

BRINGING THE WORLD'S CONSTITUTIONS TO THE CLASSROOM

CONSTITUTE TEACHING GUIDE



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This teaching guide was developed for the Comparative Constitutions Project (CCP) by the American Bar Association Division for Public Education. The lessons included in it were inspired by exercises developed by CCP authors and fielded at the University of Texas, the National Constitution Center, and other sites across the world.



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UNIT PLAN: BRINGING THE WORLD'S CONSTITUTIONS TO THE CLASSROOM

Constitute, a web application originally built as a resource for those drafting real constitutions, has tremendous value in the classroom and other educational settings. The site contains the full text for nearly every active national constitution in the world. All the constitutions have been tagged by subject area, allowing users to discover relevant constitutional provisions on more than 300 topics, no matter the wording. In addition to browsing topics, users can also execute their own searches, sort their results by region or time period, and pin content for further analysis.

See an introductory *Constitute* video at <http://bit.ly/constitute-intro>.



CONSTITUTE

TEACHING CONSTITUTE IN GRADES 5-12

The creators of *Constitute* are excited to bring the world's constitutions into Grades 5-12 social studies classrooms, not only as a research tool, but also as a way to empower students as citizens. In studying world constitutions, students learn fundamental principles and ideals of nations, frameworks for governments, and statements of human rights. As a result, students will deepen their understanding of our own U.S. Constitution and their role as citizens.

The ***Bringing the World's Constitutions to the Classroom*** unit consists of four lessons integrating *Constitute* through activities designed to engage students in learning. Lessons can be taught independently or combined depending on learning goals for the class. Lessons are aligned with the C3 framework for social studies (see p. 4).

Each lesson is formatted to include the following:

- Introductory activity – helps capture student interest in the lesson's topics.
- Learning activity – provides content and directions for conducting the activity.
- Reflection activity – allows students ways to reflect on their learning.
- Enrichment activities – provide ideas for further lesson applications including other settings.

Each lesson addresses key learner questions:

- Why do countries have constitutions? Why study these constitutions? What is *Constitute*? How can *Constitute* be used as a research tool? (Intro Lesson)
- How does looking at other countries' constitutions deepen my understanding of the U.S. Constitution? (Lesson 1)
- How does comparing different ways of addressing a topic help me analyze current constitutional issues? (Lesson 2)
- How can I co-create a new constitution? (Lesson 3)

INTRO LESSON

Constitutions in the Classroom

This lesson introduces students to constitutions and why it is important to study world constitutions using a key-word reading strategy. Students are introduced to *Constitute* as a resource and its value as a research tool. Students brainstorm questions and use *Constitute* to seek answers to their queries.

LESSON ONE

28th Amendment Exercise: It's Never Too Late to Change

This lesson asks students to amend the U.S. Constitution by suggesting one significant change to it. Students search the world's constitutions on *Constitute* for ideas for a single change. In groups, students write a proposed amendment with supporting rationale and present it to the class in a mock national convention.

LESSON TWO

A Deeper Dive: Finding a Better Way

Students dig more deeply into world constitutions by examining how other countries address key topics challenging governance today. This lesson's topic is the environment and how to protect it. After comparing constitutions in all five world regions and evaluating different options, students present their suggestions to a United Nations Task Force.

LESSON THREE

We the People: Crafting a Preamble

Students create a visionary preamble to a new constitution for an imaginary or existing society. After researching and comparing preambles in current and fictitious constitutions, students draft their own in a process of brainstorming, deliberation, and consensus-building. The lesson concludes with students reflecting on their preamble and placing it on a People-Power continuum.

ALIGNMENT WITH C3 FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRIES

Intro Activity	D1.4.9-12. Students construct supporting questions and explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.
Intro Activity	D1.5.6-8. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of views represented in the sources.

DIMENSION 2: APPLYING CIVICS DISCIPLINARY TOOLS AND CONCEPTS

Intro, Lessons 1,2,3	D2.Civ.3.6-8. Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions.
Lesson 1	D2.Civ.4.9-12. Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.
Lessons 1,2,3	D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies and promoting the common good.

DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE

Lessons 1,2,3	D3.1.6-8. Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
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DIMENSION 4: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION

Lessons 1,2,3	D4.8.6-8. Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts.
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INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

**CONSTITUTIONS IN
THE CLASSROOM**

OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces students to constitutions and why it is important to study world constitutions. Students are introduced to *Constitute* as a resource and its value as a research tool. Students brainstorm questions and use *Constitute* to seek answers to their queries.

GRADES: 9-12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- explain the purpose of constitutions and why it is important to study world constitutions
- identify the key parts of the U.S. Constitution
- ask supporting questions on the topic of comparing world constitutions
- explore *Constitute* as a resource and recognize its value as a research tool

MATERIALS

- Student version of the article “Bringing the World’s Constitutions to the Classroom” by Jessie Baugher, Zachary Elkins, and Tom Ginsburg (p. 10)
- Student handout, Key Word Notes from Introductory Reading (p. 12)
- [United States Constitution](#) on *Constitute*

DURATION: 1 class period (about 45-50 minutes)



PROCEDURE

A. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

- Show students rotating photos on constituteproject.org listed here:
 - Brazilians protest for a constitutional amendment (2011)
 - Electoral workers in Libya count ballots to elect a constitutional assembly (2011)
 - Protesters in Myanmar call for constitutional change (2014)
 - Bolivians protest for a new constitutional referendum (2008)
 - Election officials check voter rolls for Kenya's constitutional referendum (2010)

Ask students: What do you see? What is happening? Where? Why? What do all the pictures have in common? (Something to do with constitutions)

- Today we are going to study constitutions. What is a constitution?
- What are the differences between a rule, a law, and a constitution?
 - A rule is a guideline that tells you what is or is not allowed in a situation. For example, we have school rules.
 - A law is a rule made and enforced by the government of a town, state, country, etc.
 - A constitution is a written document embodying the basic principles and laws of a nation, state, or social group that determines the powers and duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people under its jurisdiction. It also lays out how ordinary laws are made.
 - ♦ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/constitution>
- Why do countries have constitutions?
 - Constitutions are often referred to as the “highest law of the land.” Why?
 - Let's watch a short video and see if you can tell me three things constitutions do. “Constitute: A New Way to Search the World's Constitutions” (1:28) <http://bit.ly/constitute-intro>
 - ♦ symbolic aspirations, principles and ideals of a nation
 - ♦ a statement of belonging and identity
 - ♦ framework for government to last for future generations
 - ♦ identifies rights of individuals or groups, empowers citizens
- Today we will read about why it is important to study world constitutions and how a resource called *Constitute* can help us learn.

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

B. LEARNING ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Let's start by looking more closely at the U.S. Constitution. Go to the [United States Constitution](#) on *Constitute*.

- What do we learn from the title, United States of America 1789 (rev. 1992)?
 - Note that "rev." refers to the most recent revision or amendment of a constitutional text. The U.S. Constitution was last amended in 1992, with ratification of the 27th Amendment about congressional salaries.
- Skim over the U.S. Constitution and identify the major parts. What does each part tell us?
 - Preamble – identifies goals of government and ideals for our country
 - Articles and Sections – identify power and limits to power in federal government, set up the structure of U.S. government and how it operates, describe how the Constitution can be changed
 - Amendments – make changes to the constitution, first ten are known as the Bill of Rights

How do you think the U.S. Constitution compares with those of other countries?

- Let's brainstorm questions you would want to ask when comparing world constitutions.
 - Do all constitutions serve the same purposes?
 - Do all documents have the same parts as the U.S. Constitution?
 - Do other constitutions have language that is specific or is it written in general terms?
 - Do other constitutions reflect the principles and ideals of their nation?
 - Do other constitutions give power to government and/or limit government power?
 - Do constitutions set up similar frameworks for government? How are they different?
 - Do other constitutions allow for change?
 - Do other constitutions have a statement of rights?

Today we will read about why it is important to study world constitutions and how a resource called *Constitute* can help us learn.

- Our focus question for today's reading is "Why study world constitutions?"

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

- The reading is divided into four sections. Each section has a heading. Before we read, let's change each heading into a question.
 - What do we learn from constitutions?
 - How is the U.S. Constitution unique?
 - What do we learn from old and new constitutions?
 - How is *Constitute* a resource?
- Now let's carefully read each section. When you finish section one, stop and write down on your Key Word Reading Guide the 3-5 key words or phrases you remember from this section. Continue for each section.
- After reading the entire article, answer the question "Why study world constitutions?" Answer in a 3-5 sentence paragraph.
- Ask students to share summaries with the class.

C. REFLECTION ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

At the bottom of the Key Word Worksheet students are asked to brainstorm five questions on the topic "world constitutions." Ask students to share one of their questions with the class. Explore how answers could be found using *Constitute*.

RESOURCES

- View tutorials on how to use *Constitute* at <http://bit.ly/constitute-tutorials>

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to follow up on their own research question with a more thorough inquiry on *Constitute*. Present findings to class.
- Explore links in reading to begin a study of world comparisons.

INTRODUCTORY READING

“Bringing the World’s Constitutions to the Classroom”

Jessie Baugher, Zachary Elkins, and Tom Ginsburg

1. Learning from constitutions

Most every country in the world has a constitution, but not all constitutions are the same. Some set up monarchies, while others provide for elected presidents. Some provide for rights to health care, while (a small handful of) others have a right to bear arms. Some have long elaborate preambles that recount the country’s glories and struggles, while others plunge right into formal text.

All this variety can help you learn about different forms of government in different countries. But it also helps you to better understand our own constitution. The United States Constitution is the world’s oldest national constitution currently in force, and is considered by many to be the first modern document of its type. Many Americans revere it as the source of our civic identity and national prosperity. It is also a repository of our national values.

2. U.S. Constitution is unique

Viewed from the vantage point of the rest of the world, the U.S. Constitution has some unusual features. It contains institutions like the electoral college, which has not found a home in other countries. The text of the Constitution is relatively short, and it leaves many questions of constitutional law unanswered. At a little over 7,000 words, it pales in comparison with the constitutions of other continent-sized federal countries like India (105,000 words), Brazil (73,000 words), or Russia (14,000 words).

It is also very difficult to change. [Article V](#) of the Constitution sets forth two methods, both requiring approval of three-fourths of the states; one of the methods, a constitutional convention, has never been used (although there is a political movement to push for one at the moment). Some scholars have said the U.S. Constitution is the most difficult to amend in the world. Despite that rigidity, we have managed to get 27 different [amendments](#) through the process, though of course the first ten of them came in one fell swoop in 1791.

3. Old and new constitutions

The great virtue of having such an old constitution is that it doesn’t change much with the times. The great danger of having such an old constitution is that it doesn’t change much with the times. Our courts have stepped in to interpret and reinterpret the

INTRODUCTORY READING (CONT'D)

document and to put meaning onto the bare bones of the text. But this has led to a distortion in the political system, in which Supreme Court seats have become a major political battleground. Norms of reciprocity between the two major political parties have broken down, and the Supreme Court became a major issue in the 2016 presidential election. Because Supreme Court justices sit for life, there is increasing pressure to select younger and more partisan candidates, contributing to a perception that the interpretation of the Constitution is political.

A typical national constitution written today would have many more rights than our document does. It might also have new bodies like a [counter-corruption commission](#), a [special court](#) just to interpret the constitution, and perhaps an [ombudsman](#) to hear complaints from citizens. It might refer to [environmental issues](#), which were not on the minds of the Framers when they gathered in Philadelphia in 1787. And it might list numerous bases of equality, including [gender](#), [disability](#), and [age](#).

Exploring the contents and form of other constitutions can stimulate one's imagination. The texts are full of different ways of doing things. Ecuador's constitution, for example, grants [rights to mother nature](#) herself, allowing any person to bring a claim on her behalf. Egypt's provides for a [right to organ transplants](#). China's [preamble](#) is an ideological history of that country for the past century. And Bolivia's prohibits [discrimination](#) on a long list of bases, including sexual orientation, culture, and political philosophy, along with more standard ideas of race, class, and gender.

4. *Constitute* is a resource

The Comparative Constitutions Project (CCP) is an academic research project, based at the Universities of Texas and Chicago, which has been exploring these and other themes for over a decade. The CCP has identified over 900 constitutional texts, along with thousands of amendments, from more than 200 independent nation-states, dating to 1789. We have produced a large database of the contents of these texts, with an eye to understanding how words and ideas develop and spread across time and space, and to understand what it is that makes constitutions work.

In 2013, the CCP partnered with Google Ideas (now Jigsaw) to build *Constitute*, a web application that facilitates the search, discovery, and analysis of constitutional text. The site contains the full text for nearly every active national constitution in the world. All of the constitutions have been tagged by subject area, allowing users to discover relevant constitutional provisions on particular subjects, no matter the wording. In addition to browsing the 300+ topics tagged by CCP, users can also execute their own searches, sort their results by region or time period, and pin content for further analysis.

KEY WORD WORKSHEET

KEY WORD NOTES from INTRODUCTORY READING

After reading each titled section, write 3-5 words or phrases that describe the heading.

1. Learning from constitutions

2. U.S. Constitution is unique

3. Old and new constitutions

4. *Constitute* is a resource

Summary: In 3-5 sentences answer the question, why should I learn about world constitutions?

Brainstorm: Write 5 questions about the topic world constitutions.

LESSON ONE

28TH AMENDMENT EXERCISE:
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO CHANGE





OVERVIEW

This lesson asks students to amend the U.S. Constitution by suggesting one significant change to it. Students search the world's constitutions on *Constitute* for ideas for a single change. In groups, students write a proposed amendment with supporting rationale and present it to the class in a mock national convention.*

GRADES: 5-12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- understand the types of changes made to the U.S. Constitution through amendments
- describe the process for amending the U.S. Constitution
- research world constitutions to identify features and ideas unique to the U.S. Constitution
- present a constitutional amendment proposal reflecting a needed change to update the U.S. Constitution
- participate in a democratic process at a simulated constitutional convention

MATERIALS

- [United States Constitution](#) on *Constitute*
- 'Filter by Date Adopted' feature on *Constitute*, to review constitutions from newest to oldest
- Student handout, Constitutional Amendment Proposal
- Optional student readings
 - [Constitutional Amendment Process](#), Federal Register at National Archives
 - ["He Got a Bad Grade. So, He Got the Constitution Amended. Now He's Getting the Credit He Deserves."](#) Matt Largey, NPR Austin

DURATION: 1-2 class periods (about 90 minutes)

*This is an exercise that researchers from the Comparative Constitutions Project have conducted with many different kinds of participants, both in the United States and abroad. When they conduct it abroad, they ask participants to identify the idea, or "cornerstone provision," around which they would want to build a constitution (see [Baugher et al. 2018](#)).

PROCEDURE

A. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Ask students:

- Of all the world's constitutions, which one is the oldest written document? (U.S. Constitution) When was the U.S. Constitution written? (1787)
 - Have there been changes in our country since the Constitution was written? Tell me several.
 - And when you think of all the changes in our society since 1787, do you think our Constitution needs to change to keep up with modern society?
 - What do you think would be a good change to the U.S. Constitution?
- Amendments are the formal changes to the U.S. Constitution. How many amendments have there been over the years? (27) How many times has the United States Constitution been changed? (17 – adoption of first 10 amendments was one event, the Bill of Rights)
 - Are you surprised to learn that the last time the Constitution was changed was over 25 years ago (1992)? (And that was an amendment that was initially proposed over 200 years ago.)
 - What does that tell us about the process for changing the U.S. Constitution? (It is hard to change the Constitution, or no change is really needed)
 - Constitutional change happens in other ways outside of the amendment process, including through court cases that lead to judicial interpretations and re-interpretations, and legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President. This activity focuses on the formal amendment process, specifically.
- Today you will have a chance to propose one change to help update the U.S. Constitution.

B. INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (60-80 MINUTES)

Divide students into learning groups of 3-5.

Optional group activities for background knowledge – assign one or more of the following activities (see p. 19-20) to help students prepare for writing their own proposal.

#1 Examine different types of changes already made to the U.S. Constitution.

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

#2 Is amending the U.S. Constitution an easy or difficult process? Can one person do it?

#3 Analyze the proposed changes over the years that have not been approved.

Now it's your turn to propose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

STEP ONE: Explore ideas found in world constitutions using *Constitute*. Do a general search using the 'Filter by Date Adopted' feature.

- Check out recent national constitutions for additions not found in the U.S. Constitution. Look for:
 - More rights or different kinds of rights, e.g. a [right to housing](#) (Kyrgyzstan 2010, rev. 2016).
 - New bodies like: [counter-corruption commissions](#)
[constitutional courts](#)
[ombudsmen](#)
 - Different kinds of issues, e.g. [environmental issues](#), which were not on the minds of the Framers when they gathered in Philadelphia in 1787.
 - Various types of anti-discrimination clauses that guarantee equality based on factors such as [gender](#), [disability](#), or [age](#).
- Other constitutions are full of different ways of doing things.
 - Ecuador's constitution, for example, grants [rights to mother nature](#) herself, allowing any person to bring a claim on her behalf.
 - Egypt's provides for a [right to organ transplants](#).
 - China's [preamble](#) is an ideological history of that country for the past century.
 - Bolivia's [prohibits discrimination](#) on a long list of characteristics, including sexual orientation, culture, political philosophy, race, class, and gender.
- As a group, discuss any ideas you would like to see added to the U.S. Constitution. Choose one to write up as a proposed amendment.

STEP TWO: Write your proposed amendment and complete the student handout. Develop rationale and support for its passage. If time allows, create a visual (poster, PowerPoint slide) as a tool in your presentation.

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

STEP THREE: Each group presents its proposal as part of a national nominating convention. Our class is now role-playing a first-time ever national constitutional convention at the request of two-thirds of the states (see [Article V](#)). All class members are delegates to the convention and the teacher is chairperson.

- Each group will introduce its proposed amendment in a 5-minute presentation to the class.
- After each presentation there is a group discussion on the proposed amendment. The Chair begins discussion by asking:
 - Are there any clarifying questions?
 - Are there speakers in favor? Raise your hand.
 - Are there speakers opposed? Raise your hand.
 - Chair calls for arguments in alternate order (speaker one in favor, speaker two against, favor, against, favor, against).
- After discussion, call for vote and if two-thirds vote yes then it will be sent to the states for ratification.
- Ask a recording secretary to keep track of the passed proposals.

C. REFLECTION ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Remind students about the next step in the Article V amendment process, where three-fourths (38) states must ratify the amendment. Predict the success of each proposed amendment at the state level.

RESOURCES

- *Constitutional Amendment Process*, Federal Register at National Archives retrieved August 27, 2018 at <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/constitution>
- Largey, Matt. “[He Got a Bad Grade. So, He Got the Constitution Amended. Now He’s Getting the Credit He Deserves.](http://www.kut.org/post/he-got-bad-grade-so-he-got-constitution-amended-now-hes-getting-credit-he-deserves)” March 21, 2017 retrieved from <http://www.kut.org/post/he-got-bad-grade-so-he-got-constitution-amended-now-hes-getting-credit-he-deserves>

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

- Individual project work - Write a constituent letter or email to your representative suggesting your proposed amendment and why your representative should sponsor and introduce it in Congress. Support your proposed amendment using evidence from your research on *Constitute*. Read the Matt Largey article from the Resources section for inspiration!
- Go the next step - After class has voted on proposed amendments, ask each group to choose one proposal and create a poster as part of a statewide campaign either in favor or against its ratification in your state.
- In advanced classes, ask students to analyze the U.S. Constitution more deeply and further investigate either a gap, weakness, or fix necessary for the U.S. Constitution to remain relevant in today's world.
 - ✦ For example, [Article III](#) of the U.S. Constitution does not identify eligibility requirements for Supreme Court justices. Should justices be lawyers? judges? experienced? have certain backgrounds or personal characteristics?
 - On *Constitute*, research the topic and find other ways countries have addressed this issue.
 - ✦ For example, check out the "[Eligibility for supreme court judges](#)" topic and discover what requirements are identified in other countries' constitutions.
 - Discuss and propose an amendment that is a solution to the problem you have identified.
 - Support your proposed amendment using evidence from research on *Constitute*. Explain how your proposal addresses the gap or weakness identified in the U.S. Constitution.
 - Debate the proposed amendments in class.
- For international audiences: frame the task as the choice of proposing a constitutional provision upon which to build a new constitution – a "cornerstone provision."

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Use the following optional activities to provide background knowledge:

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONT'D)

#1 Examine different types of formal changes already made to the U.S. Constitution.

- Find the amendment section of the U.S. Constitution on *Constitute*. In your groups, work together to find an amendment that makes the following kind(s) of change, then write down the amendment number and explain how it changes the Constitution.
 - An amendment that provides a right that Congress cannot limit (possible answer: the 1st Amendment identifies the fundamental right to free speech which the federal government cannot limit)
 - An amendment that identifies another right protected from federal government action (Bill of Rights)
 - An amendment that makes a change to how government works (many possible answers including: the 12th Amendment changed how electors cast votes separately for President and Vice President, or the 17th Amendment established the direct election of Senators)
 - An amendment that expands voting rights (the 15th Amendment prohibits denial of the right to vote based on race or former servitude, the 19th Amendment prohibits denial of the right to vote based on sex, and the 26th Amendment guarantees the right to vote to persons at least 18 years old)
 - An amendment that expands federal taxing power (16th Amendment – federal income tax)
 - An amendment that limits state governments (14th amendment)
 - An amendment that corrected (repealed) an ineffective change made earlier (the 18th Amendment led to Prohibition making it illegal to sell alcohol, which was then later repealed by the 21st Amendment after enforcement problems)
 - An amendment that requires elections between salary changes for Congress (27th Amendment)
- As a group, discuss which kind of formal change you would like to see to the U.S. Constitution.

#2 Is amending the U.S. Constitution an easy or difficult process? Can one person do it?

- Read [Article V](#) of the U.S. Constitution and/or the resource article, [Constitutional Amendment Process](#) from the National Archives.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES (CONT'D)

- Diagram the two-step process for amending the Constitution.

Answer: Article V of the Constitution outlines the two-step process for amending the Constitution.

First, Congress passes a proposed amendment by a two-thirds vote in both the House Representatives and the Senate, OR a national constitutional convention called for by two-thirds of the state legislatures. (None of the 27 amendments to the constitution have been proposed by constitutional convention but this lesson asks students to participate in the first-ever constitutional convention.)

Second, three-fourths of the states must ratify the proposed amendment in their state legislatures or in specially called state conventions.

- Discuss whether you think this is an easy or difficult process. Give 3 reasons to support your opinion. (Difficult – needs broad agreement at the national level and at the state level where 38 out of 50 states need to ratify; time constraints set by Congress for ratification may be an obstacle)
- Is it possible for one person to change the Constitution? Check out the story of Gregory Watson and his mission to get the 27th Amendment ratified in the states more than 200 years after it had been proposed by James Madison. See resource article, “[He Got a Bad Grade. So, He Got the Constitution Amended. Now He’s Getting the Credit He Deserves.](#)”

#3 Analyze the proposed changes over the years that have not been approved.

- Research online the various proposed changes. There have been over 10,000 since 1789!
 - https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/three_column_table/measures_proposed_to_amend_constitution.htm
- Identify some interesting/notable ones.
- Which ones deserve further consideration?

WORKSHEET

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROPOSAL

Our proposed amendment is...

It changes the U.S. Constitution by...

(adds a right, fixes a problem, addresses a new issue in society)

Three reasons to support this amendment are:

1.

2.

3.

One argument against this proposal might be:

BUT a counter-argument is:

Conclusion - Here is how our change will update the U.S. Constitution:



LESSON TWO

A DEEPER DIVE:
FINDING A BETTER WAY

OVERVIEW

Students dig more deeply into world constitutions by examining how other countries address key topics challenging governance today. This lesson's topic is the environment and how to protect it. After comparing constitutions in all five world regions and evaluating different options, students present their suggestions to a United Nations Task Force.

GRADES: 9-12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- understand how different world constitutions address current topics of governance (e.g. environment, media, campaign finance).
- compare and evaluate different options found in world constitutions.
- defend best ideas in class presentations.

MATERIALS

- Student Instructions for Constitutional Deep Dive (p. 27)
- Comparative Chart on Key Topic (p. 28)
- Recommendation format to UN Task Force (p. 30)

DURATION: 1 class period (about 45-50 minutes)



PROCEDURE

A. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Ask students:

- What do you think are important issues today that constitutions should address?
“A majority of Americans (55%) now cite protecting the environment as a top priority, up from 47% a year ago,” reported a Pew Research Study conducted in January 2017 at the beginning of a new presidential administration. (<http://www.people-press.org/2017/01/24/after-seismic-political-shift-modest-changes-in-publics-policy-agenda/1-17/>)
- What does our U.S. Constitution explicitly say about protecting the environment? (Nothing, it is silent on the subject.)
- Do you wonder if other world constitutions have addressed the topic of the environment? According to *Constitute*, there are 157 Constitutions that speak directly about the environment. For example, some provide for a duty of the state to protect the environment. The Ecuadorian Constitution has a concept called *pachamama*, which grants nature its own rights.
- Today we are going to find out how other world constitutions address the topic of protecting the environment and report our findings to the United Nations Task Force on constitutional protections of the environment.*

B. LEARNING ACTIVITY (45 MINUTES)

- Class or teacher chooses topic(s) to research. Today students focus on one topic, protecting the environment, providing students a deeper dive offering broader regional comparisons.
- Divide class into pairs. Assign each pair one of five world regions to research: Africa, America, Asia, Europe, or Oceania.
 - Students research the topic [protecting the environment](#) by exploring several constitutions in the same world region.

*Optionally, ask the class to read through the topic areas listed on *Constitute* and identify an alternative topic that they would be interested in analyzing.

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

- After surveying 10 or more constitutions, students choose two countries for deeper study, complete the “Comparative Chart on Key Topic” (p. 28) and select a recommendation.
- See “Student Instructions for Constitutional Deep Dive” (p. 27).
- Jigsaw – Pairs split up and teacher regroups students into new groups of five students, one from each world region. In a class of 30, there will be six world groups with five members.
 - Each student is an “expert” on the region they researched.
 - Experts present their findings and proposal to their world subgroup.
 - The world subgroup discusses each proposal and chooses the best one to present to the United Nations.
 - Group completes the UN Task Force proposal sheet (p. 30).
- Each world subgroup presents their recommendation to the entire class.
- After presentations, teacher leads class discussion asking students to evaluate the pros and cons of each recommendation.
 - Which recommendation is a better solution to the issue?
 - Which recommendation is best for the global community?
 - Which recommendation best promotes democratic values?
 - Which recommendation balances human rights and economic development?

C. REFLECTION ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Ask each student to rank order the recommendations and explain their top choice.

RESOURCES

- Key topic search on *Constitute*

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

Divide the class into groups and allow each group to choose their own key topic.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY (CON'T)

For example, *Constitute* researchers have been looking closely at the topic of campaign finance because of the challenges of balancing money and politics in the United States. Forty-three constitutions say something about campaign finance. There are a variety of ways to address [campaign finance](#), solutions that may not otherwise occur to students. Some countries regulate parties, others the media, and others develop a method of public funding. Looking at options for a problem helps students think about exactly what the problem is, and discover new ways to address it.

Examples:

- Party regulation: Argentina, Burundi, Zambia
- Media guidelines: Ecuador, Uganda, Zimbabwe
- Public funding: Haiti, Panama, Turkey



HANDOUT

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL DEEP DIVE

- Go to [Constitute](#), click on 'Explore Constitutions,' and use the sidebar to choose a topic and/or subtopic that is a key issue in today's world. Or type in today's topic – environment – to see related topics on *Constitute* (i.e. 'Protection of environment').
- Use the 'Filter by Country' feature to choose 10 or more countries from your assigned world region (Africa, America, Asia, Europe, or Oceania). Read different ways constitutions address the environment.
- Choose two countries and use the “[compare](#)” feature to get side-by-side comparisons and pin comparisons for reference.
- Identify and discuss each constitutional provision that addresses the key topic. Paraphrase the provision in your own words. What goals are stated? What measures protect the environment?
- Compare and evaluate the constitutional provisions in the two countries' constitutions. For example, which provision better protects the environment? What aspects of the environment are protected? Which provision has a greater impact? Which provision would you recommend?
- Summarize your comparisons and evaluate which provision you would recommend as a best example from your region. Fill out your comparative chart and include your rationale for supporting your recommended provision.
- Enrichment - What questions do you have about the region's geography and history that would help you better understand each country's provision? (For example, colonization of Africa, mineral resources, recent conflicts, etc.)

COMPARATIVE CHART ON KEY TOPIC

Topic: _____

Key: **+**: strongly recommend, **✓**: recommend with changes, **↓**: do not recommend

EXAMPLE COMPARATIVE CHART

Topic: Environment - Protection of environment

Key: +: strongly recommend, ✓: recommend with changes, ↓: do not recommend

Region/ Country	Constitutional Provisions on Key Topic	Comparison Notes	Recommendation +, ✓, ↓
Africa/ South Africa	<p>24. ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Everyone has the right-</p> <p>a. to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and</p> <p>b. to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that-</p> <p>i. prevent pollution and ecological degradation;</p> <p>ii. promote conservation; and</p> <p>iii. secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.</p>	<p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -safe environment -benefits future generations -reasonable legislative measures <p>Ways to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -prevent pollution -promote conservation -balance tensions between protecting environment and promoting economic development 	<p>+ Goals are recommended because it provides a safe environment for future and both countries have similar goal</p> <p>✓ Very broad measures but doable</p>
Africa/ Ethiopia	<p>ARTICLE 44. ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS</p> <p>1. All persons have the right to a clean and healthy environment.</p> <p>2. All persons who have been displaced or whose livelihoods have been adversely affected as a result of State programmes have the right to commensurate monetary or alternative means of compensation, including relocation with adequate State assistance.</p>	<p>Similar goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -safe environment <p>Ways to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -monetary or alternative compensation by state to those displaced by state programs 	<p>↓ May not apply to other countries depending on their history.</p>

RECOMMENDATION WORKSHEET

UNITED NATIONS TASK FORCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Recommendation by our World Region Subgroup

1. Describe the key topic studied and why it is an important issue for constitutions to address.
2. Summarize your group's conclusions after studying different kinds of constitutional provisions.
3. Write your chosen recommendation.
4. Explain why you chose this provision.
5. Evaluate your proposal by telling the task force how your recommendation:
 - is a viable solution to the issue?
 - is best for the global community?
 - best promotes democratic values?
 - balances human rights and economic development?

LESSON THREE

WE THE PEOPLE:
CRAFTING A PREAMBLE



OVERVIEW

Students create a visionary preamble to a new constitution for an imaginary or existing society. After researching and comparing preambles in current and fictitious constitutions, students draft their own in a process of brainstorming, deliberation, and consensus-building. The lesson concludes with students reflecting on their preamble and placing it on a People-Power continuum.

GRADES: 5-12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- identify the purpose and features of preambles in constitutions.
- compare preambles from the world's constitutions and some from fictitious settings.
- create a preamble reflecting the goals and values of an imaginary or existing society.

MATERIALS

- World constitutions on [Constitute](#)
- Optional teacher-selected invented or existing societies as location for new constitution
- People-Power continuum on board for placement of preambles (p. 34)

DURATION: 1 class period (about 45-50 minutes)



PROCEDURE

A. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (5 MINUTES)

- Imagine a utopia, defined as an imaginary and indefinitely remote place, or hypothetical society (you might imagine you and your classmates are marooned on a desert island and must build a new society).

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/utopia>

- Where might a utopia be located?
 - What would the landscape look like?
 - Who would live there? Describe the culture of the people (language, religion, economics, music, etc.)
 - What might be the utopia's history?
 - How would people survive and live together?
 - What kind of government would rule?
 - What role do citizens have in a utopia?
 - And finally, what might a perfect constitution look like in a utopia?
- Today's activity asks you to create a preamble to a new constitution for the hypothetical society you imagine.

B. LEARNING ACTIVITY (40 MINUTES)

What is a preamble?

- Many world constitutions begin with preambles. A preamble is the introductory part of a constitution that usually states the reasons for the parts that follow. <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/preamble>
- What do countries include in their preambles? Preambles may explain the role of the constitution (rule of law), a vision for the country, references to its history, the values and principles of the country, goals for the government, and/or the rights and duties of citizens.
- Read the preamble to the U.S. Constitution. What does it tell you about the United States government and the reasons for the U.S. Constitution?

U.S. CONSTITUTION PREAMBLE

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, 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.

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

Research and compare preambles

- Compare [preambles](#) of constitutions on *Constitute*. Look at preambles side-by-side using the "compare" feature.
- Check out samples of imaginary preambles:
 - A constitution for a fictional paradise. See Texas elementary students' constitution for [Keecklah Island](#).
 - A constitution for Mars. See text created by award-winning science fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson in his constitution for [Mars](#).
- What kinds of ideas are generally in a preamble? Identify "kinds" of ideas (e.g. mentions of specific people, references to the history of a country, goals or aspirations for the society, etc.) with examples.

Divide students into small groups and assign each group an imaginary or existing society (a political organized unit that has a government)

- Brainstorm or research the story of your society. Consider the geography, history, people, culture, and type of government (students might choose one of the world's islands and use its characteristics as a starting point). Imagine a vision for your society. Choose a name for your society. If time allows, draw a map or flag or symbol for your society.
- Deliberate your society's values, principles, goals and type of government, rights and duties of citizens, and other topics you want to include in your preamble.
- Reach consensus on topics to include in your preamble.
- Draft or write the preamble.

C. REFLECTION ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Draw a People-Power continuum on the board. Note that you could come up with other dimensions along which to evaluate the preamble – e.g., competitive/collaborative, means/ends, freedom/equality.

ALL PEOPLE POWER  NO PEOPLE POWER

PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

As a wrap-up, ask each group to read their preamble to the class.

- Ask each group, what do we learn about the government in your society? The role of citizens?
- As a class, decide where each preamble belongs on the People-Power continuum and explain why (a democracy would be towards the 'all people power' end and a dictatorship, or absolute monarchy, would be towards the 'no people power' end).
- What do preambles tell us?
- What did you learn about writing a constitution?

RESOURCES

- On *Constitute* - submit your draft for inclusion on the site as a private document accessible via a [login](#). Once the draft text is on *Constitute*, the class can then read, search, and compare it to the world's constitutions.
- Excerpts from the Constitution of Keecklah Island:

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF KEECKLAH ISLAND have freely chosen to come together as one. We as a nation recognize the suffering in the past of the Keecklahly people and this constitution shall help us move forward from suffering and unite us as one nation to start anew.

Keecklah is unique and united. We are committed to working together to stay safe. We are also committed to keeping peace inside of Keecklah Island. We prohibit the violation of laws and violence and strongly believe in the protection of our society.

We believe in a united community of people who value each other and the future of our nation. We support the well-being of all members of our society.

We believe in the ability of all citizens to access culture, education, science, technology, research, and innovation.

Drafted by students at [Long-View Micro School](#) in Austin, Texas

RESOURCES (CONT'D)

- Excerpts from the Constitution of Mars 2128

PREAMBLE

We the people of Mars have gathered here on Pavonis Mons in the year 2128 to write a constitution which will serve as a legal framework for an independent planetary government. We intend this constitution to be a flexible document subject to change over time in the light of experience and changing historical conditions, but assert here that we hope to establish a government that will forever uphold the following principles: the rule of law; the equality of all before the law; individual freedom of movement, association, and expression; freedom from political or economic tyranny; control of one's work life and the value thereof; communal stewardship of the planet's natural resources; and respect for the planet's primal heritage.

© Kim Stanley Robinson

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

- Assign each group a type of government (e.g. autocracy, monarchy, oligarchy, democracy). Ask students to research the type of government and write their constitution to reflect the type of government assigned.
- As an extension of students' personal reading, ask them to write a constitution for a fictitious place in either a dystopian or utopian novel. For example, a group could write a constitution for Panem, the country that is the setting for *The Hunger Games* written by Suzanne Collins. This activity could also be a cross-curricular project for English and History classes, for example as an end of unit project for Fahrenheit 451, Lord of the Flies, or other books.
- Use a variation of "Visitors from Outer Space," a classic law-related education lesson, and ask students to present their constitutions to STIGHIR, a space alien who has taken over the world. Students must reach a consensus constitution to avoid destruction. Students are citizens of NOITUTITSNOC (noi-tut-its-noc) or "constitution" spelled backwards.

NOTES