**Lesson Plan: Planet Fourth Grade is Researching the U.S. Constitution**

**Grade Level: 4th**

**Context of the unit:** This fourth grade lesson is within a unit involving the study of the U.S. Constitution, and the addition of the Bill of Rights, and why these documents are important in a democratic government.

**Context of the lesson:**  Students have been working on dissecting the U.S. Constitution, reviewing the frameworks of a democratic government, and learning about the Bill of Rights. They have researched the purpose of the U.S. constitution, looked into who was involved in drafting and finalizing the constitution, and are beginning to learn how amendments to the constitution were made for the benefits of the individual people, after the constitution was written.

The students will understand that in order to create a “democracy” the U.S. Constitution, which is referred to as a “living document”, protects the rights of the United States. Also with the addition of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution establishes a democratic government protecting the individual people (Bill of Rights) within the United States.

**Standards Addressed in the Unit**:

**History and Social Science Standards addressed in the unit:**

4.5.1 Discuss what the U.S. Constitution is and why it is important.

4.5.3 Describe the similarities and differences among federal, state, and local governments.

4.5.4 Explain the structures and functions of state governments, including the roles and responsibilities of their elected officials.

**English/Language Arts Standards addressed in the unit:**

Structural Features of Informational Materials

2.1 Identify structural patterns found in informational text (e.g., compare and contrast, cause and effect, sequential or chronological order, proposition and support) to strengthen comprehension.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1.8 Clarify and enhance oral presentations through the use of appropriate props (e.g., objects, pictures, charts).

Comprehension

1.1 Retell, paraphrase, and explain what has been said by a speaker.

1.7 Use various reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, card catalog, encyclopedia, online information) as an aid to writing.

**Standards Addressed in *this* lesson:**

**History and Social Science Standards Addressed in *this* lesson:**

4.5.1 Discuss what the U.S. Constitution is and why it is important.

**English Language Arts Standards Addressed in *this* lesson:**

Writing

4.1.3 Use traditional structures for conveying information *(e.g. similarity and difference, posing and answering a question.)*

Speaking

4.2.3 Deliver oral summaries of articles and books that contain the main ideas of the event or article and the most significant details.

Comprehension

2.5 Compare and contrast information on the same topic after reading several passages or articles.

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

Craft and Structure

1. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

**Objective(s)**:

* Students will understand why the U.S. constitution is important.
* Students will show an understanding of the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, (Bill of Rights) and how they were added to the constitution to protect the rights of the individual.

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**Big Idea(s):**

- The strength of a democracy is equal to the strength of its citizens. *(The Constitution expresses the rights of the governing body for the United States and the Bill of Rights expresses the protections of the individuals in the United States. They work together to form a strong democracy.)*

* *E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one. (*From a variety of sources and experiences, we have developed a successful democracy.)*

**Essential Questions/Issues:**

* + What do you know about the U.S. Constitution?
  + How does the Constitution and Bill of Rights protect you?
  + How are democracy, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights related?
  + How did the Bill of Rights improve the constitution?

**Higher Order Thinking Questions**:

How might you feel if you were present during the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia? *(Evaluation)*

If you were present during the development of the constitution, what would you make sure was added to the “living document”? *(Evaluation)*

Is it important to have a Bill of Rights? Why or why not? *(Evaluation)*

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**Assessment:**

Students will be evaluated through written assignments (both formal and informal) from beginning of unit to the end. *(Journal writing, note-taking, Venn diagram, outlining, creative art, and a formal writing task)*

Students will write a reflection response regarding the importance of the Constitution with the addition of the Bill of Rights. (*Formal evaluation*)

Students will create a poster highlighting a specific amendment in the Bill of Rights. (*Informal evaluation*)

**Quality Criteria**:

**Rubric for Writing-** Constitution Writing Activity rubric (attached). This rubric was used for three different writing assignments.

**Rubric for Poster-** This is an informal evaluation based on report card standards using the scale of ES- Exceeding Standard, MS- Meeting Standard, AS- Approaching Standard.

**Assessment**

Students will be given final writing assignment in which they will write about how the addition of the Bill of Rights has helped to strengthen the Constitution.

Students will also choose one of the 10 amendments and create a poster highlighting the specific right of the amendments and how it relates to the individual student.

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| **Urban Discovery Academy** |
| ***Constitution Writing Activity*** |
| |  | | --- | | http://teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/general/score2.GIF | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Date : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
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| ***Criteria*** | | | | | ***Points*** |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |  |
| **Content** | No reference to constitution or learned material. Information  shows little or no understanding. | Uses somewhat developed use  of  constitutional references but  is somewhat inaccurate. | Student shows deep evidence  of  understanding through  accurate use of detail and  support. References of constitution  are evident. | Student provides extreme understanding, engages audience, provides constant support and detail. |  |
| **Organization** | Writing shows no organization or order. | Writing shows the beginning pieces of a strong entry but is very disorganized. | Writing is logical and shows a beginning, middle, and end. | Writing has strong supporting evidence, with a logical beginning, middle, and end. |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Criteria*** | | | | | ***Points*** |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |  |
| **Vocabulary and Mechanics** | Careless misspellings, no use of punctuation, and little or no use of vocabulary | Writing shows the signs of vocabulary introductions, but does not elaborate. Some misspellings and inaccuracies are found throughout the writing. | Uses a variety of word choices connecting to the vocabulary. Uses editing and punctuation with minor errors. | Student uses vocabulary and editing processes throughout. Also supports writing with effective vocabulary and mechanic use. |  |
| **Effort/ Quality** | Writing is limited in length and has no sign of detail. | Writing shows signs of order, detail, and effort. | Student response is detailed and shows signs of understanding throughout. | Writing is extremely detailed and thorough. |  |
|  |  |  |  | **Total---->** |  |

**Teacher Comments:**

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| --- | --- |
| Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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| --- | --- |
| Project Title: Amendment Poster | Teacher(s): |

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| --- |
| Amendment Poster |
| [http://teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/lab_report/handin.GIF](http://www.teach-nology.com/) |

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| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Process** | **Approaching Standard** | **Meeting  Standard** | **Exceeding Standard** | | 1. Has clear vision of amendment |  |  |  | | 2. Properly organized to complete project |  |  |  | | 3. Managed time wisely |  |  |  | | 4. Acquired needed amendment knowledge |  |  |  | | 5. Communicated efforts with teacher |  |  |  | |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Product (Project)** | **Approaching Standard** | **Meeting  Standard** | **Exceeding Standard** | | 1. Format |  |  |  | | 2. Mechanics of writing |  |  |  | | 3. Organization and structure |  |  |  | | 4. Creativity |  |  |  | | 5. Demonstrates knowledge of amendment |  |  |  | | 6. Other: Proper connect to self |  |  |  | |
| Standard:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Teacher(s) Comments: |

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**Lesson Activity Steps:** The lesson can be divided into two or three days (during social studies) depending upon time allotted, or over the course of one day.

**Hook: Planet Fourth Grade**

Imagine you’ve landed on a newly discovered planet for fourth graders. You and your crew are responsible for establishing order amongst your population. You have to establish rules and rights of the new *Plant Fourth Grade.* You are to report back to Earth to send more fourth graders when you have produced a document that establishes the order and rights for the planet.

**Student Intro Activity After the Hook:**

1. Students will be grouped into tables of 4 called “crews.”
2. At each table will be a 6 x 4 note card, a writing notebook, and a list of 10 items to place into sequential order of importance.
3. Each group is responsible for choosing one “delegate” from their crew who is responsible, dependable, and fair to others. This delegate will represent the crew on all matters of business and “conventional” meetings to establish the order and rights of its people.
4. “Delegates” from each crew will be given names, tags, yarn. They will be instructed to identify themselves by wearing the “state” name.
5. Have students look at 10 items list and with their crews, order the items from 1- most important to 10-least important. (10 minutes)
6. Crews must choose a recorder to write down the list from 1 to 10.
7. Once each crew has completed their list, have a class discussion about each item and how it is viewed by each group as important.
8. On the whiteboard, the teacher, asking each “delegate” for a group consensus, orders the items on a “class list” of 1 to 10 (by raise of delegate hand, asking who had items of the top (1) to bottom (10) of the list).

**Lesson Activity:**

This activity comes after students have begun learning about the basics of the Constitution. The students are aware that the foundation of the Constitution begins with a democracy (vs. Great Britain’s autocracy). Students also know that the Constitution was written to establish the federal rights and two years after its inception, amendments were created to establish individual rights. This activity is to engage students in the process of creating individual rights and compare it to the importance of the U.S. constitution’s Bill of Rights.

CONSTITUTION LESSON #1

1. Delegates from each crew of Planet Fourth Grade meet at a convention with their list of 10 items to discuss the rights of each crew and establish a Planet Four Grade Constitution.
2. Each delegate is given their time to speak on behalf of their crew to represent their colony. 20-30 minutes
3. During this time, additional crew members sit as the audience during the convention.
4. The conventional “president” (teacher) is in charge of delegating, organizing, and writing Planet Fourth Grade Constitution on a large piece of lined construction paper. The items will be arranged from 1 to 10 as the delegates decide as a group, which items should be listed in which order.
5. A finished Planet Fourth Grade Constitution will be displayed in the classroom at the end of the meeting.
6. Each delegate will then sign the Planet Fourth Grade Constitution.
7. Students will then review the history of the U.S. constitution by watching a U.S. Constitution power point.
8. We will then have a class discussion about the important points of the Constitution.
9. After the discussion, students will create a basic outline of the articles of the constitution in their writing notebooks. Discussing with the teacher, a brief summary of what each article implies.
10. The students will then complete the, *What Do You Know About the Constitution?* Worksheet (See grading rubric)
11. Students then join their crew again for a wrap-up discussion.

BILL OF RIGHTS LESSON #2

*Match the Bill of Rights. (This can be done in a separate lesson on day 2 or as an addition to the lesson if time permits.)*

1. Ask students why they have rules at school and home and have laws in their community. Explain that rules and laws are important because they protect each citizen’s rights. These rights prevent the government from interfering in their lives too much. These rights cannot be taken away.
2. As a class, discuss how the United States Constitution contains the main laws of our country and the first ten amendments of the Constitution guarantee certain freedoms and individual rights. They are known as the Bill of Rights.
3. Display the first 10 amendments on the board or use an overhead projector transparency. Review each amendment with students, clarifying terms and/or concepts as needed.
4. Divide students into groups. Give each group a set of the *Bill of Rights Amendment Cards.* Assign any of the following activities:

• As with the constitution list, challenge crews to rank amendments from most important amendment(1) to the least important (10).

or

• Cut the Bill of Rights Amendment Cards apart. Challenge students to

match the pictures with their descriptions (Handout 1).

or

• Cut the Bill of Rights Amendment Cards apart. Have students play concentration by matching the amendment with the appropriate

picture/description (Handout 2).

1. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the Constitution and Bill of Rights.
2. Debrief by discussing the following questions:

• Is it important for us to have a Bill of Rights? Why or why not?

• Give an example of how the Bill of Rights protects you?

• How would your life be different if you didn’t have the Bill of Rights?

• If you could add an amendment to the Bill of Rights, what would it be? Why?

**Special Needs of students are considered in this lesson**:

This lesson involves activities that reach multiple modalities of learning such as written work, creative art, hands-on learning, and group work strategies. It also allows the teacher to give the group a variety of exercises to learn the Big Ideas and Objectives. Students may also complete the extension ideas and use word processing to complete assignments.

**Extension Ideas:**

Students will complete a computer research activity in the computer lab. (Handout developed, designed, and implemented by the teacher.)

Students will work in the computer lab to create a power point presentation that outlines the constitution (and the Bill of Rights).

Students will complete a brochure outlining the three branches of government, the articles of the constitution, or the Bill of Rights.

Using the internet, have students go to the following website: http://pbskids.org/stantonanthony/bill\_of\_rights.html This website contains ideas from kids from all over the country concerning their suggestions for a Kids’ Bill of Rights. Have students evaluate one or more of the submitted rights and explain why

they agree or disagree with the statement.

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**Materials and Resources Needed:**

Writing workbooks for each student (spiral notebooks work great)

A 6x4 index card for each student or 1 per group (3 x 5 will also work)

Yarn (to make “delegate lanyards”)

Poster board paper with lines

*What do you know about the constitution?* Worksheet

*Bill of Rights* Amendment cards

*Bill of Rights* Answer card (can be given to each student or presented on a transparency.)

Computer (for both power point presentation and additional research and extension support activities)

Projector

U.S. Constitution power point presentation

Scroll paper for constitution writing activity (final activity)

Venn Diagram paper

**References:**

History/Social Studies framework

Constitution Translated for Kids: Travis, Cathy

A Kids’ Guide To America’s Bill Of Rights Krull, Kathleen

We the Kids Catrow, David

Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution Fritz, Jean Penguin Putnam, New York, 1987

We the People; The Citizen & The Constitution Center for Civic Education, New York 2003

[www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html) The Constitution For Kids Online

[www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html) Outline of the U.S. Constitution

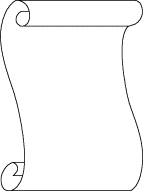
[www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/us/billofrightsdef.htm](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/us/billofrightsdef.htm) List of Individual Bill of Rights

[www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\_history.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_history.html) History of theConstitution

[www.billofrightsinstitute.org/OnDemand/ConstitutionDay/FinalConDayTab.pdf](http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org/OnDemand/ConstitutionDay/FinalConDayTab.pdf) Bill of Rights

[www.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/rubric.cgi](http://www.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/rubric.cgi)Rubric for writing activity Civics Webpages  
[www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=805](http://www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=805)    Learn California Levels of Government  
[www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/acsframeset16text.asp](http://www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/acsframeset16text.asp)  Ideas becoming a law  
[www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html)  The Constitution for Kids   
[www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html)  Outlined Constitution  by Articles and Amendments  
[www.congressforkids.net/games/billofrights/2\_billofrights.htm](http://www.congressforkids.net/games/billofrights/2_billofrights.htm)  Bill of Rights  
[www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/us/billofrightsdef.htm](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/us/billofrightsdef.htm)  Bill of Rights Individually listed  
[www.texaslre.org/downloads/092006\_cdlp\_k-2.pdf](http://www.texaslre.org/downloads/092006_cdlp_k-2.pdf)   lesson plan idea with picture cut-outs of amendments

**How Does the Bill of Rights Help to Improve the Constitution?**



**Compare and Contrast**

Constitution Bill of Rights

Similarities

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What do you know about the Constitution?

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