

John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum

Constitution Week

A Lesson for Grade Four: The *Constitution* Preamble and “Point of View”

Introduction

This lesson includes activities from the National Constitution Center and the Bill of Rights Institute. *We the Kids, the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States*, introduces and helps students develop meaning of the Constitution’s Preamble. Activity Two, “*Defining Classroom Citizenship*” is a lesson adaptation from the Bill of Rights Institute, guiding students to build consensus regarding attributes of good classroom citizens. The National Constitution Center’s lesson on *Point of View* provides reinforcement for working together using the characteristics identified, modeling standards for wider participation in civic engagement. Students learn to recognize that the point of view of an individual combined with their ability of persuasion may combine to impact an individual’s beliefs about various topics.

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

Grade Four (page nine): A Renewed Mission: Education for Civic Life in a Democracy

People who are prepared to continue the legacy of democracy in the United States:

- Know the fundamental ideas central to the vision of the 18th century founders, the vision that holds us together as one people of many diverse origins and cultures
- Are prepared to discuss complex and controversial issues and ideas with people of different views, learning to speak with clarity and respectfulness
- Develop and practice habits of civic engagement and participation in democratic government

Guiding Questions

1. What is the Preamble of the Constitution and what does it tell us?
2. What are the key attributes of good citizens?

3. What is consensus and how is it different from a vote?
4. What is “point of view” and why is it important?
5. How can you use information to form and share a “point of view”?

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to explain the Constitution Preamble in their own words.
2. Students will be able to identify the attributes of a good classroom citizen and apply them to a larger context.
3. Students will be able to share the difference between consensus and voting.
4. Students will demonstrate that a person’s point of view is developed by identifying pros and cons regarding a specific topic and can be influenced by another person’s ability to persuade them.

Lesson Materials

Activity One

- *We the Kids* by David Catrow
- Poster Board/Construction Paper for Cards
- Lined Paper
- Schoolhouse Rock Video: *The Constitution Preamble* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EfnNUt_nwY

Activity Two

- *Hey Little Ant* by Philip and Hannah Hoose
- Lined paper for small group work
- *We the Civic Kids Magazine* https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK130001_CivicsKids-2013-PAGES-FNL-Lesson5.pdf

Activity Three

- Handout: Should Children Have Pets https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_5_-_Worksheetss_-_Graphic_Organizer_Pets.pdf
- *Should Children Have Pets* by Sylvia Lollis
- Worksheet (at end of the lesson)

Activity Four

- *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by A. Wolf
- *We the Civic Kids* Bookmark [https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_5 - Teacher Materials - Bookmark revised.pdf](https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_5_-_Teacher_Materials_-_Bookmark_revised.pdf)

Lesson Activities

Activity One: The *Preamble* and “*Securing the Blessings of Liberty*”

The Preamble

- Share with students that Constitution Day, September 17th, is a civic holiday honoring the day in 1787 when the Constitutional Delegates met for the last time and signed the *Constitution*. Signed 231 years ago, the *Constitution* is still the law of our land, and outlines our democracy.
- Share that today you are going to focus on learning the meaning of the *Preamble*, or introduction to the Constitution.
- Introduce the *Preamble* by watching the Schoolhouse Rock Video: *The Constitution Preamble* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EfnNUt_nwY
- Read *We the Kids* by David Catrow. Focus on the page that divides the *Preamble* into sections and rewrites each section in modern English
- Pass out the 11 cards with each of the section of the Preamble written in old English on the front and the meaning of that section on the back. Have each student read his card, going all the way through the Preamble. Then have students read their section, then turn the card over and read the other side. Finally, have students read the modern English version to facilitate a better understanding of the meaning of the *Preamble*.

Securing the Blessings of Liberty: Classroom Citizenship

- Share with students that this part of the lesson will help them develop strategies to work together well as a class, especially when having discussions where they have different “points of view.” Share that each of them develops a point of view based on information that they have heard or read about a topic. These topics have no right or wrong answer, but each of them can develop their own “point of view” about them.
- Talk about what makes a good citizen? What makes a good *classroom* citizen?
- Pass out lined paper. Have each student individually list characteristics of a good classroom citizen. (5 minutes)

- Have students work in small groups and compare their responses. Each group will decide on a *consensus* list of the five most important characteristics of a good classroom citizen.
- Share with students that *consensus* is a process of reaching an agreement in which everyone’s opinion is heard and considered, so when you observe them working in their small groups, you want to see one person speaking and the others listening, valuing what each person shares.
- When students have their list of five characteristics, take turns having them share them, posting them for everyone to see. Circle similarities on the lists. Create a final list of the most frequently identified characteristics. ***“Now that you have demonstrated the you know what it takes to be good citizens, I’m sure we can all apply these characteristics to working together in our classroom.”*** Facilitate a classroom discussion about how the highlighted characteristics apply to and are important attributes for a productive and respectful classroom.
- Summarize the lesson by using some of the following debrief questions:
 1. What steps did you follow individually/as a small group?
 2. Did you need to start with a definition of citizenship, or did you develop it as you worked?
 3. Were the characteristics you listed based on reason or emotion?
 4. To what extent will the list we developed as a class be a good set of rules?
 5. What else might we need to consider?
 6. What steps are important in reaching a reasoned decision as an individual? As a group?
 7. What skills were necessary for you to accomplish this activity?
 8. Why is the skill of rational decision-making a useful tool?
 9. What criteria did you use to prioritize/reach consensus?
 10. In what ways did you and your group demonstrate the ability to come to a reasoned judgment in reading, writing, and speech?

Activity Two: Point of View: School Uniforms

- Read and discuss *Hey Little Ant* by Phillip and Hannah Hoose. Introduce the idea of looking at topics or issues in different ways or different *points of view*. Discuss how the point of view of “the Kid” and “the ant” were different.

- Have students work in small groups to have an introductory discussion, sharing their *points of view* about school uniforms. Assign one student in each group to be the facilitator (provide clarification if needed) and one student to be the recorder.
- Distribute *We the Civic Kids Dress for Success* https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK130001_CivicsKids-2013-PAGES-FNL-Lesson5.pdf. Facilitate a class discussion about the cover and title captions. Read and discuss the School Uniforms Narrative. Pause and seek reactions after each pro (for) or con (against) statement. Ask students to add some of their pros or cons that were not mentioned in the narrative. Remind students to follow their list of good citizen classroom characteristics as they participate in this discussion, as they develop their “point of view” regarding school uniforms.

Activity Three: Point of View: Should Children Have Pets?

- Working in small groups with the provided graphic organizer, https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_5_-_Worksheetss_-_Graphic_Organizer_Pets.pdf, have students develop a list of “pros and cons” regarding children having pets.
- Have each small group share their pros and cons with the whole class. Ask each student to record his or her “point of view” at the bottom of the worksheet.
- Explain to students that because there is no right or wrong answer, people will try to *persuade* them regarding their “point of view.” Using the book *Should We Have Pets* by Sylvia Lollis and the worksheet provided at the end of this lesson, share each “point of view” in the book and “rate the persuasiveness” according to the rubric provided. Have students tally their ratings and see if anyone changes their “point of view.”

Activity Four: *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by A. Wolf

- Have a class discussion, allowing students to recall their knowledge of the story of the *Three Little Pigs*.
- Read aloud *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Whose “point of view” is shared in this version of the story?
- Use the activities on *We the Civic Kids Bookmark* https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/CK-Lesson_5_-_Teacher_Materials_-_Bookmark_revised.pdf to highlight the two “points of view”, and see how often the students agree with the pigs and the wolf.

Your Point of View: Should We Have Pets?

This worksheet goes with the book *Should We Have Pets* by Sylvia Lollis. For each of the students' points of view, you will rate whether you think the persuasiveness of their presentation is a:

3 – Strong Presentation

2- Okay Presentation

1- Weak Presentation

Place your score in the “for” column if the student thinks children should have pets or the “against” column if the students thinks children should not have pets.

| Presentation | “For” | “Against” |
|------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Good for Animals | | |
| Animal Abuse | | |
| Pets Are Fun | | |
| Pets Cost Too Much | | |
| Pets Are Good Medicine | | |
| Overbreeding | | |
| Working Pets | | |
| Animals Should Be Free | | |
| We Can Learn from Pets | | |
| TOTALS | | |

You have heard the students' presentations for having pets. You have heard the students' presentations for not having pets. Now add up your points and cast your vote either “for” or “against” having pets. Did the students' presentations change your “point of view”? Cast your vote!