



Lesson plan: Constitution Day — Civic empowerment and active citizenship

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/classroom/lesson-plans/2022/09/lesson-plan-constitution-day-civic-empowerment-and-active-citizenship>

Overview

Constitution Day commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787. In this lesson, students will hear from constitutional scholars and see an excerpt of the Broadway play “What the Constitution Means to Me.” Students will assess the importance of the U.S. Constitution and the necessity of learning about the document and our constitutional system. Students will also have the opportunity to propose their own amendments to the Constitution.

Subjects: U.S. Government, U.S. History

Estimated time: One 50-minute class

Grade level: 6-12

Objectives:

- Students will examine the importance of Constitution Day.
- Students will research why the Constitution was necessary and understand the powers and limitations of the government created by the Constitution.
- Students will analyze the existing structure of the Constitution to determine if changes to the document are necessary and then create proposals for constitutional amendments.

Warm-up activities:

1. Think, write and share with a partner. Have students write a response to at least one of their partner's thoughts. You can use page 1 of the [Google Doc](#) worksheet for responses. *(Let participants know they'll need to make a copy of the document, so they can add their names, and input their answers. See top left of the screen → Go to File → Make Copy)*
2. **Ask students:**
 - Why do you think the federal government passed a law in 2004 requiring public schools and government offices to provide information on the U.S. Constitution on Constitution Day?
 - Do you think the Constitution Day law was necessary or unnecessary? Explain your answer.

Main activities:

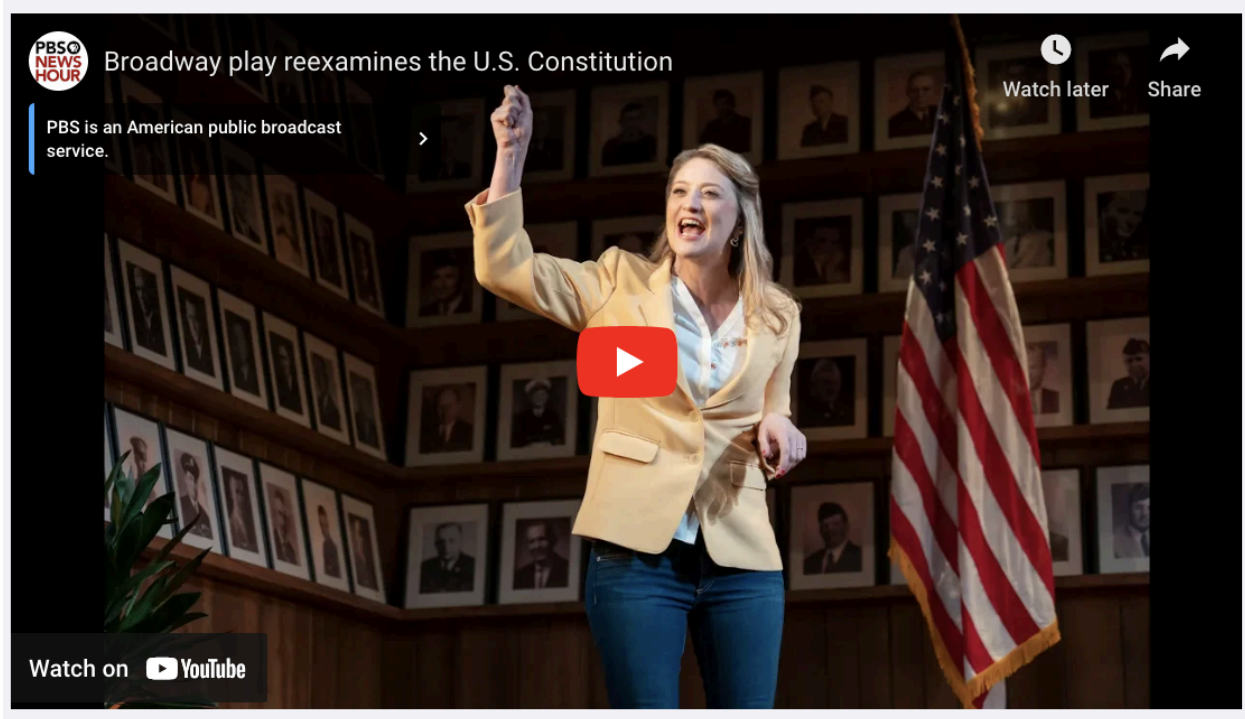
Activity #1

Have your students watch the video clips and answer the questions below. You can use page 2 of the [Google Doc](#) worksheet for responses. *(Let your students know they'll need to make a copy of the document, so they can add their names, and input their answers. (See top left of the screen → Go to File → Make Copy)*
[The Big Bang Theory](#) (Constitution USA with Peter Sagal, 4 min)

Activity #2

Using page 3 of the [Google Doc](#), *(Let your students know they'll need to make a copy of the document, so they can add their names, and input their answers. (See top left of the screen → Go to File → Make Copy)* have your students answer the prompts provided. Ask for a few volunteers to share their answers to the prompts. See how many students in your class would be open to making changes to the Constitution and how many students would be opposed to making changes. After students have shared their answers to the prompt, play the video link provided for Activity #2.

Activity #2 video - [Broadway play reexamines the U.S. Constitution](#) (Clip from PBS NewsHour - 4/13/19)



Activity #3 (time permitting): Constitutional Convention 2021

Place students in small groups (3-5 students recommended) and have them create 3 proposals for constitutional amendments. Using page 4 of the [Google Doc](#), *(Let your students know they'll need to make a copy of the document, so they can add their names, and input their answers. (See top left of the screen → Go to File → Make Copy)* Groups should create 3 proposals for constitutional amendments. Groups should consider who would favor and who would oppose their proposed amendments. Groups should share their proposals with the class. Students may want to consult the Constitution as they participate in this activity. Here is a link to the [National Constitution Center's Interactive Constitution](#).

Standards:

SS.8.C.1.1 - Recognize the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of United States citizens.

SS.8.C.1.3 - Explain how limitations on government (popular sovereignty, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and individual rights) are protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

SS.8.C.3.1 - Explain the intent, purpose, and function of the Bill of Rights as well as the differences between unalienable rights and privileges.

SS.8.C.4.1 - Analyze the structure, functions, and processes of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the United States government.

About the author



Ryan Werenka has taught Social Studies at Troy High School in Troy, Michigan, for over twenty years. Ryan teaches AP U.S. Government and Politics, AP Comparative Government and Politics, and Government and Civics. Ryan has a Bachelor's Degree in History and Social Sciences from Western Michigan University and a Master's Degree in the Art of Teaching from Marygrove College.

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