



The Constitution: We the People

Grades 6-8

Background/Objective:

For more than 200 years, the United States has remained strong because of the common civic values, or duties of people, written in our founding documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution, the foundation of our government, is the most important symbol of the creation of the United States.

The constitution is organized into three parts. First, the Preamble. The preamble describes the purpose of the document. Second, the seven Articles. The Articles establish how the government is structured and how the Constitution can be changed. Finally, amendments that express changes to the Constitution. The first 10 amendments are called the Bill of Rights. In this lesson, you will learn more about the Constitution as the foundation of the federal government of the United States. You will also explain the importance of the Constitution's opening phrase, "We the people."

Activator: [Tour Independence Hall](#) (*Play time is up to the player's discretion*)

- *The National Park Service has provided a picture tour of Independence Hall. Press on the first picture to enlarge the image and follow the pictures and captions to as you visit Independence Hall.*
- *Independence Hall is a public building in Philadelphia, PA. It was here that some of the most important events of our Nation's history took place. Our Founding Fathers and colonial leaders met to plan the future of the new Nation. The Declaration of Independence (1776) and the United States Constitution (1787) were debated and ratified, or approved here. It is a U.S. National Historic Landmark. Independence Hall was also the home of the Liberty Bell for over 200 years.*

Activity #1: [A Promise of Freedom](#) video (12:00 minutes)

- In the summer of 1787, a group of fifty-five men gathered at the State House in Philadelphia. They were sent to Philadelphia by their state governments to amend the failing Articles of Confederation, the first written constitution of the United States.
- Quickly, this convention of delegates from 12 decided that the Articles could not be saved, and a new government must be created. The delegates, or representatives for the states, debated for months over what would be included in the Constitution.
- Many compromises, or agreements had to be made during the writing of the Constitution.
- After the Convention, the Constitution had to be approved. Only nine states had to agree to, or ratify, the Constitution. When New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify, the Constitution became the law of the land!



Closure: *After completing the activator and activity, close the lesson through a discussion with your student.*

1. The United States Constitution is a document that is considered the foundation of the freedoms and responsibilities of U.S. citizens. The first three words of the Constitution are "We the people." Who are the people referenced in "We the people"?
 - a. What do these words, "We the people" mean to you and your freedom?
2. The Constitution begins with the Preamble. The Preamble described the goals of the Constitution to guarantee justice, peace, and liberty.
 - a. "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."
 - b. As a student and a member of your house and family, what goals would you set for yourself? How can you help protect the welfare of others?