

Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our third unit of study, “The U.S. Constitution: Then and Now.”

In this unit, students will discover how one of the nation’s most important documents has been shaping our lives for hundreds of years. They will discover how the Constitution continues to change to expand and protect the voting rights and civil rights of Americans, regardless of race or gender. The selections include a variety of genres, including informational text, speeches, historical fiction, and biographies. Understanding the way our government can influence the way we live will help students become responsible citizens. I hope the topic and suggested activities will spark some lively discussions at home.

I’m excited to begin our third unit in the Benchmark Advance program. As with the previous units, I am providing suggested activities you and your child can do together at home to build on the work we’re doing in class.

As always, should you have any questions about our reading program or about your child’s progress, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

The U.S. Constitution: Then and Now

In this unit, we read about the U.S. Constitution and how it has changed over the years to accommodate the changing nation and its citizens. We think in depth about the question “How do laws continue to evolve?” Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation about the Constitution and its amendments, and to build on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. Hopefully you’ll even have some fun, too, as you work together!

Topic Connection

Make an Amendment

Students are learning that the U.S. Constitution included amendments that allowed changes to the nation’s laws. Many of these amendments were enacted in order to specify specific rights that citizens were entitled to. Work with your child to think of an amendment that he or she would like to pass. The idea can be a law that is currently being considered, or an original idea that your child feels strongly about. Have your child put together a poster or pamphlet to let others know about his or her idea.

Vocabulary Connection

Speech! Speech!

Your child is learning new words related to government and the Constitution. Work on a speech together that you think could be given by a politician today. Include the following words in the speech: **compromise, denial, inevitable, legislation, tensions,** and **tolerated**. If possible, record your child giving the speech and watch it together as you play it back.

Comprehension Connection

Exercising Your Rights

In this unit, students are learning about civil rights protesters as well as those who fought for the right for women to vote. Research print and online sources with your child to find examples of ways that people are fighting for civil rights today. Have your child write a short paragraph about the struggle, including any background information about how the struggle began or how lawmakers or politicians are reacting to it.

Word Study Connections

Legislation Nation

Help your child gain a deeper focus on the word *legislation* and discuss how it helps United States citizens. Make a concept web with the word *legislation* in the center oval, and include five smaller ovals that extend out from the center. Ask your child to fill in those ovals with examples of ways a specific state or federal legislation helps citizens. They may choose new legislation, such as the ban of smoking in public restaurants. Or, they may choose legislation that has existed for many years, such as the voting rights for women or African Americans.