

Lesson 1: Why Do We Have Government?

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- There would be many serious consequences if schools, communities, and our country tried to function without government and rules or laws.
- People institute governments for many reasons such as safety, promoting the common good, and protecting individual rights
- The Constitution describes how the government is organized.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson students examine the reasons people establish governments by imagining what their school, local community, and country would be like without government or rules/laws. Students then use the Preamble to the Constitution to explore the concept of popular sovereignty and the purposes of government. Using the principle of popular sovereignty, students then create a preamble and a classroom constitution based on the rules they think will be important for establishing a high quality learning environment for the school year. Finally, students ponder how popular sovereignty and the rule of law limit the power of the government.

Content Expectations

- 4 - C1.0.2: Explain probable consequences of an absence of government and of rules and laws.
- 4 - C2.0.1: Explain how the principles of popular sovereignty, rule of law, checks and balances, separation of powers, and individual rights (e.g., freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of press) serve to limit the powers of the federal government as reflected in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

- RI.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- RI.5.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.
- SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- c. Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.
- d. Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

Key Concepts

constitution
government
limited government
popular sovereignty
purposes of government
rule of law

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Chart paper

Computer with Projector, Document Camera with Projector, or Overhead Projector

Markers

Materials to create a Social Studies Learning Log for each student (This could be spiral notebook or a folder with pockets and brads for lined paper.)

Teacher Resource

The Constitution. U.S. Constitution.net. 6 March 2011. 27 August 2012
<<http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html>>.

Hart, Rachel. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)*. Teacher-made material. Oakland Schools, 2012.

The Preamble. School House Rock. TeacherTube. 27 August 2012
<http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=197680>.

Lesson Sequence

1. Begin this lesson by having students create a Social Studies Learning Log. The Learning Log will be used throughout the units as a way for students to organize word cards, big idea cards, graphic organizers, and their written responses during lessons. One option is to use folders with pockets and brads for holding lined paper. The pockets can be used for the supplemental resources such as word cards. Paper can be placed in the center section to be used for writing.
2. Display the word “Government” for all the students to see. Have students turn and discuss with a partner everything they can remember about our Federal Government from fourth grade. After a few minutes, display Word Card #1 - “government” and have students share their prior

knowledge about government. Then ask the students, “So what if there was no government, then what would life be like?”

3. Next divide students into groups of three or four students each. Make copies and distribute the Small Group Activity Sheet, “Life Without Government, Rule or Laws,” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)* to each group. In their groups, have students discuss what life would be like in their school, community, and country without government or rules or laws. Ask them to think about what problems they think would be likely to occur. Have them record their ideas on the Group Activity Sheet. It may be helpful to provide students with an example such as the following: If school had no rules people could talk whenever they wanted. Explain to the class that if there were no restrictions on talking in class, people who want to talk would benefit, but other students who want to learn may be disturbed by such behavior. This would no doubt create problems. Allow students time to complete the group activity and then have them share their ideas with the entire class.
4. Next, guide students to understand that together they have the task of creating rules for their classroom. Display Word Card #2 on “popular sovereignty” and connect the idea of popular sovereignty to the students’ role in creating rules for their own classroom. Help them understand that they will have the power to determine what rules will become part of the Classroom Constitution. Next, display Word Card #3 “Constitution” and explain that their Classroom Constitution will be similar to the U.S. Constitution in that it will describe the rules and organization of the classroom.
5. Explain to students that their constitution, like the U.S. Constitution will have a Preamble. Display Word Card #4 “Preamble” and guide the students to understand that the Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution and describes the purposes of government. Next, if possible, have students view the Preamble video from School House Rock located on You Tube at <http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=197680>. Sometimes it is beneficial to show the video twice, first for enjoyment, and then in order to synthesize important ideas from the video. Have students talk to a partner about the Preamble and then share their thoughts with the entire class.
6. Next, display the section of the “The Constitution” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)* and read the Preamble out loud to students using the copy of the Preamble located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)*. Point out the first three words of the Preamble and ask students to read the words out loud. Use the following questions to discuss the first three words:
 - Why do you think these three words are written in such large letters?
 - What do you think these words mean?

Discuss how the words “We the People” mean that the power to govern belongs to the people who have created the government. Next, discuss any challenging vocabulary within the Preamble, such as domestic tranquility, common defense, posterity, and ordain by having students practice dictionary skills and sharing the definitions with the entire class. Note that you may find it helpful to give each student a copy of the Preamble. Remind students that in fourth grade they did an activity in which they interpreted the different sections of the Preamble.

7. Divide students into small groups and distribute copies of “*The Preamble to the Constitution*” worksheet found in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)*. Have students work together to write a Preamble by replicating the format of the actual Preamble to the Constitution. Have students share their Preambles and together write a Classroom Preamble by combining their ideas. Encourage them to determine together what principles are important in the classroom; such as common good, kindness, respect, equality, etc. After a draft of the Classroom Preamble has been written, select a student to write a final copy at the top of a piece of new chart paper.
8. Ask students to think about their classroom and school and to ponder what individual rights they feel need to be protected in order to “form a more perfect” classroom. Have students recall rules from previous classrooms and think of how those rules protected their rights at school. For example, every learner has the right to have their voice heard; therefore students should take turns and raise their hands. Distribute the “*Classroom Rights and Rules*” worksheet located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)*. Have students return to their small groups and together explore the connection between learner rights and rules in the classroom by brainstorming together and filling out the worksheet. Guide students in writing rules in positive language; instead of saying “No blurting out” show them how to state the correct behavior as a rule such as, “Raise your hand.” When done, have the students share their ideas about important rights and rules with the entire class. Write all possible rules on chart paper eliminating repeats and adding in any rules the teacher feels are also important.
9. Next, guide the students in a whole class discussion to choose five rules from what they created from the “Learner Rights and Rules” worksheets. Help them understand that the rules they choose are rules that they think will be most important to all students in order to support the principles from their Preamble. Rewrite the five most important rules on a new sheet of chart paper. Explain that there must be a 2/3 majority for the rules to become law. Have students calculate how many students of the total class must approve the five rules in order to have them become part of their Constitution. Have students vote on the rules by each student calling “yeah” or “nay” and record the results. If it is not 2/3 majority, ask the students that voted “nay” what their reasoning was for voting “nay”. Model to the students thoughtful compromise and then re-vote until 2/3 majority is reached.
10. After the rules have been “ratified” by 2/3 majority, select a student to write these five rules onto the chart paper below the Classroom Preamble. Refer to the sample “*Classroom Constitution*” found in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)*.
11. Once the Classroom Constitution is written, review the concept of “rule of law” by displaying the Word Card #6 for all students. Explain that rule of law means everybody, including government officials (the teacher), must obey the laws. Have the students acknowledge their agreement to their classroom rules by tracing their handprint and signing their names inside their handprint. Display the Classroom Constitution in the class throughout the year. This constitution can be referred to during later lessons, classroom meetings, or when issues regarding behavior may occur.

12. Finally, have a discussion about how popular sovereignty and rule of law limit the power of the government. Explain that everyone had the power to create the rules (popular sovereignty) and that all must follow the rules (rule of law) so that no one has absolute power or is allowed to act however they choose. Ask them if they preferred the way the classroom rules were chosen or if they would want the teacher to create the rules alone. Have students support their answers with reasoning. Then have them reflect on how they felt about their role in creating the Preamble and Classroom Constitution by writing a short reflection in their Learning Log.
13. Have students add the Word Cards, the Big Idea cards, and the graphic organizer from this lesson to their Learning Log.

Assessment

An Assessment in the form of an Exit Slip has been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 1)*. This assessment requires students to answer three important questions relating to lesson content. Note that a sheet showing sample answers has also been included.