

4th Grade

Discover America

Course 6 - Teacher Guide



**COURSE 6: CREATING THE
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

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4th Grade

Teacher Guide



Key Themes

- Freedom
- Independence

Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Liberty

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define liberty.
- Explain how the Constitution was created.
- Explain how the Constitution serves the people of the United States.
- Define the three branches of government.
- Explain the roles of the three branches of government and how they relate to checks and balances.



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Key Terms

- 01 **Bill of Rights** - a list of rights that American citizens have.
- 02 **checks and balances** - a system to ensure that no branch of government has too much power.
- 03 **constitution** - a set of rules that guides how a country works.
- 04 **executive branch** - President and Vice President of the United States.
- 05 **government** - a system of rules and the people who make and enforce them.
- 06 **judicial branch** - the branch of government that reviews laws and determines if they are fair.
- 07 **preamble** - an introduction that explains the purpose or goals of a formal document.

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Introduction

ASK Students

What do you know about the Constitution?

(allow students to respond)

TELL Students

The **Constitution** is like the rulebook for the government of the United States. It was made to protect the rights of the people and make sure the country is safe and united.

Before the Constitution, there were some problems with the government. They tried the Articles of Confederation, but it wasn't strong enough. So, they had a big meeting called the Constitutional Convention to make a new set of rules.

They finished making the Constitution on September 17, 1787, and then it had to be approved by at least nine out of thirteen states. It got approved on June 21, 1788, and started working on March 4, 1789. George Washington became the first President on April 30, 1789.



U.S. Constitution

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Introduction

TELL Students

The Constitution starts with “We the People of the United States,” which means the government is there to help the citizens. The **government** is intended to improve the country and protect the freedom of the people.

Our government is a federal government, which means it has certain jobs, and the states have other jobs. The Constitution explains who is responsible for certain tasks.

WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Episode:
The Constitutional Convention



Scan Me!

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Lesson

ASK Students

What does “We the People of the United States,” mean?

(allow students to respond)

TELL Students

The Constitution established something important called the “separation of powers,” and this is a big deal when it comes to our freedom.

But why is it important to separate powers in the government? It is because it helps make sure that each part of the government has its own specific job. This way, no part can become too strong and take away our freedom.

To separate powers, the government is divided into three branches:

1. **Legislative Branch:** This is the law-making branch, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate, together called Congress. They create the laws.
2. **Executive Branch:** This is the branch that includes the President and other important people. They make sure the laws are followed and carried out.
3. **Judicial Branch:** This includes our judges and courts. The Supreme Court is the most powerful court, and they decide what the laws mean.

The legislative branch makes the laws, the executive branch makes sure they are followed, and the judicial branch interprets the laws. This separation of powers helps protect our rights and keeps our government in balance.

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Lesson

ASK Students

What are the three branches of government?

What are **checks and balances**?

(allow students to respond)

TELL Students

Learning how our government works is important. It helps you grow to be an informed citizen. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more about the formation of the United States government.

WATCH

Learn More With Liberty Videos:
Why Liberty Matters: The Constitution
Safeguards of Liberty in the Bill of Rights



Scan Me!

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Lesson

ASK Students

What happened at the Constitutional Convention?

What is the **Bill of Rights**?

(allow students to respond)



The Constitutional Convention

WATCH

Optional Course Videos:

Learn More With Liberty: Separation of Powers and Liberty

Learn More With Liberty: The Preamble to the Constitution

Scan Me!



Please utilize this additional resource to further the discussion on course content with your students.

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Quill Pen

TELL Students

Liberty is the state of being free within society. It protects us from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on our way of life, behavior, or political views. Another word for liberty is freedom. Countless hours were spent creating the Constitution by respectable men who wanted to protect our families' freedom. Liberty matters because no one wants to be oppressed or controlled by the government.

We are going to create a **quill pen!**

Show students a quill pen from a school-approved website. Explain that we are going to sign the constitution. Give students a variety of feathers and pens. Students will pick one feather and one pen. Students will trim the feather so that the quill is bare for two inches so they can tape the quill tightly to the pen.

Write the following sentence on butcher paper:

"Liberty matters to me because I want to be free to _____."

Students will orally complete the sentence as you add their response to the butcher paper. Explain that you are creating a classroom Constitution. After all students state what liberty means to them, they will use their feather pen to sign the class constitution.

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Knowledge Check

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Read each question and answer set carefully. Circle the correct answer.

- 01 What does the Constitution begin with?
a) We the Politicians of the United States
b) We the Government of the United States
c) We the Representatives of the United States
d) We the People of the United States
- 02 Which of these are not part of the legislative branch of the federal government?
a) The House of Representatives
b) The Supreme Court
c) Congress
d) The Senate
- 03 Which branch is responsible for carrying out laws?
a) The legislative branch
b) The executive branch
c) The judicial branch
d) The state branch
- 04 How long do justices serve the Supreme Court?
a) Two years
b) Five years
c) Ten years
d) For life
- 05 Which of these is NOT part of the Second Amendment?
a) To keep and bear arms
b) To come together and protest
c) To religious freedom
d) To freedom of speech

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Answer Key

- 01 What does the Constitution begin with?
a) We the Politicians of the United States
b) We the Government of the United States
c) We the Representatives of the United States
d) **We the People of the United States**
- 02 Which of these are not part of the legislative branch of the federal government?
a) The House of Representatives
b) **The Supreme Court**
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- 03 Which branch is responsible for carrying out laws?
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- 04 How long do justices serve the Supreme Court?
a) Two years
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d) **For life**
- 05 Which of these is NOT part of the Second Amendment?
a) To keep and bear arms
b) To come together and protest
c) **To religious freedom**
d) To freedom of speech

Creating the American Government **Resource List**

- 01 www.2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/ar/14313.htm
- 02 www.archives.gov/education/lessons/slave-trade.html
- 03 www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/how-did-it-happen
- 04 www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution
- 05 www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/articles-of-confederation
- 06 www.bensguide.gpo.gov/j-states-ratification
- 07 www.constitutioncenter.org/blog/on-this-day-james-madison-introduces-the-bill-of-rights
- 08 www.constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution
- 09 www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R41357.html#fn6
- 10 www.heritage.org/the-constitution/commentary/what-the-constitution-really-says-about-race-and-slavery
- 11 www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/siege-of-yorktown
- 12 www.history.com/topics/early-us/federalist-papers
- 13 www.history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/continental-congress
- 14 www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/convention-and-ratification.html
- 15 www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/shays-rebellion/
- 16 www.nps.gov/articles/constitutionalconvention-june20.htm
- 17 www.senate.gov/civics/common/generic/Virginia_Plan_item.htm

