

# Constitution Day

## September 17, 2009



## Census in Schools Lesson Plan for Grade 2:

### ***The Preamble and the Census***

***Based on Constitution Day Across the Country from [constitutionday.civiced.org](http://constitutionday.civiced.org)***

Curriculum Areas: Civics, Government, English Language Arts, and Art

Purposes of this Lesson:

- To introduce the Constitution, discuss what it is, and compare the Preamble to our Class Agreement.
- To discuss the concept of the three branches of government, with emphasis placed on the legislative branch.
- To introduce the role of the Census Bureau and how it counts every resident every ten years, and how this count determines how many Congressional representatives there will be for each state.

National Standards for Civics and Government (K-4):

Define government, its necessity, purposes, and functions.

Learning Outcomes for Students:

- Students will be able to explain the Preamble in their own words.
- Students will be able to discuss ways in which the Preamble to the Constitution is similar to their Class Agreement.

Materials:

- Classroom Agreement
- Images of Constitution and Framers
- *The Preamble*, School House Rock (1976)
- *We the Kids*, David Catrow (2002)
- "The Constitution Poem" by Teri Delich (2008)
- Pictures and bios of Congressmen/women
- Census map that captures populations for each state and the number of Congressional representatives based on Census 2000 data
- Oak tag copy of the Preamble
- White lined paper
- Construction paper with printed scroll outline

- Oak tag pretzels
- Glue sticks
- Red, white & blue glitter
- White ribbon

Getting Started:

Setting the Framework (30 minutes)

1. Announce to students that the nation will be observing Constitution Day on September 17. Have students look up the definition of the word “constitution” in the dictionary. Explain what the U.S. Constitution is and how the country will commemorate the day.
2. Read aloud “The Constitution Poem.”
3. Have students read the poem silently. Ask for their interpretations. Record their responses.

Instructional Practice:

This part of the lesson will take 20 minutes and will begin with full class instruction and then move into individual work.

1. Display Classroom Agreement poster. Review how and why the class rules were developed. Remind students that the class made rules so that everyone could be safe, learn, and have fun. The classroom rules were created by and for students. It involved listening to different students’ opinions. Tell students that our country also made rules by the people and for the people, called laws, so people could be safe and free.
2. Ask students to recall “The Constitution Poem.” Ask them to recall some of the things mentioned in the poem.
3. Show the image of the U.S. Constitution. Identify the document, and tell students the Constitution is the law, or rules, of the United States. The Constitution was written over two-hundred years ago and signed on September 17, 1787.
4. Display images of the Founding Fathers.
5. Explain that the Constitution has several sections and that today we are going to look at just the Preamble. Explain what “Preamble” means.
6. Have students listen to “The Preamble” song, and follow along with the printed copy on oak tag.
7. Have students identify words they do not understand, underline and discuss them.

8. Read *We the Kids*, taking time to look at the illustrations, to further explain what the words mean.
9. Revisit the Classroom Agreement. What things are similar between the Preamble and our Agreement. Ask why it's important to have an agreement (responses vary).
10. Have students return to their seats and copy our Classroom Agreement on white-lined paper, using their best handwriting. We will mount on construction paper scrolls so they will have their own copies of our Classroom Constitution.

Extension: (40 minutes)

1. Later in the day, revisit the Constitution and discuss the poem they have read. Discuss the job of the president, Congress, and judges. Have students share their thoughts about the roles of the president, Congress, and judges. Refer to the three branches of government. Compare this to your school.
2. Work with small groups of children to make a Constitution necklace. Each student will need a labeled paper towel and an oak tag pretzel on the towel. Put glue on the pretzel. Each ring of the pretzel will be covered with a different color of glitter: one red, one white, and one blue to represent the three branches of government. After the pretzels dry, loop an appropriate length of gold ribbon or string through each pretzel and tie to create a necklace.
3. Students can wear their Constitution necklaces as they share their illustrations showing good citizen behavior with the class.
4. Ask students if they know who their Congressional representative is. Show them pictures of different members of Congress and their bios. (Or if students have access to computers, have them look up their representative and read his or her bio.)
5. Tell them that each state has a certain number of Congressional representatives. Create a chart with the name of the state and the number of Congressional seats, such as CT 5; MA 10; and NH 2. Or refer to the census map with this information.
6. Tell them that the Constitution has many laws. One law is that a census must be taken every 10 years to determine how many Congressmen/women there will be for each state. Explain that the word "census" means to take a count of the population or things.
7. Ask them how we can count every resident in the United States. Record their responses.
8. Explain that each household will be mailed a form or questionnaire that must be filled out. Sketch out a questionnaire on the board with a name, address, birth date, and so on. The form must be mailed back. After the count is completed, each state

will have a certain number of members of Congress based on the population of the state.

Motivational Techniques:

Students will become engaged in the lesson by revisiting their Classroom Agreement, listening to a song, and looking at a picture book.

Wrap Up:

Summarize the main points of the lesson.

Assessment:

Informal observation of group participation

Potential Pitfalls:

*Pitfall:* Some students may have difficulty connecting the Constitution to their Classroom Agreement. *Solution:* The song presents additional information about why the Constitution was written. The picture book offers a visual interpretation that is student-friendly.