

Lesson Title: Primary Sources: Looking for the Answer in the Constitution

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Explore the basic ideas of the U.S. Constitution and Amendments through a scavenger hunt
- Determine central ideas in a primary source document
- Interpret meaning from complex text

Social Studies Content 2014 GED® Assessment Targets	Social Studies Practices 2014 GED® Assessment Targets
<p>Determine the clearly stated details in primary and secondary sources, and use this information to make logical inferences or valid claims. (SSP.1.a)</p> <p>Determine the central ideas or information from a primary or secondary source document. (SSP.2.a)</p>	<p>Draw conclusions and make inferences. (SSP.1)</p> <p>Determine central ideas, hypotheses, and conclusions. (SSP.2)</p> <p>Interpret meaning of symbols, words, and phrases. (SSP.4)</p>

Materials

- Copies of the U. S. Constitution and the Amendments
- Copies of the *Let’s Find the Answer Scavenger Hunt Activity*

Instructional Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will explore basic ideas of an important primary source – The U.S. Constitution. Primary sources are the raw materials of history — original documents and objects which were created at the time. They are different from secondary sources, accounts or interpretations of events created by someone without firsthand experience.

Examining primary sources gives students a powerful sense of history and the complexity of the past. Helping students analyze primary sources can also guide them toward higher-order thinking and better critical thinking and analysis skills.

Process

Introduce the lesson by writing the phrase “primary source” on the board. Have students work together to create a definition of a primary source. Students should include that a primary source is an original record of the political, economic, artistic, scientific, social and intellectual thoughts and achievements of a specific historical period. A primary source is one that has been created by firsthand witnesses of an event. Have students brainstorm specific examples of primary documents. Answers may include: the Constitution, speeches, photographs of a certain period of time, diaries, legal agreements, treaties, laws, etc.

Show students a copy of the U.S. Constitution. Explore what students remember about the U.S Constitution. Reinforce that the Constitution is the highest law in our land and explains how our whole government works and lists the basic freedoms that all Americans enjoy. Discuss that although the Constitution was written more than 200 years ago, it is still very important in our lives today.

Explain that the Constitution is divided into several sections:

- The first part, the Preamble, explains who is writing the Constitution and why.
- The second part, which is composed of seven Articles, explains how our government works.
- The third part is a list of amendments, or additions to the Constitution. These additions, or amendments, name the rights or freedoms that Americans have..

Challenge your students to name the first 10 amendments, known as the Bill of Rights.

Discuss that because the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and was written over 200 years ago, reading the various sections is often viewed as difficult. Explain that although students will not need to know everything there is to know about the Constitution, it is important to understand the “big ideas.”

Divide the class into small groups of 4 – 5 students. Provide each group with a copy of the Constitution, including the Amendments, as well a copy of the *Let’s Find the Answer Scavenger Hunt* Activity.

Websites that include copies of the Constitution and Amendments to download include:

- http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html
- <http://constitutionus.com/>
- <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc50/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc50.pdf>
- <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.pdf>

Tell students that today, they will be competing with the other groups in the class to see if they can find the correct answer to each of the questions on the scavenger hunt. Share with students that answers need to be complete and accurate.

Note: Dependent on the time frame of the class, you may wish to shorten the scavenger hunt or have students only complete a specific section, such as only the Amendments.

Sample Debriefing Questions

- Who created the U. S. Constitution?
- When was it written? What was happening during the different time periods?
- When looking at the Constitution and the Amendments, what did you notice about the style of writing?
- What did you see that you didn’t expect?
- What are some of the powerful words and ideas expressed?
- What is one thing that you learned by completing the scavenger hunt on the Constitution?
- What big ideas of the Constitution are important to you in your daily life?

Assessments/Extensions

1. Provide students with a copy of the Bill of Rights. Have students create a chart or poster in which they identify the “big idea” of each of the amendments. Example: 1st Amendment – freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, petition.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Provide each group with a small section of the Constitution. Have each group closely read their section and create a one-sentence summary of the big ideas of the section. Next have each group identify how their assigned section impacts them in their daily lives. Have each group share their ideas and their written summary with the group.

U. S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt

Preamble

The Preamble was written to declare a purpose of this Constitution (to form a more perfect union) by promoting fairness (justice), peace (domestic tranquility), safety (common defense), well-being (general welfare), and freedom (blessings of liberty) for Americans both then and in the future (posterity).

Article I – The Legislative Branch

This section focuses on the responsibilities and limitations of the Legislative Branch, often referred to as Congress.

1. The two parts of Congress are the _____ and the _____.
2. Members of the House of Representatives are elected to _____-year terms.
3. In order to be eligible for the House of Representatives, candidates must be _____ years old, a citizen of the U.S. for _____ years, and live in the state they plan to represent.
4. The number of Representatives allotted to each state is determined by _____.
5. How is the Speaker of the House chosen? _____.
6. Members of the Senate are elected to _____-year terms.
7. The number of Senators is _____ per state.
8. In order to be eligible for the Senate, candidates must be _____ years old, a citizen of the U.S. for _____ years, and live in the state they plan to represent.
9. Who is the President of the Senate? _____. When is the only time this person can vote on bills? _____.
10. At minimum, how often must Congress meet? _____.
11. Are Senators and Representatives paid for their work? _____ (Yes or No)
12. All money/revenue bills must originate in the _____.
13. Before bills can be signed into law by _____, they must pass both the House and the Senate.
14. Even if a bill is vetoed/sent back to Congress by the President, the bill can still become law with a _____ (fraction) vote for it in both the House and the Senate.
15. True/False: Votes by members of Congress are secret and not recorded individually. _____.
16. True/False: Congress has the power to raise armies and declare war. _____.

17. True/False: Congress has the power to collect taxes and print money. _____.
18. True/False: Congress has the power to select Supreme Court judges. _____.
19. True/False: Congress has the power to regulate trade with other countries. _____.
20. True/False: Congress has the power to make treaties with other countries. _____.

Article II – The Executive Branch

This section focuses on the responsibilities and limitations of the Executive Branch and its leader, the President.

21. The President is elected to a _____-year term. This term may be repeated one time.
22. The President is directly elected by a body of electors. How many electors are allotted to each state?
_____.
23. In order to be elected President, a candidate must be _____ years old, be a
_____ citizen, and have lived in the U.S. for _____ years.
24. True or False: The President is paid for his service. _____
25. Name 5 powers of the President. _____.
26. What is the purpose of the President's "State of the Union"? _____.
27. The President and the Vice-President can both be removed from their positions in office if convicted of treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors. This process is known as
_____.

Article III – The Judicial Branch

This section focuses on the responsibilities and limitations of the Judicial Branch, the court system.

28. Congress has established both a _____ Court and _____ Courts.
29. Name 5 types of cases that are tried by the Judicial Branch. _____.
30. In most cases aside from trials involving public officials and states, the Supreme Court has
_____ jurisdiction. This concept comes from the word "appeal" and means that the cases have to be started elsewhere first and been re-tried in other lower courts before making it to the Supreme Court.
31. True or False: Judges are paid for their service and may remain on the court until they can no longer serve. _____.

Article IV, V, VI, VII – The States, Amendments, Oaths, and Ratification

These sections lay out instructions of how the federal/national government and state governments interact, how changes can be made to the Constitution, expectations of public officials, and how the Constitution is approved.

32. All state laws, records, and court decisions that are made in one state are also in effect in all other states. This is known as "Full _____ and _____". Example: If you were married in Florida, you are still considered married if you move to North Carolina.
33. Yes/No: Can a person who is charged with a crime in one state and flees to another state be sent back to the state where he/she is charged with the crime? _____.
34. If Congress desires to propose a change to the Constitution, called an amendment, what percentage of each part of Congress must propose the change? _____.
35. What percentage of states must ratify/approve of an amendment for it to be added to the Constitution? _____.

Amendments

An Amendment is a change or addition to a document. The First Ten Amendments were added to the Constitution at the direction of the very first Congress in 1789, though they were not official law until 1791. They were added because many people believed the Constitution did not adequately protect them from the government's power.

36. The first ten amendments are called _____.
37. Which amendment gives 18 year olds the right to vote? _____.
38. The First Amendment guarantees freedom of _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
39. This amendment protects citizens from searches without a warrant. _____.
40. What basic protection does the 6th Amendment provide citizens? _____.
41. Who gained the right to vote from the 19th Amendment? _____.
42. Amendment _____ says citizens should not be denied the right to vote based on race.
43. What does the 10th Amendment say about rights or powers that are not given to the federal government? _____.
44. How does the 22nd Amendment affect the President of the United States? _____.
45. Which amendment allowed the U.S. Government to implement income tax? _____.

U. S. Constitution Scavenger Hunt – Answer Key

1. Senate and House of Representatives
2. Two year terms
3. 25 years old and a U.S. citizen for 7 years
4. Population
5. Speaker of the House is chosen by the members of the House of Representatives
6. Six year terms
7. Two senators per state
8. 30 years old and a U.S. citizen for 9 years
9. The Vice-President and he/she can only vote if there is a tie (he/she is tie-breaking vote)
10. Once per year
11. Yes
12. House
13. The President
14. Two-thirds (2/3)
15. False
16. True
17. True
18. False
19. True
20. False
21. Four
22. It is based on population = # of representatives + two senators
23. 35 years old, a natural-born citizen (born in U.S.), and resident of U.S. for 14 years
24. True
25. Answers will vary, but can include: Commander in Chief of the Military, grant pardons, make treaties with consent of Senate, nominate ambassadors and public officials, nominate Supreme Court judges, fill Congressional vacancies, give State of the Union speech, call special sessions of Congress, etc.
26. To provide information and to recommend items of consideration to Congress
27. Impeachment
28. Supreme Court and Inferior (or Lower) Courts. Note: Inferior courts can be district courts and/or Courts of Appeal
29. Answers will vary, but can include: Constitutional issues, trials of Ambassadors or other Public officials, cases of maritime/sea jurisdiction, cases between states, cases between a state and a citizen, cases between citizens of different states, cases between the U.S. and foreign citizens, etc.
30. Appellate
31. True
32. Full Faith and Credit
33. Yes
34. Two-Thirds (2/3) approval in both the Senate and the House of Representatives
35. Three-Fourths (3/4) of state legislatures must approve the amendment

36. The Bill of Rights
37. 26th Amendment
38. Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly, Petition
39. Amendment 4
40. Jury Trial, Right to Confront and to Counsel, Speedy Trial

41. Women's right to vote (women's suffrage)
42. Amendment 15
43. Reserves powers that are not given to the U.S. government under the Constitution, nor prohibited to a State of the U.S., to the people and the States.
44. Limits the terms that an individual can be elected as president (at most two terms). Individuals who have served over two years of someone else's term may not be elected more than once.
45. 16th Amendment