**Lesson Plan: The Constitution: What it Says and What it Means**

**Grade Level: 5th**

**Context of the Unit:** This is a fifth grade social studies unit focusing on how the original thirteen colonies transitioned from independent states to a united nation. Through a series of readings and activities students will first learn about what life was like during and immediately following the American Revolution. They will then participate in further readings and hands-on activities aimed and increasing their understanding of the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

**Context of the Lesson:** Through participation in this lesson students will learn what the Constitution says, what it means, and its importance. Students will be able to identify how the Constitution addressed the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation, how our government derives its power from the people, and how our government is composed of three branches of government.

Prior to this lesson, students will have studied how life was different during 1787. They will have analyzed the Articles of Confederation and will understand the problems and weaknesses of this document. Through the core literature book SHHH! We’re Writing the Constitution by Jean Fritz, a power point presentation, and the creation of a flip book, students will understand the challenges surrounding the creation of the Constitution, what the Constitution says, and what it actually means. From here, students will go on to examine the significance of the Bill of Rights, and ultimately, at the conclusion of this unit, they will understand how our government was created by the people, for the people, and that as citizens of the United States they have a responsibility to protect the rights established in the Constitution through active participation in government.

**Standards Addressed:**

**History Social Studies Standards:**

**5.7 Students describe the people and events associated with the development of the U.S. Constitution and analyze the Constitution’s significance as the foundation of the American republic.**

5.7 – 1 List the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation as set forth by their critics.

5.7 – 2 Explain the significance of the new Constitution of 1787 including the struggles over its

Ratification and the reasons for the addition of the Bill of Rights.

**5.7 –3 Understand the fundamental principles of American constitutional democracy, including**

**how the government derives its power from the people and the primacy of individual liberty.**

**5.7 –4 Understand how the Constitution is designed to secure our liberty by both empowering**

**And limiting central government and compare the powers granted to the citizens,**

**Congress, the president, and the Supreme Court with those reserved for the states.**

**English/Language Arts Standards:**

**Reading:**Main idea and details  
Analyze text  
Draw inferences and conclusions

**Writing:**

2.3 Write a persuasive letter or composition:  
 2.a State a clear position in support of a proposal  
 2.b Support a position with relevant evidence

**Common Core State Standards for ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects K-5**

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing K-5**

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Objectives:**

Students will:

* be able to identify why the Articles of Confederation gave the central government limited powers.
* Be able to list the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation.
* **Identify those individuals who were instrumental in creating the United States.**
* **Identify the Federalist and Anti-Federalist points of view regarding the new Constitution.**
* **Know the reasons for the addition of the Bill of Rights.**
* Know the first 10 Amendments and the rights they protect.
* **Understand how the United States government derives its power from the people.**
* **Be able to identify the three branches of government and the roles and duties of each branch.**
* **Be able to identify the role the citizen plays within the three branches of government.**
* Understand the judicial system and the responsibilities of the American citizen within this system.
* Understand how the judicial system calls on citizens to safeguard the individual liberties of individual Americans.

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**Big Ideas:**

***Power, Authority, and Governance***

Understanding the historical developments of structures, power, authority, and governance and their evolving functions in contemporary US society, as well as in other parts of the world, is essential for developing civic competence.

***Civic Ideals and Practices***

An understanding of civic ideals and practices of citizenship is critical to full participation in society and is a central purpose of the social studies. All people have a stake in examining civic ideals and practices across time and diverse societies, as well as at home, and in determining how to close the gap between present practices and the ideals upon which our democratic republic is based.

**Essential Questions:**

What are the duties and responsibilities of an American citizen?

What is the significance of the United States Constitution?

**Higher Order Thinking Questions:**

Do you think the delegates at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 were right to create a brand new document (the Constitution) or do you think they should have reworked the Articles of Confederation?

After analyzing the United States Constitution, what do you think is the most significant article of the document (including the preamble) and why?

In your opinion, which document – The Articles of Confederation, The United States Constitution, or the Bill of Rights – has had the biggest impact our nation and why?

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**Assessment:**

Throughout this unit students will be evaluated both formally and informally through the use of student participation, teacher observation, social studies journals, quick writes, persuasive writing assignment, projects, and a multiple choice test.

Students will create a social studies journal which will be turned in for a formal grade based on a point system. The social studies journal will divided into three sections labeled accordingly: The United States Constitution, Vocabulary, and Daily Warm-Ups.

Students will also write a persuasive essay in which they will state whether or not the American citizen should ratify the Constitution or not. This will also be graded on a rubric.

Students will also be given a multiple choice pre and post test. All students should improve on the post test and the post test will be graded by percent.

**Quality Criteria:**

Persuasive Essay – Graded using a rubric that evaluates the following components: Social Studies content, writing strategies, writing applications, and conventions.

Social Studies Journal – Graded using a rubric that evaluates the following components:

Social Studies content, neatness, and creativity.

Formal Assessment – Multiple choice test graded on a 100 percent scale.

**Assessment:**

In informal assessment can be made from the entry journals from the days specifically linked to the lesson “The Constitution: What it Says and What it Means” can be used to assess student learning on a daily basis.

Student summarizing from their foldable book can be used to assess student understanding of what the Constitution says and means.

The final page of the student foldable booklet where students compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution can be used as a formal assessment to student understanding of the two documents.

**Persuasive Writing Rubric:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Social Studies** | **Applications (Genre)** | **Writing Strategies (Traits)** | **Conventions** |
| **4** | \*Clearly and effectively states their position for or against ratification of the Constitution  \*Supporting details are logical to the position taken  \*Clearly and effectively is able to compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution through their position.  \*Student addresses the concerns of the opposing view | \*Establishes a clear, well-crafted position for the decision to ratify or oppose the Constitution.  \*Supports the position convincingly and logically with arguments and relevant and pertinent evidence and details for each argument  \*Organization is clear, follows a simple organizational pattern and uses key points to make the argument  \*The opposing view’s concerns about ratification are distinctly and directly addressed | \*Writes a multiple-paragraph position paper that clearly establishes the position and the important supporting ideas, in a convincing, logical sequence  \*Clearly supports the focus with carefully chosen details and transitional expressions that link one paragraph to another in a well-planned logical order  \*Concluding paragraph summarizes important details and provides closure to the arguments and clearly restates the position | \*Contains few, if any errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and sentence structure.)  \*Errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing |
| **3** | \*States a position for or against the ratification of the United States Constitution.  \*Supporting details are logical to the position taken  \* Is able to compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution through their position.  \*Student attempts to address the concerns of the opposing view, however may simply list the reasons previously stated. | \*States a clear position for the decision to ratify or oppose the Constitution.  \*Supports the position logically with arguments and relevant evidence and details for each argument  \*Organization is clear and follows a simple organizational pattern  \*The opposing view’s concerns about ratification are addressed | \*Writes a multiple-paragraph position paper that establishes a topic and the important supporting ideas, in a logical sequence  \*Supports the focus with details and transitional expressions that link one paragraph to another in a logical order  \*Concluding paragraph summarizes important ideas and restates the position | \*Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure.)  \*Errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing |
| **2** | \*May or may not clearly state their position for or against the ratification of the United States Constitution.  \*Supporting details do not appear to be logical  \*May or may not compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution through their position.  \*Student does not address the concerns of the opposing view. | \*States a vague position for the decision to ratify or oppose the Constitution.  \*Supports the position with weak arguments and evidence or details that may be irrelevant or inconclusive  \*Organization is loosely followed and may simply be a listing of items.  \*The opposing view’s concerns about ratification may be acknowledged | \*Writes a limited multiple-paragraph position paper that alludes to a to a position and includes some supporting ideas in a loose sequence  \*Generally supports the position with details and transitional expressions that may be vague and may not clearly link paragraphs together  \*Concluding paragraph may merely restate the position or summarize a previous idea | \*Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (Grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure.)  \*Errors may interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing |
| **1** | \*Position for or against the ratification of the United States Constitution is omitted.  \*Supporting details are weak or omitted  \*Is unable to include a comparison to the Articles of Confederation.  \*Student does not address the concerns of the opposing view. | \*Position may or may not be stated for the decision to ratify or oppose the Constitution.  \*Position may or may not be supported by any arguments, evidence, or details  \*Organization is lacking and may be a mere listing of items  \*The opposing view’s concerns about ratification are not addressed | \*Writes a single paragraph position paper that may or may not address the topic and/or supporting details in no discernable order  \*Few details are provided and no transitional expressions are used to link paragraphs  \*May include an introduction but ends abruptly with no summary of the main ideas | \*Contains numerous errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure.)  \*Errors interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing |

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**Timeframe:**

This entire unit, assuming you teach Social Studies for approximately 1 hour per day, 5 days per week, will take between 4 – 6 weeks. This particular lesson, which includes the reading of the book SHHH! We’re Writing the Constitution, (allotting for 1 hour per day, 5 days a week) will take approximately 5 to 6 days.

**Hook:**

\*Pass out the Anticipation Guide regarding the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and the framing of the United States Constitution. Give the students between 5 – 7 minutes to answer the questions.

\*Read the questions out loud to the class and ask the students to share their responses.

\*Have students place the Anticipation Guide in their journal so they can revisit it at the conclusion of the lesson.

**Into:**

\*Pass out student books, SHHH! We’re Writing the Constitution!, and allow students between 2 – 4 minutes to browse through the book examining the illustrations so students can make predictions.

\*Ask students to share their predictions with the class. The teacher can chart these predictions to revisit at the end of the story.

\*Read the story TO the class. (This part of the lesson should take approximately 3 days. Each day before you begin reading you can have the students respond to a journal prompt regarding the book and the previous days reading.)

\*Journal Prompts to Consider:

\*Name some of the “Founding Fathers” and explain their role at the Constitutional

Convention.

\*Who was Edmund Randolph and what was the Virginia Plan?

\*What prevented many states from immediately adopting the Constitution?

\*How did the Constitution fix the shortcomings found in the Articles of Confederation?

\*What is the system of checks and balances?

**Through:**

\*Pass out Flip Books and power point handouts to students.

\*Have students place the title on their flip books and label each tab.

\*Have students cut and paste each Article under the appropriate tab.

\*Once all students have completed the above steps begin the power point presentation. The power point presentation should be directly taught. Use the “What it says” slides to discuss such things as spelling, why the Founding Fathers capitalized certain words, and ask the students what THEY think each article means before actually moving to the “What it means” slides.

\*Students should paraphrase or summarize the “what it means” slide into their own words.

\*At the completion of the power point, students should be given time to color and illustrate their flip books.

**Beyond:**

There are actually TWO beyond activities that can be completed with this assignment.

\*Have students create a Double Bubble Map where they compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation with The Constitution.

\*Pass out Persuasive Writing Prompt and have students complete the essay on whether or not they think their state should ratify the constitution or not.

**Special Needs of Students Considered in this Lesson:**

1. For those English Language Learners and students not yet reading at grade level a series of vocabulary lessons prior to the lessons on the Articles of Confederation, **The Constitution**, and the Bill of Rights, are conducted to help make the material more accessible.
2. For those English Language Learners and students not reading at grade level the story SHHH! We’re Writing the Constitution should be read TO the class.
3. Sentence starters can also be posted on the wall for student use when responding to the journal prompts.
4. Illustrations referencing the material in the Constitution also can make the material more accessible for the English Language Learners.
5. For GATE students, students can be expected to fill in the “What it Means Section” without teacher guidance and then share out to class.
6. GATE students can also be expected to complete the writing assessment with minimal teacher guidance.
7. Multiple lessons throughout this unit rely heavily on Thinking Maps and Foldable books making information more accessible to different learning modalities.

**Extension Ideas:**

1. Students can write a class or school constitution.
2. Students can research and present an oral/visual report on one of the Founding Fathers.
3. Students can research and present Constitutions from other countries.
4. Students can compare and contrast the Federal Constitution with the Constitution from their state.

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**Materials:**

* Student copies of Shhh! We’re Writing the Constitution!
* Power Point “What the Constitution Says and What it Means”
* Handouts on “What the Constitution Says”
* Student Flap Booklets

**References:**

Our Constitution by Donald A. Richie & Justice Learning.org

Our Living Constitution Then and Now by Jerry Aten

Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution by Jean Fritz

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Forming the United States Government  
Persuasive Writing Document

You have just returned to your state following the Constitutional Convention of 1787. You must now persuade your state representatives and citizens on whether or not they should vote in favor of ratification or not. Write a persuasive essay in which you state whether you think your state should ratify the new constitution or not. Give supporting details to back up your decision. Don’t forget to address the concerns of the opposing view.

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