

Anatomy of the Constitution

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets
 Projector
 Transparencies (2, if using overhead)

Copy Instructions:

Preamble Activity (half sheet; class set)
 Reading (4 pages; class set)
 Worksheet (2 pages; class set)
 Foldable (1 page; class set)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Explain the structure, function, and powers of the U.S. government as established in the Constitution
- Identify the roles of the three branches of government
- Describe the constitutional amendment process
- Interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution

STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** by asking students where the government gets its instructions. How do Congress, the President, and federal judges know what to do? Give students a moment to think, then randomly call on students to share their thoughts.
- DISTRIBUTE** one reading packet to each student.
- READ** through the first two paragraphs on page one with the class.
- PROJECT** the *Breaking it Down: The Preamble* projection master. Walk through the Preamble line by line with the class. 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.
- READ** the rest of page one, continuing through page three with the class. Explain that you will go into greater detail on the amendment process on the next page.
- READ** the information about the amendment process on page four and take the students through the various paths to the addition of an amendment to the Constitution.
- DISTRIBUTE** the tent foldable activity page and show the class how to fold it correctly.
- PROJECT** the *Whose Job Is It?* Active Review projection master, revealing one at a time.
- ASK** students to show the correct branch on their tent and note the correct answer on the projection. If you see areas of confusion, stop and clarify as needed.
- DISTRIBUTE** the worksheet pages to the class.
- ASSIGN** students to complete the worksheet activities. Review answers if you wish.
- 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.

Anatomy of the Constitution

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,

Self-government, not rule by a king

a better union of states than before

establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility,

create a fair legal system, keep things peaceful at home



provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare,

join together to defend against attacks, help support people's well-being

and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity,

make sure that freedom and liberty is around today and for our descendants

do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

the people have created and agreed to follow this new plan of government

Anatomy of the Constitution

Name: _____

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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.



Preamble Activity

Anatomy of the Constitution

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Preamble Activity

Anatomy of the Constitution

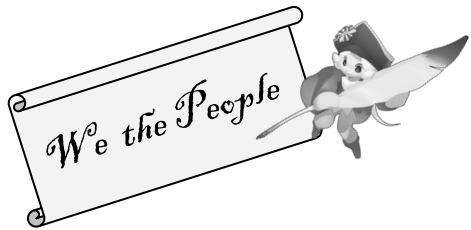
Name: _____

How Do They Govern?

The U.S. Constitution is the document that creates our nation's government. The contents of the Constitution create the three branches of our government and give directions for how the federal government works. (It does this with a little over 4,500 words covering only four sheets of paper!) Although the Constitution was written in 1787, over 220 years ago, it still guides our officials in running our country today. It is the oldest written constitution in the world that is still in use.



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

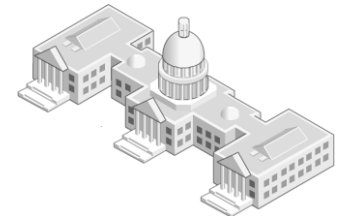


Introducing... The Preamble

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 first three words of the Constitution—"We the People"—contain the important idea of **self-government**.

Creating Congress: Article I

Article I is the first and longest part of the Constitution. It creates the legislative branch of our government. *Legislative* means law-making. This section is the longest because the people who wrote the Constitution believed that a legislative branch is very important in a government that represents the citizens. Members of the *legislature*, or law-making body, are responsible for turning citizens' wants and needs into laws.



Represent Me!

The legislative branch makes our government a representative democracy. In a *representative democracy*, citizens elect people to represent their needs and concerns in government. Article I creates a legislature called Congress and divides it into two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Article I describes how Congress should be organized, tells what qualifications legislators must have, and says how often Congress should hold elections and meet as a group. It also describes other details of operation that each house of Congress gets to decide for itself.

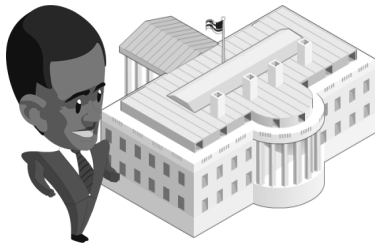


| | The Senate | The House of Representatives |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Qualifications | You must be at least 30 years old, been a U.S. citizen for at least 9 years, and live in the state you represent | You must be at least 25 years old, been a U.S. citizen for at least 7 years, and live in the state you represent. |
| Size | 2 senators per state = 100 total | Number per state depends on population = 435 total (in 2011) |
| They represent... | the interests of the citizens in the entire state for 6 years per term. | the interests of the citizens who live in the district they represent within the state for 2 years per term. |
| Special Duties | The Senate acts as a court during impeachments. | All bills that raise money must start in the House of Representatives. |
| Role in Lawmaking | A bill must be approved by BOTH houses of Congress before it can go to the President to become a law. | |

The Powers of Congress

Article I lists the powers Congress has. Even though Congress is a law-making body, it is not allowed to make laws about anything that's not on this list:

- Collect taxes
- Borrow money and pay debts
- Make rules for how to become a citizen
- Regulate *commerce* (trade) with other nations, between the states, and with Indian tribes
- Coin money and punish counterfeiters
- Establish post offices
- Give patents to new inventions
- Create the lower federal courts
- Punish pirates
- Declare war and support an army and navy
- Make any other laws that are "necessary and proper" to carry out the powers in this list.



Creating the President: Article II

Article II of the Constitution describes the job of the executive branch. This branch *executes*, or carries out, laws. The president heads this branch, which also includes the vice president and many departments in charge of carrying out the government's day-to-day business. Article II describes who qualifies to be the president, what powers the office has, and what happens if a president misbehaves! It also explains the Electoral College, which is the process of how the president is selected.

Presidential Powers

The overall job of the executive branch is to carry out and enforce laws, but Article II gives the president a list of specific duties:

- Act as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces
- Maintain a *cabinet* of advisors who run the 15 executive departments like the State Department and the Treasury
- Grant pardons in all federal criminal offenses, and *reprieves* (postpone punishments like executions)
- Negotiate treaties with other countries
- Appoint ambassadors, Supreme Court Justices and federal court judges, and Cabinet members
- Make a State of the Union address to Congress
- Represent the United States when dealing with foreign countries
- Make sure that laws are carried out (*executed*)



The U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, DC

Creating the Courts: Article III

Here come the judges! Article III creates the judicial branch. The judicial branch interprets laws to decide what they mean and whether they have been followed in specific cases.

Article III creates the Supreme Court and authorizes Congress to create federal courts below the Supreme Court. These are courts that deal with United States laws, not state laws. Article III also gives directions about what kinds of cases the Supreme Court and federal courts can hear. Under Article III, federal judges are appointed, not elected. They stay on the bench until they retire, die, or are removed for bad behavior. Article III also guarantees trial by jury for criminal cases and explains the crime of treason.

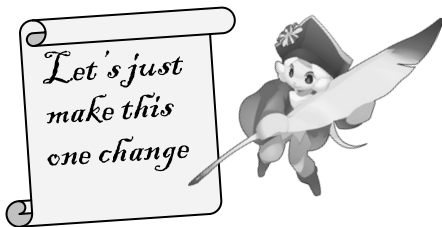
Anatomy of the Constitution

Name: _____

The States: Article IV

States have the power to create and enforce their own laws. Article Four of the Constitution describes how the states should interact with each other.

- Each state has to respect the laws and court decisions of the other states.
- If a criminal flees from one state to another, the state where the crime was committed can request that the criminal be returned to face charges. This is called *extradition*.
- New states can be admitted to the Union with the authorization of Congress and the president.
- All states must have a *republican*, or representative, type of government. (Sorry, states can't have kings.)

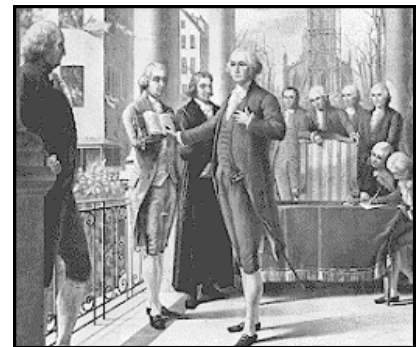


Amending the Constitution: Article V

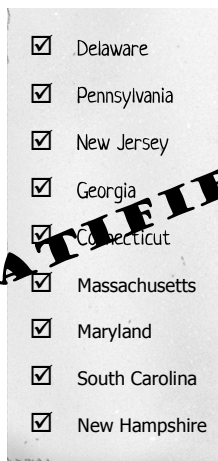
The Constitution is not set in stone, and Article Five describes how it can be changed! A change or addition to the Constitution is called an **amendment**. Given what you've learned so far, do you think the Founding Fathers made it easy or difficult to amend the Constitution? If you guessed difficult, you're right. You'll read all about it on the next page.

Supreme Law of the Land: Article VI

Federalism is the idea that the national government shares power with the state governments. But what happens if a state law disagrees with a national or federal law? Article Six states that the laws and treaties of the U.S. government are "the supreme law of the land." If a state law disagrees with a federal law, federal law wins. This article also requires officials working in the state and federal governments to take an oath to support the Constitution no matter what.



George Washington taking the oath of office for President of the U.S.



Ratification: Article VII

Article Seven says the Constitution could not take effect until at least nine out of the thirteen states approved it. (Back then, there were only thirteen states.) Each state held its own convention to discuss and vote on the Constitution's plan for government. But getting approval wasn't easy. Some people thought the seven articles weren't enough. After much debate, it was agreed that ten amendments would be added to the Constitution. These amendments, called the Bill of Rights, would list specific rights not already mentioned in the Constitution. This put people's minds at ease, and the Constitution became the law of the land in March 1789. The Bill of Rights was added in 1791.

The list of states in order of ratification of the Constitution.

Anatomy of the Constitution

Name: _____



The Amendment Process

The Constitution has only been amended 27 times in all these years. Does that tell you anything about how easy it is to change? Believe it or not, there are only two steps to the amendment process: approval in the U.S. Congress and approval by the states. But these steps are hugely difficult (especially the second one). Getting members of Congress to agree on something is hard enough... but getting states to agree?? That's an awful lot of agreement! With so much approval required, changing the Constitution can take years.

Here are the ways it can be done:

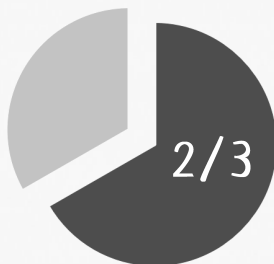
STEP 1: PROPOSE

Choose one of these methods:

Congressional Vote

(All existing amendments proposed this way)

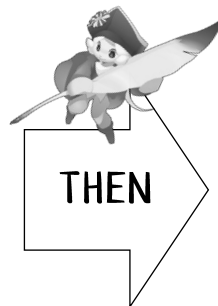
Two-thirds ($2/3$) of both houses of Congress vote YES to the amendment.



Congressional Convention

(Never actually been used)

Two-thirds ($2/3$) of state legislatures ask Congress to hold a convention. The amendment is proposed at this meeting.



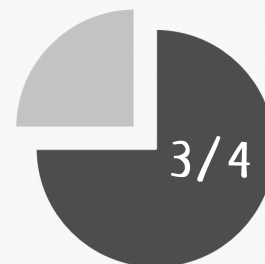
STEP 2: RATIFY

Choose one of these methods:

State Legislature Vote

(Most common method)

Three-fourths ($3/4$) of state legislatures vote YES to ratify (approve) the amendment.



Special State Conventions

(Only been used once)

Each state holds a special convention to consider the proposed amendment. Three-fourths ($3/4$) of state conventions vote YES to ratify the amendment.

So Few Amendments, So Much Time

Hundreds of amendment proposals are introduced in Congress each year. Only 33 have ever received enough votes to actually be proposed. Of those, 27 were ratified and are now part of our Constitution. The first twelve amendments were proposed only a year after the Constitution took effect! Only ten of these were ratified by the states. They became the first ten amendments to the Constitution, and we call them the **Bill of Rights** because they define many of the rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens. The 27th Amendment was actually one of those original twelve... but it wasn't ratified until 1992! The 21st Amendment, which repealed the prohibition against alcohol in 1933, was the only amendment where states held special conventions to ratify the proposal.



This postage stamp commemorated the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote in 1920.

Reading p.4

Anatomy of the Constitution

Name: _____



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

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| ___ 1. ratify | A) Introduce a new amendment |
| ___ 2. execute | B) Carry out a law |
| ___ 3. federalism | C) A representative form of government |
| ___ 4. republican | D) Approve or pass an amendment |
| ___ 5. propose | E) System where the national government shares power with state governments |

B. Multiple Choice. Use what you have learned in this lesson to answer the following questions.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ___ 6. How many senators are in the U.S. Senate? a. 50 b. 435 c. 100 d. It depends on the population. | ___ 8. What was added to the Constitution that listed rights not already in the Constitution? a. The 14th Amendment b. The approval of all 13 states c. The Bill of Rights d. The Necessary and Proper Clause |
| ___ 7. What does the Constitution say is the 'supreme law of the land'? a. The Bill of Rights b. State laws c. The amendments d. U.S. or federal laws | ___ 9. What is the term for members of the House of Representatives ? a. 2 years b. 4 years c. 6 years d. Life |

C. Separate Those Powers! Draw a line connecting each branch to the powers it has.



10. We write the bills that become laws.



11. We make sure the laws are carried out and enforced.



12. We hear cases about the laws and decide what the laws mean.

D. Article Match-Up. Draw a line connecting each Constitutional article with the subject that it covers.



13. Discusses how states should interact with each other.



14. Supreme Law of the Land



15. Creates the three branches of the U.S. government



16. Additions to the Constitution



17. How to amend the Constitution



18. How to Ratify the Constitution

Anatomy of the Constitution

Name: _____

E. Table of Contents. Complete the Constitutional Table of Contents by filling in the missing pieces with words from the lesson. Use the word bank below if you need help.

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------|--------|-----------|
| legislative | amended | Constitution | steps | executive |
| federalism | purpose | judicial | states | |

| Section | Answers these questions... |
|-------------|---|
| Preamble | What does the Constitution do? What is the _____ of the government? |
| Article I | How does the _____ branch create laws? What powers do the states have? |
| Article II | How does the _____ branch execute laws? |
| Article III | How does the _____ branch interpret the laws? |
| Article IV | How should the _____ get along with each other? |
| Article V | How can the Constitution be _____, or changed? |
| Article VI | How does _____ work? Which law is supreme? |
| Article VII | What _____ have to be taken to make the Constitution the law of the land? |
| Amendments | What changes have been made to the _____? |

F. Who Said It? First, match the quote about working in government to the correct branch. Then name the article that describes the powers of this branch.

Floor debate [on a bill] is an exhilarating experience and important duty.
Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, D-MI

The presidency has many problems, but boredom is the least of them.
Richard Nixon, R-CA

We apply laws to facts. We do not apply feelings to facts.
Justice Sonia Sotomayor



Article _____

The Executive Branch



Article _____

The Judicial Branch



Article _____

The Legislative Branch

Directions: Fold on the dotted lines to make a 3-sided tent with the text facing out:
Tuck the extra flap to the inside.



(Fold here)

Executive Branch



iCIVICS

(Fold here)

Legislative Branch



iCIVICS

(Fold here)

Judicial Branch



Whose Job Is It?

E=Executive

L= Legislative

J= Judicial

(For each description show the correct side of your tent.)

- ___ 1. Prints money
- ___ 2. Enforces the laws
- ___ 3. Decides what a law means
- ___ 4. Declares war
- ___ 5. Includes the president, vice president, and the cabinet
- ___ 6. Divided into the House and Senate
- ___ 7. Punishes pirates!
- ___ 8. Makes treaties with other countries
- ___ 9. Can declare laws unconstitutional
- ___ 10. Selected by the Electoral College
- ___ 11. Selected by popular vote
- ___ 12. Appoints Supreme Court Justices, federal judges, ambassadors and cabinet members
- ___ 13. Approves presidential appointments
- ___ 14. Makes a State of the Union address each year
- ___ 15. Collect taxes



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Anatomy of the Constitution

****TEACHER GUIDE****



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| <u>E</u> 3. federalism | C) A representative form of government |
| <u>C</u> 4. republican | D) Approve or pass an amendment |
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B. Multiple Choice. Use what you have learned in this lesson to answer the following questions.

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| <p><u>D</u> 7. What does the Constitution say is the 'supreme law of the land'?</p> <p>a. The Bill of Rights b. State laws c. The amendments d. U.S. or federal laws</p> | <p><u>A</u> 9. What is the term for members of the House of Representatives ?</p> <p>a. 2 years b. 4 years c. 6 years d. Life</p> |

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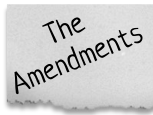


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13. Discusses how states should interact with each other.

14. Supreme Law of the Land

15. Creates the three branches of the U.S. government

16. Additions to the Constitution

17. How to amend the Constitution

18. How to Ratify the Constitution

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| | federalism | purpose | judicial | states |


| Section | Answers these questions... |
|-------------|---|
| Preamble | What does the Constitution do? What is the PURPOSE of the government? |
| Article I | How does the LEGISLATIVE branch create laws? What powers do the states have? |
| Article II | How does the EXECUTIVE branch execute laws? |
| Article III | How does the JUDICIAL branch interpret the laws? |
| Article IV | How should the STATES get along with each other? |
| Article V | How can the Constitution be AMENDED , or changed? |
| Article VI | How does FEDERALISM work? Which law is supreme? |
| Article VII | What STEPS have to be taken to make the Constitution the law of the land? |
| Amendments | What changes have been made to the CONSTITUTION ? |

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Article II

The Executive Branch



Article III

The Judicial Branch



Article I

The Legislative Branch