

John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum
Constitution Week
A Lesson for Grade 2: “The Constitution”
Adapted from The National Constitution Center’s Lesson
“We the Civic Kids the Constitution A Signing of the Times”

Introduction

In this lesson, filled with fabulous literature and activities, students will become familiar with the basic tenets of the Constitution, signed by the Delegates to the Constitutional Convention on September 17th, 1787, “Constitution Day”. Students will be able to discuss the historical background and writing and ratification of the Constitution, name and explain the three branches of the federal government and read a physical and political map of the United States, made up of thirteen states, when the Constitution was written.

MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education History and Social Science Content Standards

Grade Two:

Topic 1. Reading and making maps

- 1.1. Explain the kinds of information provided by components of a map and give examples of how maps can show relationships between humans and the environment

Topic 3. History: migrations and cultures

- 3.8. Investigate reasons why people migrate (move) to different places around the world, recognizing that some migration is voluntary, some forced
- 3.9. Give examples of why the United States is called “a nation of immigrants”

Topic 4. Civics in the context of geography: countries and governments

- 4.12 Recognize the difference between physical geography and political geography
- 4.13 Explain the characteristics of a country

Guiding Questions

1. How did the United States become a country? What is the Constitution? Who wrote the Constitution and when was it written?

2. The first part of the Constitution is called *the Preamble*. What does it say and why is it important?
3. Who were the first people to come to the United States? Where did they come from? Why is the United States called a country of immigrants?
4. How many states made up the United States when the Constitution was ratified? Where part of our country today were the first states located? What are the names of those states?
5. What information does a physical map provide? What information does a political map provide? How are these two maps different?

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to describe the United States in 1787 including the importance of the Constitution in our country's development.
2. Students will be able to paraphrase the meaning of the Constitution's Preamble and share that it is the introduction that outlines the delegates development of a democratic government.
3. Students will be able to explain the difference between a rule and a law.
4. Students will be able to explain the difference between a physical and political map. They will be able to locate and label the 13 states that made up the United States in 1787, identify them as being on the eastern coast. They will be able to label major rivers and the Appalachian Mountains.

Materials

Activity One

- *We the Kids* by David Catrow
- *A More Perfect Union* by Betsy Maestro
- School House Rock Video: *The Preamble* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHp7sMqPL0g>
- Worksheet: The Preamble Scramble https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/Preamble_Puzzle.pdf

Activity Two

- *We the Civic Kids: The Constitution* https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK130001_CivicsKids-2013-PAGES-FNL-Lesson2.pdf
- School House Rock Video: *Three Ring Government* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEPd98CbbMk>
- We The Civic Kids Bookmark Activity https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_2_-_Teacher_Materials_-_Bookmark_revised.doc.pdf

- *Library Lion* by Michelle Knudsen
- *No Animals in the Library* Worksheet [https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson2-No Animals In the Library activity sheet.pdf](https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson2-No_Animals_In_the_Library_activity_sheet.pdf)

Activity Three

- Blank Map Original Thirteen States
https://www.eduplace.com/ss/socsci/books/content/ilessons/4/ils_tn_gr4_u4_c06_l1.pdf
- PDF: Geography of the Colonies
- PDF: A Political Map of the Original Thirteen Colonies
- PDF: The Thirteen Colonies

Lesson Activities

Activity One: *The Introduction to the Constitution*

- This lesson focuses on the *Preamble* of the *Constitution*. Students will read the Preamble and develop an understanding of the importance of this part of the *Constitution*.
- Read *We the Kids* by David Catrow
- Watch the School House Rock Video: *The Preamble* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHp7sMqPL0g>
- Engage the students in a class discussion about what is included in the *Preamble* and why it is important.
- Have students work together and complete the Preamble Scramble.
https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/Preamble_Puzzle.pdf
- As students are completing the activity, share *A More Perfect Union* by Betsy Maestro

Activity Two: *Understanding the Constitution*

- Read together *We The Civic Kids: The Constitution* https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK130001_CivicsKids-2013-PAGES-FNL-Lesson2.pdf As you read about each branch of the government, highlight and display it: Executive, Legislative, Judicial Highlight the concept of “Balance of Power”
- Share the School House Rock Video: *Three Ring Government* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEPd98CbbMk>
- Review the information students have just learned with a “Name That Branch” oral game. Here are the questions:
 - a. “I am the branch that has two houses. Who am I?”

- b. "I am the branch that decides if a law follows the Constitution. Who am I?"
 - c. "One of the jobs in my branch is the commander in chief. Who am I?"
 - d. "In my branch I am known as the upper house. What is my branch and who am I?"
 - e. "The Department of Education is found in my branch. Who am I?"
 - f. "One chief justice and eight justices are part of my branch. Who am I and what is my branch?"
- The branches of the government are responsible for *making* and *interpreting* the law. This is a challenging job. Let's try it! Read *Library Lion* by Michelle Knudson. Pass out the follow up activity worksheet *No Animals in the Library*. [https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson2-No Animals In the Library activity sheet.pdf](https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson2-No_Animals_In_the_Library_activity_sheet.pdf). Have students work with partners to complete the activity. Then have each pair report out their responses by a hand vote. Allow discussion as to whether exceptions should be allowed.
 - The Bookmark Activity https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_2_-_Teacher_Materials_-_Bookmark_revised.doc.pdf and "The Sticky Situation" in the *We The Civic Kids* are excellent follow-up activities to his lesson.

Activity Three:

- Students will become familiar with the United States, made up of 13 states, when the Constitution was written in 1787. The states were divided into three regions, the New England, the Middle Colonies, and the Southern Colonies. The land in New England was shaped by glaciers. The soil in New England is very rocky. Crops did not grow well. The growing season was only five months long. New England used other natural resources, using the wood from the forests to build buildings and boats. They also fished and caught whales for food and other products. The Middle Colonies had richer soil and a longer growing season. In these colonies farming was much more profitable. The Southern Colonies had the best soil and the longest growing season.
- Provide students with sharpie markers and two blank maps. Tell them that they will create two maps: a political map and a physical map.
 1. Share the example of a political map included with this lesson. Starting with the blank map, have students label the states using each one's abbreviation. They may also want to put Philadelphia, site of the Constitutional Convention on the map as well. They can then color the states, based on their borders, each a different color.
 2. Share the example of the physical map. Help students to label some of the areas including: the Atlantic Ocean, the Appalachian Mountains, the Green Mountains, the White Mountains, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the Connecticut River, the Pennsylvania River, and the Roanoke River. Students can then color the physical map using blue to highlight water, brown to highlight mountain ranges, and green to highlight the remaining areas.