

Governing—The Constitution of the United States Lesson #3 of the 1783-1812 Module

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

In your opinion, what are the two most significant amendments to the Constitution of the United States? Why? (Support your answer)

OVERVIEW

The Constitution of the United States tries to protect the voice of the people and creates a system of checks and balances to limit the power of the federal government. The delegates to the Philadelphia Convention shifted their goal from revising the Articles of Confederation to creating something new. They drafted a document that combined the ideas of republics, the voices of democracy and the limits to try to prevent future tyranny.

The Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments added to the Constitution and ratified in 1791—emphasized and protected the rights of Americans and that specifically stated that powers not given in the Constitution would remain with the states. Later amendments continued the pursuit of liberty for all of “We The People.”

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Knowledge
 - Name and explain some of the key articles of the Constitution of the United States.
 - Name and explain some of the freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights.
 - Name and explain some of the key amendments to the Constitution of the United States.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis
 - Read and examine the Constitution or the Bill of Rights.
3. Evaluation
 - Consider how the Constitution has been amended to continue the pursuit of liberty.

ACTIVITIES

1. Use the [Lesson's PowerPoint](#) to explore the context and history; the PowerPoint introduce an Essential Question and lays foundational knowledge about the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights and Amendments to the Constitution.
2. Provide links or printed copies of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. (Digital copies are available in the Primary Source section of the [Lesson Plan Page](#).) Students will choose one of these documents to read.
3. Working individually or in groups, students will read their selected document and answer the [worksheet questions](#).

4. Discuss answers to Questions 4 and 9 as a class.

STANDARDS

Please visit the [Lesson Plan Page](#) and select the “Common Core and NCSS Standards for Social Studies” to view the details.

RESOURCES

Visit the [Lesson Plan Page](#) to find all resources in one convenient place. You’ll find everything mentioned or linked in this Lesson Plan along with additional videos, articles, primary sources, and biographies.

Quick Links

- [PowerPoint](#)
- [Primary Source Worksheet](#)

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK/ASSESSMENT/ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Option 1: Reconstruction Amendments

As a group, read the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments:

- [13th Amendment](#)
- [14th Amendment](#)
- [15th Amendment](#)

Then, lead a discussion using these questions:

- What do you already know about the Reconstruction Amendments?
- Why were these amendments needed after the Civil War and during the Reconstruction Era?
- What do these amendments change and/or protect?

Individually or in groups, have the students choose an amendment and make an art poster celebrating the achievement of the amendment and showing how it is essential for liberty, justice and equality.

Option 2: Writing an Amendment

Review Article V of the Constitution of the United States which outlines the amendment process.

In groups, students can draft a new amendment proposal. If students need ideas for their amendment, some concepts might include term limits for Congress, voting rights reforms, privacy protection in the digital age or environmental protections.

After the students draft their amendment, each group will present their proposed amendment and share 3 short reasons this amendment would be beneficial, trying to convince their fellow students to vote for their amendment.

At the end of the presentations, vote for the amendments. Any that gain a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the class votes would be “passed.”