



We the People

9_A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

What Have We Already Learned?

5 minutes

Ask students how much they know about the U.S. government. Students who have previously participated in the Core Knowledge Language Arts program will have already learned about some key presidents and American symbols, and will have heard about the beginning of the United States. If some students in your class are unfamiliar with any facts about the U.S. government, you may wish to prompt discussion by asking the following questions:

- Who is the leader of our country? (the president)
- Where does the U.S. president live? (the White House, in Washington, D.C.)
- The United States is not a kingdom but a . . . ? (democracy) If a country has a democracy, that means it is a country ruled by the people.
- What official document was written to declare independence from the King of England? (the Declaration of Independence)
- What do we mean when we say the “Founding Fathers”? What did they write? Hint: It was a plan for how the new country of the United States should be run. (The Founding Fathers were the leaders from each state who helped write the Constitution.)

Tell students that today they are going to learn more about the U.S. Constitution, what it does, and who did the most to write it.



U.S. Constitution

← **Show image 9A-1 (Cover image on the right side)**

1. Today's read-aloud is about the importance of the *U.S. Constitution* and what the *Constitution* does.
2. Say the name *U.S. Constitution* with me three times.
3. A constitution is a document, or paper, that states the laws of a country and explains how its government works. The constitution for the United States is called the U.S. Constitution.
4. The U.S. Constitution was written by the Founding Fathers over two hundred years ago. It begins with the phrase "We the People." [Point to the phrase on the image.]
5. Why do you think it is important for a country to have a constitution? Why do you think the U.S. Constitution begins with the phrase "We the People"? (A country needs a basic plan and some laws. "We the People" shows that most of the power in the government is with the people.)

Bill of Rights

1. In today's read-aloud you will hear about a part of the U.S. Constitution called the *Bill of Rights*.
2. Say the name *Bill of Rights* with me three times.
3. The Bill of Rights is a document added to the original Constitution, but is part of the Constitution. The Bill of Rights includes the first ten amendments, or changes, to the Constitution.
4. The Bill of Rights protects the rights of Americans, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion.
5. [Give students Instructional Master 9A-1 (Rights and Responsibilities T-Chart).] We can fill in two things under the column for "Rights." With your partner, think of an example of freedom of speech and an example of freedom of religion.

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen carefully to learn more about the Constitution, one of the people who helped write it, and why it is so important to the citizens of the United States.



- 1 [Point to the Constitution on the left. The image on the right is the Declaration of Independence. Mention that the Constitution was written after the Declaration of Independence.]
- 2 Today these two important documents are located at the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. [Point to Washington, D.C. on a U.S. map.]



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← Show image 9A-1: The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

The Constitution and **the Bill of Rights** are two of the most important documents in U.S. history.¹ A constitution is a document that describes the basic plan for the laws and government of a country. It explains the main laws of a country and how its government works. That means that the U.S. Constitution states the basic laws of the United States and explains how the U.S. government works.²

← Show image 9A-2: James Madison

One of the men who helped write the U.S. Constitution was James Madison. A small, quiet man, James Madison was born in 1751 in Virginia. He did not enjoy crowds, nor did he enjoy speaking to them. When he did, he had such a soft voice that listeners had to lean closer in order to hear Madison's words. Yet, many people took the trouble to do so, because they thought Madison's words were worth hearing. He was well-known for having great ideas and making the most confusing problems clear.



← Show image 9A-3: Continental Congress

Often at the end of a conversation, this polite, quiet man would inspire people to think seriously about his important ideas. That is what happened when leaders of the new nation called the United States of America met in 1787 to decide what sort of government they wanted to form.³ The leaders came from all parts of the country, and had all sorts of ideas. In the end, however, Madison's ideas had the greatest influence, or effect, in shaping the organization of the new American government. For example, Madison's idea of having three branches, or sections, of government—a president, a Congress, and a Supreme Court—

- 3 This was just a few years after the colonists declared their independence from England in 1776.

is very important today. Together these three branches in the American government balance each other's power so that no one branch can be too powerful and make all of the nation's decisions. When it was time to write down what they had agreed upon, Madison did more than anyone else to write the Constitution of the United States.



← **Show image 9A-4: Madison working on the Bill of Rights**

James Madison's job was not done after the Constitution was written. In 1789, Madison helped write an extra part to add to the Constitution, called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten **amendments** to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights protects the rights of Americans, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion.⁴ Over the years, as the United States changes, Americans have found that the Constitution needs to change a little bit, too. To do this, Americans add amendments, which are changes or additions to the Constitution. The amendments are believed to make the Constitution better for the lives of the American people.

4 Do you remember how the Separatists were persecuted in their homeland for having a religion different from the king? The U.S. Constitution protects the rights of American citizens to practice their own religion.



← **Show image 9A-5: Madison as president**

James Madison's fine work in developing the U.S. Constitution earned him the nickname the "Father of the Constitution." Later, James Madison was elected to serve as the fourth president of the United States. Today, hundreds of years later, America's government and laws are based on what Madison and his fellow Founding Fathers created. The U.S. Constitution is the highest law of the land, so no one and no state is allowed to pass a law that goes against the Constitution's principles.⁵

5 Who remembers what principles are?



← **Show image 9A-6: Close-up of "We the People"**

But what does the Constitution say? Well, right from the start the authors made a bold⁶ statement. The Constitution begins with a very famous introduction, called the Preamble.⁷ It starts, "We the People of the United States . . ." This means that the greatest power behind the American government is the American

6 or brave

7 [Have students repeat the word *preamble* after you.] A preamble is an introduction or opening.

8 If I ask to borrow your book, and you say, “yes,” then you are giving me consent, or approval, to borrow your book. Who gives consent and is the greatest power behind the American government?



← **Show image 9A-7: White House, Capitol building, Supreme Court, fighter jet**

The Preamble, or introduction to the Constitution, tells us that American laws, or rules, must protect the liberties, or freedoms, of *all* citizens, not just some. And the laws are meant to protect the liberties or freedoms for Americans now and in the future. The Preamble also says that the federal government will include an army, navy, and other military forces to protect Americans from enemies.⁹

9 What are some things the Preamble tells us? How does the Constitution affect you?

10 [As you read the next sentence, point to the following images for the following references: the image of the White House for the office of the president, the image of the Capitol building for the Congress, and the image of the Supreme Court building for the Supreme Court.]

The rest of the Constitution goes on to describe the different things the government is supposed to do. The government makes laws and carries them out. It solves problems. And the government protects Americans from certain dangers.¹⁰ The Constitution created the office of the President of the United States. The Constitution created the Congress, which makes and passes the law. And the Constitution created the Supreme Court, which are made up of judges who decide whether the laws follow the principles of the Constitution.¹¹

11 What does the Constitution go on to say after the Preamble? (It describes the three branches of the U.S. government.)

12 Why do you think it would be difficult to plan for problems that do not yet exist?



← **Show image 9A-8: Madison and other Founding Fathers**

The writers of the Constitution did an amazing job of creating a form of government that would not only help solve the problems of their own time, but would also help solve all sorts of problems they thought might come along later.¹²

Today, “We the People of the United States” have a Congress made up of people from every state. Congress is where laws are made. We have a president to carry out those laws. And we have courts to help us settle **disagreements**¹³ and keep the peace.

13 or arguments

These parts of the government were created over two hundred years ago; they were based on the ideas of James Madison and other Founding Fathers who wrote the U.S. Constitution.

As time goes on and our country grows, bringing new problems and wonderful new opportunities, new laws are being added to deal with problems and to protect the people. Whenever a new law is added, it is our job—our responsibility—to follow the new law or to speak out if we feel that the law does not agree with the principles in the Constitution.

Although the Constitution was written over two hundred years ago, it still tells us how our government is supposed to work, even today.

Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes



Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

← Show image 9A-6: Close-up of “We the People”

1. *Literal* What important document begins with the words “We the People”? (the Preamble to the Constitution)
2. *Inferential* Why is the Constitution so important to the citizens of the United States? (It lays the foundation for the laws and government of the United States.)



← Show image 9A-5: Madison as President

3. *Literal* Who was nicknamed the “Father of the Constitution”? (James Madison) Why? (because he helped to write a great deal of the U.S. Constitution) What other title did Madison have? (President of the United States)
4. *Evaluative* Why are the words “We the People” in the Preamble so important and remembered by U.S. citizens? (Those words are important because they let everyone know that American citizens are the greatest power behind the American government.)

5. *Inferential* What are some things the Preamble and the Constitution say? (The people want the Constitution to make the nation run fairly for everyone. American laws must protect the liberties, or freedoms, of all the people. The people can use the government to make laws and carry them out, to settle arguments among Americans, to protect Americans from certain dangers, etc.)
6. *Inferential* What is the Bill of Rights? (The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It protects the rights of the American people, including freedom of speech and freedom of religion.) Who have you heard about in this domain who immigrated to this country and benefited from these rights? (Answers may vary, but may include the Pilgrims who were looking for the freedom to practice their religion and Charles Steinmetz who valued freedom of speech.)
7. *Evaluative* What are some adjectives you might use to describe the people who wrote the Constitution of the United States? (Answers may vary.)
8. *Evaluative* How is the U.S. Constitution important to you? (Answers may vary.)

[Please continue to model the *Question? Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

9. *Evaluative What? Pair Share:* Asking questions after a read-aloud is one way to see how much everyone has learned. Think of a question you can ask your neighbor about the read-aloud that starts with the word *what*. For example, you could ask, “What did you learn about in today’s read-aloud?” Turn to your neighbor and ask your *what* question. Listen to your neighbor’s response. Then your neighbor will ask a new *what* question, and you will get a chance to respond. I will call on several of you to share your questions with the class.
10. After hearing today’s read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

Word Work: Disagreements

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “[We] have a Congress (. . .) where laws are made. We have a president to carry out those laws. And we have courts to help us settle disagreements.”
2. Say the word *disagreements* with me.
3. Disagreements are arguments or differences of opinion.
4. Sometimes Gabriella and her brother have disagreements, but they talk and work things out.
5. Have you ever had any disagreements with anyone? Who did you have disagreements with? What did you disagree about? Try to use the word *disagreements* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “_____ and I had many disagreements about . . . ”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about?

Use a *Word Parts* activity for follow-up. Write the words *agreements* and *disagreements* on a piece of chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard. Ask students what they notice about the words. Prompt them to see that the word *disagreements* has the prefix *dis-*. Tell the students that the prefix *dis-* is often added to the beginning of a word to mean the *opposite of* or *not*. For example, disagreements are the opposite of agreements. Directions: I will say several words with the prefix *dis-*. Listen carefully to the word that you hear after the prefix *dis-* to help you discover the meaning of the word. For example, if I say, “disagreeable,” then you would say, “That means not agreeable.”

1. disrespecting (That means not respecting.)
2. disorder (That means not in order.)
3. dissatisfied (That means not satisfied.)
4. disliked (That means not liked.)
5. disorganized (That means not organized.)



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



We the People

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Note: Extensions may have activity options that exceed the time allocated for this part of the lesson. To remain within the time periods allocated for this portion of the lesson, you will need to make conscious choices about which activities to include based on the needs of your students.

Extensions

20 minutes

Classroom Constitution (Instructional Master 9B-1)

20 minutes

- Remind students that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are the two most important documents in the United States government. The Constitution is the highest law of our land.
- Ask students: “What might the constitution of our classroom be?” (classroom rules)
- Remind students of the rules in their classroom. Tell students that the rules in their classroom are like laws, and all of these rules together make up the classroom’s constitution. Read the classroom rules together with the class. Using a large piece of chart paper, have your students repeat the classroom rules as you write them down. Then label the document “Classroom Constitution.”
- Tell students that as citizens of the classroom they have the power to change how the classroom is run. Explain that students will have the opportunity to make amendments, or changes, to the “Classroom Constitution” in small groups.
- Each small group should choose a scribe to write down their amendments. As students think of amendments, encourage them to consider and discuss with their group the following questions:
 - Will they be able to follow the rules?
 - Is this rule fair?
 - Will this rule benefit everyone in the class?

- After the small groups have written down their amendments, they should choose a representative to present the proposed changes to the “Classroom Constitution.”
- Lead the students in a vote to see whether the amendment will pass. Share with students that, in the U.S. Constitution, amendments are very rare—only twenty-seven have been added since the Constitution was first approved more than two hundred years ago.
- After the class has voted on the amendments, add the amendments that passed to the “Classroom Constitution.” Tell students that they just made these changes by voting and that this is called “the consent of the governed.” Ask if everyone is in favor of these rules as a “Classroom Constitution.” If students are in favor of the rules, have them all sign the “Classroom Constitution.”

Domain-Related Trade Book

20 minutes

- Refer to the list of recommended trade books in the Introduction at the front of this *Supplemental Guide*, and choose one trade book about James Madison, the U.S. Constitution, or the Bill of Rights to read aloud to the class. [Suggested trade books include Items 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 36, and 38.]
- Explain to students that the person who wrote the book is called the author. Tell students the name of the author. Explain to students that the person who makes the pictures for the book is called an illustrator. Tell students the name of the illustrator. Show students where they can find this information on the cover of the book or on the title page.
- As you read, use the same strategies that you have been using when reading the read-aloud selections—pause and ask occasional questions; rapidly clarify critical vocabulary within the context of the read-aloud; etc.
- After you finish reading the trade book aloud, lead students in a discussion as to how the story or information in this book relates to the read-alouds in this domain.

- Provide students with drawing paper, drawing tools, and writing tools. Have students draw one detail or idea from the trade book that is new or different from the read-aloud they heard. Then have students write two or three sentences to go along with their drawing. Have students share their drawing and writing with their partner or home-language peers.