

Who should establish the voting criteria and procedures - the states or the federal government?

Set:

Introduce the lesson with the following video. The video outlines how voting rights have expanded since 1789.

TEDEd: <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-fight-for-the-right-to-vote-in-the-united-states-nicki-beaman-griffin>

While viewing the video, ask students to list restrictions on voting in the past.

Content:

Ask students to use the "How Voting Has Changed" worksheet to record information from the video.



Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

page 2

Topics for discussion:

What hindrances still remain for people to vote?

How might these problems be addressed?

Should the federal government make a law to change voting procedures in all the states? Why or why not?

1789 - Who could vote? The 1789 United States Constitution did not define who was eligible to vote, allowing each state to determine who was eligible. Freed slaves could vote in four states. Women were largely prohibited from voting, as were men without property.

The 10th Amendment of the Constitution says: The **Tenth Amendment** says that the federal government only has those **powers** delegated in the Constitution. If a power isn't listed, it belongs to the states or to the people. Therefore, since voting rights were not in the original document, each state could determine who voted in that state.

Since the criteria of who can vote are not established in the Constitution, those criteria can be established by each state. Therefore, they can differ from state to state.

In the video, what restrictions have been placed on voting?

Convicted felons

Own property

Race

Literacy tests

Poll Taxes

Women

Age



Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

page 3

Changes to voting in the United States

1830s - Jacksonian democracy - right to vote expands to all white males.

1870 - 15th Amendment - The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

1920 - Nineteenth Amendment - The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex

1965 - Voting Rights Act - No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color

1971 - 26th Amendment - The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

These laws lifted some of the voting restrictions addressed in the video. However, the number of people who vote is still smaller than expected. Why don't people vote today? What might restrict people from voting?

Currently the U.S. Congress is discussing the "For the People Act" that proposes these changes to voting:

Automatic voting registration

Making election day a national holiday

Creating at least 15 days of early voting for federal elections

Voter IDs

Discuss these proposals:

Do the students think this would increase voter participation?

What are the pros and cons of these changes?

Should the federal government make the voting laws or should the states make them?



Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

page 4

Rock the Vote

<https://www.rockthevote.org/>

Introduce this interactive website to students to help them understand how to register to vote and how to obtain voting information.

Assessment and/or student follow-up activities

Create a timeline of voting rights in the United States

Write a letter to the editor of the *Bucks County Courier Times* explaining your position on the current proposed changes to voting in the United States.

Research the position of your senator or congressman on federal law to determine voting procedures for all states.

How Voting has Changed in the U.S. Worksheet

While watching video: List restriction to voting that have occurred in the past:

Restrictions to Voting	When changed....
Must own property	1830s

How did laws change to allow more people to vote?

Who can vote?	What was the change
Constitution	No reference to who can vote in original document. Common practice is white males who own property
Tenth Amendment	States that powers not given to the Federal government are reserved for the States. Each state can determine who can vote in that state
19th Amendment	
Voting Rights Act of 1965	
26th Amendment	



Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

page 5

The Constitution in a Period

This Constitution Day, why not have the students reread the U.S. Constitution? In this lesson, students are divided into groups and each reads a selection from the U.S. Constitution. They discuss their section and answer three general questions. Each group reports back to the class in chronological order. This lesson is based on the Literacy Lesson template called "Novel in an Hour."

Enduring Understanding:

The U.S. Constitution is the blueprint for the government of the United States.

The Constitution is a living document that changes to meet current society needs.

Essential Questions:

What is in the U.S. Constitution?

What changes have been made since it was written in 1787?

Do I understand all that is stated in the U.S. Constitution?

Set:

Introduce the lesson with a trivia game.

Use the 10 questions found at ConstitutionFacts.com: <https://www.constitutionfacts.com/?page=quiz.cfm>.

After students and class have completed the trivia game, organize the students into groups to read and discuss sections of the U.S. Constitution.

Organization:

Groups should include 3-4 students Group sizes and assignments can be adjusted to meet your class needs and size.

Suggested groups:

Group 1 - Article 1: Sections 1 and 2 and 3

Group 2 - Article 1: Sections 4, 5 and 6



Offered by the Washington Crossing Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Friends of Washington Crossing Park to celebrate Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.





Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

page 6

- Group 3 - Article 1: Section 7
- Group 4 - Article 1: Section 8
- Group 5: - Article 1: Section 9 and 10
- Group 6: - Article 2
- Group 7 - Article 3
- Group 8 - Article 4
- Group 9 - Article 5
- Group 10 - Article 6 and 7

Assignment:

Give the following directions to the groups, asking them to record their answers on the provided "Constitution in a Period" PDF worksheet.

Read your selection and answer the following questions:

What aspect of the government does your section address?

What is the key idea?

What vocabulary words did you need to define?

Did you learn anything new by reading this section?

Demonstrate this procedure by reading the Preamble. Discuss the four questions as a class. These are possible answers.

What aspect of the government does your section address? This is the introduction to the U.S. Constitution and lists the seven goals for the government.

What is the key idea? The goal of the U.S. Constitution is to form a democratic government that benefits the citizens.

What vocabulary words did you need to define? Tranquility - peace; posterity – descendants.

Did you learn anything new by reading this section? The goal of the U.S. Constitution was to form a government that was more perfect than the monarchies from which most immigrated.

Give each group time to read and answer their questions - 15-20 minutes



Offered by the Washington Crossing Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Friends of Washington Crossing Park to celebrate Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.





Constitution Compendium

Lesson Plan ~ Grade Level 10-12

page 7

Groups will report their findings to the class, reporting in order from Article I-VII. Space is provided on the “Constitution in a Period” worksheet for students to take notes.

Assessment:

Conduct a “Ticket Out the Door” activity, asking students to answer the following question on a 3” x 5” card that they must turn in as they exit class.

Today we are celebrating the Constitution. What did you learn today that you hope to remember?

Constitution in a Period Worksheet

My group is reading:

Read your selection and answer the following questions:

What aspect of the government does your section address?

What is the key idea?

What vocabulary words did you need to define?

Did you learn anything new by reading this section?

Constitution in a Period Worksheet, page 2

Complete this chart to record information from all group reports

Selection from Constitution	Something I learned from Group's Report
Preamble	
Article I: Sections 1, 2, 3	
Article I: Sections 4, 5, 6	
Article I: Section 7	
Article I: Section 8	
Article I: Section 9 and 10	
Article II	
Article III	
Article IV	
Article V	
Article VI and VII	

What is one thing you learned about the Constitution today that you hope to remember and share with others?



Constitution Compendium

Constitution Resources ~ Grade Level 10-12 to Adult

page 8

Suggested Reading on Constitution

Amar, Akil Reed. *The Words That Made Us: America's Constitutional Conversation, 1760-1840*. 2021

Beeman, Richard. *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution*. 2010.

Bowen, Catherine Drinker. *Miracle at Philadelphia: The Story of the Constitutional Convention May-September 1787*. 1986.

Hjelmland, Andy. *Kids in Jail*, 1992.

Hughes, Chris. *People at the Center of the Constitutional Convention*. 2005

Khan, Khizr. *This is Our Constitution: Discover America with a Gold Star Father*. 2017

Klaman, Michael. *The Framers' Coup: The Making of the constitution*. 2018

Madison, James. *The Constitutional Convention: A Narrative History from the Notes of James Madison*. 2005.

Maier, Pauline. *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788*. 2011.

McClanahan, Brion. *The Founding Father's Guide to the Constitution*. 2012

Mitchell, Barbara. *Father of the Constitution: A Story About James Madison*. 2003

Monk, Linda. *The Words We Live By*. 2004.

Morris, Gouverneur. *To Secure the Blessings of Liberty*. 2012.

Patrick, Sean. *The Know Your Bill of Rights Book: Don't Lose Your Constitutional Rights*. 2012.



Offered by the Washington Crossing Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Friends of Washington Crossing Park to celebrate Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.





Constitution Compendium

Constitution Resources ~ Grade Level 10-12 to Adult

page 9

Rakove, Jack. Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the constitution. 1997.

Vile, John R. Encyclopedia of Constitutional Amendments, and Amending Issues, 1789-2002. 2003

Wehle, Kim. How to Read the Constitution and Why. 2019

Biographies of Signers

Founding Fathers: A Captivating Guide to Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and James Monroe. Captivating History, 2019.

Founding Fathers: The Essential Guide to the Men Who Made America. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007.

Pisasale, Gene. Forgotten Founding Fathers: Pennsylvania and Delaware in the American Revolution, 2020.

Rappleye, Charles. Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution, 2010.

Stewart, David. O. The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution, 2008.

Toth, Michael C. Founding Federalist: The Life of Oliver Ellsworth, 2011.

Videos

Just the Facts - The United States Constitution. Goldhil Home Media, 2004.

Key Constitutional Concepts. Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. 2003.

Our Constitution, A Conversation. Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnyland, 2006.



Offered by the Washington Crossing Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Friends of Washington Crossing Park to celebrate Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.





Constitution Compendium

Constitution Resources ~ Grade Level 10-12 to Adult

page 10

The US Constitution. The Khan Academy. Khan academy.org.

Other Resources

Constitution Hall Pass, constitutioncenter.org

Constitutional Questions with Justice Neil Gorsuch

The Constitutional Convention: A Tour of Signers Hall

Convention, Ratification and Amendment Process

Federalism

Separation of Powers

The Legislative Branch

The Executive Branch

Electoral College Overview

Judicial Review: Marbury v. Madison

Article III: Justice Breyer on how the Supreme Court decides cases

Amending the Constitution with Justice Neil Gorsuch

The Bill of Rights with Justice Neil Gorsuch

The Bill of Rights

First Amendment Overview

First Amendment Speech and Press

Tinker v Des Moines

First Amendment Discussion Starter: Freedom of Expression

First Amendment Religion

Fourth Amendment and Privacy

Fourth Amendment Discussion Starter Search and Seizure

Eighth Amendment Discussion Starter: Freedom from Excessive Punishment

The Thirteenth Amendment

The Dred Scott Decision with Justice Neil Gorsuch

Dred Scott v. Sanford

The 14th Amendment

14th Amendment with Eric Foner

14th Amendment with Jeffrey Rosen

14th Amendment with Tomato Brown-Nagin

14th Amendment Discussion Starter: The Emancipation Proclamation

14th Amendment Discussion Starter: The 39th Congress Debates



Offered by the Washington Crossing Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Friends of Washington Crossing Park to celebrate Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.





Constitution Compendium

Constitution Resources ~ Grade Level 10-12 to Adult

page 11

14th Amendment Discussion Starter: The Black Codes

14th Amendment Discussion Starter: The Women of Reconstruction

14th Amendment Discussion Starter: The Declaration of Independence and Frederick Douglas

TEDEd videos on the U.S. Constitution

The Making of the American Constitution - Judy Walton - <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/who-made-the-american-constitution-judy-walton>

A Three Minute Guide to the Bill of Rights by Belinda Stutzman - <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/a-3-minute-guide-to-the-bill-of-rights-belinda-stutzman>

Why is the US Constitution so Hard to amend? <https://www.freotech4teachers.com/2019/09/7-ted-ed-lessons-for-constitution-day.html>

Why Wasn't the Bill of Rights Originally Included in the Constitution? <https://www.freotech4teachers.com/2019/09/7-ted-ed-lessons-for-constitution-day.html>

How is Power Divided in the US Government? - <https://www.freotech4teachers.com/2019/09/7-ted-ed-lessons-for-constitution-day.html>

How do Executive Orders Work? - <https://www.freotech4teachers.com/2019/09/7-ted-ed-lessons-for-constitution-day.html>

Mount Vernon - mountvernon.org

Washington's Pivotal Role - <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/constitutional-convention/convention-president/>

A More Perfect Union - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k55VdRD8DDo>

Researching the American Revolution - <https://researchingtheamericanrevolution.com>

American History from Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond - <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/>

National Archives - <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>

Hillsdale College

The Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum - <https://k12.hillsdale.edu/>



Offered by the Washington Crossing Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Friends of Washington Crossing Park to celebrate Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.





Constitution Compendium

Constitution Resources ~ Grade Level 10-12 to Adult

page 12

Trivia Quiz

<https://www.constitutionfacts.com/?page=quiz.cfm>

<https://play.howstuffworks.com/quiz/us-constitution-quiz>

https://www.sporcle.com/games/Hejman/armed_bears?t=constitution

Tests knowledge of Preamble

https://www.sporcle.com/games/sproutcm/thank_heavens_for_schoolhouse_rock?t=constitution

Tests knowledge of Bill of Rights

https://www.sporcle.com/games/Hejman/armed_bears?t=constitution