



**FLORIDA JOINT CENTER
FOR CITIZENSHIP**

THE PREAMBLE OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION
SS.7.C.1.6 Interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution.

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Lesson Summary

Essential Question

What are the goals and purposes of government according to the Preamble?

NGSSS Benchmark

SS.7.C.1.6 Interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution.

Florida Standards

LAFS.68.RH.1.1

LAFS.68.RH.1.2

LAFS.68.RH.2.4

LAFS.68.RH.2.5

LAFS.68.WHST.1.2

LAFS.68.WHST.4.10

LAFS.7.SL.1.1

LAFS.7.SL.1.2

Overview

In this lesson, students will understand the goals and purposes of government as defined by the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution.

Learning Goals/Benchmark Clarifications

- Students will explain how the Preamble serves as an introduction to the U.S. Constitution, establishing the goals and purposes of government.
- Students will identify the goals and purposes of government as set forth in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution (i.e., form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity).
- Students will recognize that the intention of the phrase “We the People” means that government depends on the people for its power and exists to serve them.

Benchmark Content Limits

- Items will be limited to addressing the intent of the Preamble, rather than interpretations throughout other periods of history.

Civics EOC Reporting Category

Reporting Category 1 – Origins and Purposes of Law and Government

Suggested Time Frame

- One 45-50 minute class period

Civics Content Vocabulary

- defense, domestic, insure, justice, ordain, posterity, Preamble, tranquility, union, welfare

Instructional Strategies

Document analysis

Close reading of complex text

Use of video

Materials

Computer to project websites, activity sheet, and video

Dictionaries for student pairs to use throughout the lesson, if needed

Student activity sheet:

- The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

Suggested Student Activity Sequence

1. To begin this lesson, place students into pairs and project a text image of the U.S. Constitution: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=9#>.
2. Pose the following questions for brainstorm and discussion: “What do you know about the U.S. Constitution? What is the purpose of the U.S. Constitution?”
3. Have students share out.
4. Lead students to the understanding that the U.S. Constitution outlines the government structure and function for the nation.
5. Engage students in a discussion about the structure of the document by posing the following questions: “What do you notice about how the document is structured? Is there an introduction to the document?”
6. Provide students with time to brainstorm and share out. Lead students to the understanding that the Preamble is the introduction to the rest of the Constitution.
7. Project and pass out the “Preamble to the U.S. Constitution” student activity sheet and explain to students that they will do an analysis and close reading of the Preamble in order to understand the ideas contained within the introduction of the Constitution.
8. Read aloud the Preamble to the whole class.
9. Pose the following questions for discussion: “What words or phrases from the text stand out to you? What do you think this text means?”
10. Direct student attention to the vocabulary chart on the student activity sheet and project the following list of civics content vocabulary terms on the board:

1. union	2. justice	3. insure	4. domestic	5. tranquility
6. defense	7. welfare	8. posterity	9. ordain	

Teacher note: The terms are listed as they appear in the text.

11. Read the Preamble aloud to the class for the second time and pause at each term. Instruct students to define the term using the clues available. Teacher note: Explain to students that some words are in a style of English that is no longer used in the U.S. and they might recognize the word using modern spelling. For example, defence spelled with modern English is defense. If additional support is needed to define terms in context, utilize the S.L.A.P. technique: 1. SAY the word aloud to the class, 2. instruct students to LOOK for clues, 3. instruct students to ASK themselves what the word might mean and think of another word that may be used to express that meaning, and 4. PUT that word in place of the unknown word, does it make sense? Why or why not?
12. Have students add the definition for each term on the activity sheet.
13. Read the Preamble to the class for a third time.
14. Pose the following questions for discussion: “What are the punctuation marks in the text? (period and commas) What do these marks tell you about the structure of the text?” (It is a complex sentence, with multiple and related ideas connected by commas.)
15. Explain to students that there are two important questions about our government that can be answered in the Preamble: Where does the government’s power come from? What are the goals and purposes of government?
16. Read the Preamble aloud to the class for the fourth time.
17. Pose the following questions for discussion: “Where does the government’s power come from? What does the text say?”
18. Provide adequate time for students to think and share out ideas.
19. Instruct students to write the statement: *We the People of the United States...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America* in the blank box on their activity sheet.

20. Instruct students to circle the text from this statement that answers the question: Where does the government's power come from? (We the People)
21. Share with students that the phrase "We the People" is important because the government gets its power from the people and government exists to serve the people. Instruct students to take notes on their activity sheet.
22. Read the Preamble aloud for the fifth time.
23. Pose the following questions for discussion: "Now that we know where government gets its power from, what are the goals and purposes of government? What is in the text to help you answer this question?"
24. Provide adequate time for students to think and share out ideas.
25. Direct student attention to the graphic organizer on their student activity sheet that is labeled: "Goals and Purposes" and pose the following question for discussion: "Based on the amount of boxes on the graphic organizer, can you identify the same amount of goals and purposes in the Preamble?"
26. Provide time for students to fill in the top row of the graphic organizer with the six goals and purposes as outlined in the Preamble: 1. in Order to form a more perfect Union, 2. establish Justice, 3. insure domestic Tranquility, 4. provide for the common defence, 5. promote the general Welfare, and 6. secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.
27. Instruct students to work with their partner and using the definitions for each term, summarize each goal and purpose in their own words in the spaces on the graphic organizer.
28. Explain to students that they will watch a short video to help them summarize each goal and purpose in their own words. Instruct students to add any notes to their graphic organizer that will help them summarize the six goals and purposes in their own words.
29. Play the "Constitution Preamble from Schoolhouse Rock" video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_NzZvdsbWI or
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30OyU4O80i4>.
30. Provide time for students to summarize the six goals and purposes in their own words.
31. Have students share out.
32. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):
 Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using the following prompt:
Prompt
 Using what you have learned from the analysis of the Preamble, explain where the government gets its power and what the six goals and purposes of government are according to the Preamble.

Extension Suggestion: Divide the class into eight groups. Assign each group a section of the Preamble:

1. We the People of the United States,
2. in Order to form a more perfect Union,
3. establish Justice,
4. insure domestic Tranquility,
5. provide for the common defence,
6. promote the general Welfare, and
7. secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity,
8. do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America

Instruct each group to create a visual representation of their section of the Preamble. Display each visual, in order, in the classroom.

The Preamble of the U.S. Constitution

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, 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.

1. union		6. defense	
2. justice		7. welfare	
3. insure		8. posterity	
4. domestic		9. ordain	
5. tranquility			

Goals and Purposes						

Sources

Text image of the U.S. Constitution from the National Constitution Center:

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=9#>

Constitution Preamble from Schoolhouse Rock video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_NzZvdsbWI or

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30OyU4O80i4>

Additional Preamble Content adapted from:

[https://kids.kiddle.co/Preamble to the United States Constitution](https://kids.kiddle.co/Preamble%20to%20the%20United%20States%20Constitution), Accessed April July 2020

The SLAP Strategy: <http://lareading.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/slap.pdf>, Accessed July 2020

The Preamble of the U.S. Constitution – Sample Answers

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, 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.

1. union	something formed by combining parts, such as states into one country	6. defense	defense, method of protecting oneself
2. justice	a system of establishing what is legal and illegal by fair rules	7. welfare	well-being
3. insure	ensure, to make sure	8. posterity	future generations
4. domestic	referring to something at home, not foreign	9. ordain	to establish something by law
5. tranquility	peace		

We the People of the United States... do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Goals and Purposes	in Order to form a more perfect Union	establish Justice	insure domestic Tranquility	provide from the common defense	promote the general Welfare	secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity
	The goal and purpose of the government is to make things better for all.	The goal and purpose of government is to make a fair and honest system for all.	The goal and purpose of government is to create peace in the country.	The goal and purpose of government is to protect the country from other countries or people that might try to harm us.	The goal and purpose of government is to create a better life for all.	The goal and purpose of government is to secure liberty and freedom for current and future generations.

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Part of Speech	Definition
defense	noun	method of protecting oneself
domestic	adjective	referring to something at home, not foreign
insure	verb	ensure, to make sure
justice	noun	a system of establishing what is legal and illegal by fair rules
ordain	verb	to establish something by law
posterity	noun	future generations
Preamble	proper noun	the introduction to the U.S. Constitution
tranquility	noun	peace
union	noun	something formed by combining parts, such as states into one country
welfare	noun	well-being

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

This section addresses the following issues:

1. What is the purpose of the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution?
2. Dissecting the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution.

1. What is the purpose of the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution?

The Preamble of the U.S. Constitution provides information as to why the U.S. Constitution was being written; it does not form or specify any power of government. The U.S. Constitution was written in order to take the goals of government and create a workable structure reflecting the goals of government outlined in the Preamble.

2. Dissecting the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution

The matrix that follows takes each phrase in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution and clarifies its deeper meaning. The clarifications explain how the Preamble establishes the goals and purposes of government.

Phrase	Deeper Meaning	Modern Application or Example
we the people	The people grant the powers to the government in this clause. The creators of the U.S. government were, by definition, an elite group that understood that they were creating a nation where the majority of the population were not elites, but common people. This majority's approval was necessary; one way to gain their approval was to confirm that the people were forming the government, and it was not being handed down by a god or a king.	In elections, the people decide who will govern. One of the results of the Progressive Movement (1890s-1920s) was the direct election of U.S. Senators who had been elected by state legislatures up to the ratification of the 17 th Amendment.
form a more perfect union	The U.S. Constitution was intended to improve on the Articles of Confederation, the government in place at the time. The Articles of Confederation had worked well to a point, and was the best that the colonists could come up with when the Articles were created. The Framers understood that the Constitution would not be "perfect", but "more perfect".	Amendment process in the Constitution allows for change in order to respond to issues that emerge such as concerns about presidential abuse of power reflected in term limits.
establish justice	The purpose of establishing justice is to maintain public order. Maintaining public order requires that the government follows the rule of law and treats the law as supreme. After the experiences of the people as colonists and new Americans, they wanted a level playing field where courts were established with uniformity and would treat the people with fair and equal treatment.	The Bill of Rights extends protections to persons accused of crimes. Even though the nature of these crimes is unpopular and may be especially heinous, the Bill of Rights guarantees to all citizens a level playing field when they are brought to trial.

Phrase	Deeper Meaning	Modern Application or Example
insure domestic tranquility	The purpose of insuring domestic tranquility was to protect citizens from internal conflict. Internal conflict creates instability. Avoiding instability, such as Shays’s Rebellion (1786-1787) was needed in order for a new nation to take hold.	The president and governors may call in the National Guard to address concerns that may or have resulted in violence in a state or area. For example, the National Guard was called in to maintain order in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and to New York and New Jersey after Superstorm Sandy in 2012.
provide for the common defense	The purpose of this phrase is to present the goal of protecting citizens from external attacks, which was a problem under the Articles of Confederation. No one state was really capable of fending off an attack from land or sea on its own so the states needed each other to survive attacks, especially from Britain or Spain, or by Native Americans.	The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were deemed by the federal government to be a terrorist attack on the nation even though New York City and Washington, DC were the prime targets of the attacks. As a federal concern, the federal government took action on behalf of victims.
promote the general welfare	Government focuses on the “public interest” which allows every state and citizen to benefit from what the government could provide. The point of having tranquility, justice, and defense was to promote the general welfare which reinforces the concept of “we the people”.	Public policies focusing on environmental protection promote the public interest.
secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity	The “public interest” is intended to work to the people’s benefit and not to their detriment for now and forever. In essence, the U.S. would resemble a paradise for liberty.	There are occasions when First Amendment protections are offensive to some; however, in protecting free speech rights for some, free speech rights for all are protected. However, free speech exercises may not violate the public interest because they would compromise the people’s benefit.
do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America	This phrase finishes the “we the people” approach by giving the document a name, naming the nation and summarizing the Preamble. There is a higher order involved here which is “the people”. The Constitution replaces the Articles of Confederation (“establish”) and creates one national government.	Since the U.S. Constitution was ratified, every state that has entered the union has also adopted a constitution.