

Constitution Day

September 17, 2009



Census in Schools Lesson Plan for Grades 3-5:

The Constitution and the Census

Curriculum Areas: Civics, Government, and Art

Objectives:

- Name and discuss the three branches of government.
- Compare the U. S. Constitution with their classroom agreement.
- Describe what a census is and explain why it's part of the Constitution.

Overall purpose of these three interrelated lessons:

- To introduce students to the U. S. Constitution and to the census.
- To explain the functions and relationships of the Constitution and the census.

National Standards for Civics and Government:

- Define government and its necessity and purposes. (Grades K-4)
- Explain purposes of rules and laws. (Grades K-4)
- Understand the concept of constitutions and the purposes and uses of government. (Grade 5)

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Copy of the Preamble
- "The Preamble" song by School House Rock
- "We the People" section of the Preamble
- Census map that captures populations and the number of Congressional representatives for each state
- Paper pretzels (pre-cut or pre-copied)
- Glue
- Red, blue, and white glitter

Getting Started:

Lesson 1 - Constitution, Preamble and the Classroom Agreement

1. Tell students that today is a very special day – Constitution Day. Ask students if anyone knows what the Constitution is. Record their answers.
2. Explain that the Constitution is an agreement that U. S. citizens have chosen to govern themselves by.
3. Ask students if they know what “govern” means. Record their answers. Explain that “govern” means the rules we live by.
4. Ask students if they can think of any agreements they have chosen to live by. Record their answers.
5. Discuss the classroom agreement established during the first week of school. How was it created? What was the process? Write down the procedure: propose, discuss, debate, assess, and vote. Define the words that students don’t understand. Was everyone involved? Did you vote on rules? Explain that this is how the Constitution was created and for the same reasons: who would rule and how. Emphasize that it was created by the people and for the people.
6. Read “We the People.” Show the Preamble on chart paper. Read with the students. Sing along with “School House Rock.”
7. Ask students to point out any words they didn’t understand. Offer a synonym they know. Once all words have been explained, re-read.
8. Pull words from their classroom agreement.
9. Ask if the Preamble now looks familiar or similar to their classroom agreement.
10. Have students record in their own words, on scroll worksheet.

Lesson 2 - Three Branches of Government

1. Have students recall the Preamble as part of the Constitution. Ask if they can explain what the Constitution is.
2. Explain that it sets out how we will govern ourselves. Refer to recorded answers on what “govern” means.
3. Explain the three branches of government. Executive (President), Legislative (Congress), and Judicial (Courts). Ask the class if they know the

roles/responsibilities of each branch.

4. Explain that they depend on each other to keep things fair. Make clear the concept of checks and balances.
5. Draw intertwined circles on board, on paper, or on overhead so that it looks like a pretzel.
6. Ask students what the rings look like. Do they look like a pretzel?
7. Show video of “3-ring circus” School House Rock
8. Ask what could happen if the President could do whatever he or she wanted? What could happen if Congress wrote any law it wanted? What would happen if the police arrested anyone they wanted?
9. Explain why these rings are important and why they are intertwined?
10. To reinforce the three branches, have students create a Constitution necklace. Select a red, white, or blue color for each branch and have children color and glitter glue 1/3 pretzel for each branch. Add a length of yarn and string pretzels.

Lesson 3 – The Census and the Constitution

1. Have students recall what the Constitution is. Listen to responses (imbedded assessment.)
2. Ask students to recall the branches of government. Listen to responses.
3. Ask students how the President is chosen. Listen to responses.
4. Explain that each state gets a certain number of Congressional representatives. Explain again, if necessary, the role and responsibilities of a congressman/woman.
5. Ask students how they might make that amount fair. Record answers.
6. Ask students how we can find out how many children are in the class.
7. We have a pie that we want to share. How can we make sure everyone gets a share of the pie? Record their answers.
8. What if we divide the class into three uneven groups (10, 5, 7) and we only have 4 slices of pie left. We want each group to have a slice or slices of the pie. Let’s say we are not allowed to cut the pie into smaller pieces. We want to be fair to all 3 groups so that they can have a slice of the pie based on the number of people in the

group. Which group should receive the 4th slice? Why or why not? Explain the concept of proportion. (It's an agreeable or positive relation of parts.)

9. Explain that the census counts people to determine the number of Congressional seats for each state based on the population count. It's required by the Constitution. Show a chart with the names of 3 states, their populations from Census 2000, and the number of Congressmen/women.

CT	3,409,535	5	Congressional representatives
MA	6,355,568	10	Congressional representatives
NH	1,238,415	2	Congressional representatives

Explain that the Census counts people by mailing out a questionnaire to each household throughout the nation. The head of the household fills it out and mails it back. In 2010, a count will be taken of every resident in the United States. Again this relates to figuring out the number of Congressmen/women for each state. Refer to the Constitution.

Have the class read aloud Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution. Explain that enumeration refers to counting each resident. The Constitution mandates that we conduct a census every 10 years.

Wrap up:

Summarize why we have a Constitution; how the class agreement is based rules that were created for and by students so that they can learn in a safe environment; why we have three branches of government; and why we conduct a census and how it is mandated by the Constitution.

Assessment:

Informal observations of group participation