

Elementary Activity Suggestions

Kindergarten:

- Teacher initiates discussion concerning days/holidays that people celebrate, such as students' birthdays. Encourage students to think of days that the United States would celebrate. Introduce Constitution Day as the day America celebrates the birthday of the set of rules that run our country.
- Lead students in a discussion of things that would cause them to think of the United States, such as the flag, celebrating 4th of July, etc. Show pictures of America's symbols: eagle, Statue of Liberty, Liberty Bell, fireworks on July 4th, and the White House. Ask students why these objects symbolize America. Example: school mascot is similar to the eagle symbolizing the United States.
- Read *God Bless America*, words and music by Irving Berlin, illustrations by Lynn Munsinger, HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.
- Lead students in discussion of why classroom rules need to be followed. Discuss what would happen if everyone in the class ignored the rules. Ask students to suggest rules for Americans to follow.
- Draw pictures of the American flag. Cut out the flag. Paste to plastic straws. Each student displays their flag while stating one reason they appreciate living in America.

Grades 1-2:

- Students draw a picture of a symbol of America, and write one sentence explaining why that symbol of America is important to our country.
- Students recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Teacher displays the words of the pledge. Lead discussion of the meaning of the phrases of the pledge. Students are divided into small groups and assigned to illustrate one of the phrases. Students discuss ideas for illustrations within their groups. Display illustrations within the classroom beneath the appropriate phrase.
- Since classroom rules have already been established prior to celebrating Constitution Day, have students suggest ways rules are not exactly being followed. Discuss ways those rules may need to be changed. Inform students that the United States has rules in our Constitution. Sometimes those rules need to be changed or amended. These changes are then added as amendments to the Constitution. Add amended classroom rules to the already listed rules without omitting the original rules.
- Develop an acrostic poem as an entire class using the word America. Teacher writes suggestions on overhead or whiteboard. Read orally as a group. Discuss words in the poem that bring an imagery to mind. Students copy poem and illustrate. Display in classroom.

Grades 3-5:

- Students develop acrostic poems using Constitution Day theme words such as flag, Bill of Rights, Constitution, government, America, and United States. Illustrate poems and display in groups of similar words.
- Ask students to suggest items that are extremely important to themselves or their family. Discuss what items might be important to America. Share pictures of the Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and U.S. Constitution. Discuss why these original documents are guarded throughout the day when on display, and placed in a vault when the National Archives is closed.
- Take class to computer lab to complete Constitution puzzles, games, and trivia at

- <http://www.constitutioncenter.org/education> .
- Discuss purpose of the Bill of Rights. Lead discussion of rights students have in their class, cafeteria, playground, or home. Use a web to list suggestions. Assign students to develop a Bill of Rights of their own with eight rights. Suggest students use their imagination. Bills of Rights can be developed for themselves, teenagers, teachers, family pets, parents, etc. Direct students to list their rights in storyboard form. Include one illustrated right in each section of the storyboard. Share with class prior to displaying in room or hall.
- Provide students with timelines listed in *A Timeline of the First Continental Congress* by Maxine Rosaler after sharing book with the class prior to Constitution Day. Assign one event per student to research. Students illustrate their assigned event and write a brief summary on the illustrated page. On Constitution Day, students arrange the events in sequence around the room under a card displaying the date. Students briefly introduce their event. Connect events with colorful ribbon or yarn.

Lessons Plans

Kindergarten

Objective: Students will describe the purpose of the U.S. Constitution

Teachers can begin discussion by showing a rule book of any game. In a web, describe the need for rules, why they are important and who is to monitor these rules. Students learn that our Constitution is a "giant rule book" for our country. (Show a picture of one). This was very hard to write because everyone had to agree on the rules and consequences before it was finished. Students then engage in a class activity to write a classroom constitution. (On butcher paper made to look like a scroll). Brainstorm some rules and consequences. Narrow it down to 5 fair rules and consequences that the whole class has to agree on. All students sign their names.

Grades 1-2

Objective: Students will describe what a "framer" to the constitution and why they were important

Teachers can begin a discussion by bringing in a picture frame. Students should be able to identify what it is, its function, and why it is important. Use a web to share suggestions. Then teachers need to explain how/ when our Constitution was written. Share that the men who came together to write this important document were called "framers", too. Teachers should refer to web to explain how these three men James Madison, Ben Franklin or George Washington, helped to write it. After reading about the important "Framers" along with showing a picture of these framers, teachers can have the students draw a portrait of one of these three men (in a construction or tag board frame). The most important point is that they are called "framers" because they wrote the constitution.

Grades 3-5

Objective: Students will describe the purpose of government by interpreting the Preamble of the Constitution.

Teachers have students answer the following questions in pairs or triads:

- 1) What is a purpose?
- 2) Why is it important to know what your own purposes are?
- 3) What is government?

- 4) What do you think the purposes of government are? List suggestions.
- 5) Explain why EACH purpose of government you listed is important.

Share answers as a class. Record as a web (web each question)

Read as a class about the Preamble to the Constitution and its importance. This can be from a sheet developed by the teacher and read orally in class.

Divide students into small groups. They take one of six phrases (written on strip paper) of the Preamble and must answer the following questions:

- 1) What does the phrase mean? Give an example.
- 2) Why is this phrase important?
- 3) What does this phrase have to do with protecting the rights and well-being of the people?

Each group will share their answers.

Elementary Level Books:

Ansary, Mir Tamim. *Flag Day*, 32 pages

Bennett, Kelly. *Flag Day*, 32 pages

Catrow, David. *We the Kids, The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States*, 22 pages

Kaplan, Leslie C. *Flag Day*, 24 pages

LeVert, Suzanne. *The Constitution*, 48 pages

Payan, Gregory. *The Federalists and Anti-Federalists: How and Why Political Parties Were Formed in Young America*, 32 pages

Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *The Constitution*, 48 pages

Rosaler, Maxine. *A Timeline of the First Continental Congress*, 32 pages

Schulz, Charles M. *This is America, Charlie Brown*, 24 pages

Venezia, Mike. *James Madison: Fourth President 1809-1817*, 32 pages

Videos:

Birth of the Constitution, a Lee Mendelson-Bill Melendez Production in association with Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates and United Media. 24 minutes

School House Rock!-America Rock from Scholastic Rock, Inc. 24 minutes