

Unit 4: Building a Constitution
5th Grade Humanities
35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Essential Questions

- Why was the Constitution created, and what problems was it trying to solve?
- How does the Constitution balance power and protect people's rights?
- How can individuals and groups influence government and create change?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

- EU 1:** The Constitution as a balanced system of government
- Analyze problems with the Articles of Confederation and why change was needed.
 - Explain how the Constitution reflects key principles like separation of powers and federalism.
 - Develop claims about why compromise was necessary in forming the Constitution.
- EU 2:** The Constitution reflects core democratic ideals
- Examine how the Preamble expresses the goals and values of the United States.
 - Identify laws and structures that expanded or limited rights
 - Evaluate how different groups experienced rights and freedoms differently.
- EU 3:** Civic participation allows individuals and groups to influence government.
- Explain how people influenced laws and government from the Revolutionary Era to today.
 - Analyze multiple perspectives on civic issues and explain why viewpoints differ.
 - Construct arguments about how citizens can address problems in their communities.

Standards

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

5.Civ.3.a.: Examine the origins and purpose of key provisions of the United States Constitution (e.g., checks and balances, limited government, popular sovereignty, republicanism, separations of powers, federalism).

5.Civ.4.b.: Explain how rules were established at the end of the American Revolution by identifying laws that promoted and limited personal liberties (e.g., citizenship, property, suffrage).

5.Civ.5.a.: Explain the role of the Constitution in establishing a system of government in the United States (e.g., federalism, separation of power, states' rights).

5.Civ.10.a.: Identify how the political beliefs are represented in the Preamble of the United States Constitution.

5.Civ.14.a.: Illustrate how individuals and groups in the Revolutionary Era and today have and can effect change (e.g., school, community, and state issues).

5.Civ.10.b.: Identify the contributing factors that underlie multiple and varied points of view about school, community, and civic issues.

5.Geo.2.a: Use maps to explain the relationship between the location of the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies, and the environmental characteristics of each region (e.g., New Amsterdam, New France, Jamestown, Plymouth, Saint Augustine).

5.Inq.1. a.: Identify concepts, ideas, and interpretations associated with compelling and supporting questions about early United States history.

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5.Inq.1. b.: Explain how supporting questions help answer compelling questions in an inquiry about United States history.

5.Inq.1.c: Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the questions.

5.Inq.2. a.: Apply disciplinary knowledge and practices to demonstrate an understanding of United States history content.

5.Inq.3. a.: Gather relevant evidence from multiple sources about a person, event, or issue in United States history while using the origin, structure, and context to guide selection.

5.Inq.3. b.: Identify evidence responses to a compelling question while determining facts and opinions to determine the credibility of multiple sources.

5.Inq.3. c.: Use evidence to develop claims in response to a compelling question by using evidence related to early United States history.

5.Inq.4. a.: Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources about United States history.

5.Inq.4. b.: Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.

5.Inq.4. c.: Critique arguments and explanations.

5.Inq.4. d.: Present a summary of arguments and explanations about early United States history using print, oral, and digital technologies in classrooms, schools, and out-of-school contexts.

5.Inq.4. e.: Explain the challenges and opportunities, both present and past, in addressing local, regional, and global problems in United States history.

5.Inq.4. f.: Use a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to evaluate and implement strategies to address problems in classrooms and schools.

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.a: Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.b: Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., photograph, photosynthesis).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.c: Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.2: Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3: Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5: Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.8: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.a: Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.b: Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.c: Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.d: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.a: Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.c: Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.e: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.a: Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.b: Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.c: Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.d: Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.e: Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.5: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 5 here.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.6: With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7: Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8: Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finish work, and provide a list of sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9.a: Apply grade 5 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or a drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., how characters interact]").

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9.b: Apply grade 5 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., "Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point[s]").

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

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Unit Content Overview

1. From Revolution to Government

- Explain the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and why a stronger government was needed.
- Analyze how events after the American Revolution led to the Constitutional Convention.
- Examine the compromises (e.g., Great Compromise) that shaped the Constitution.

2. Principles of the Constitution

- Explain key principles: separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, limited government, and popular sovereignty.
- Analyze how power is divided between national and state governments.
- Examine how the Constitution creates a system that prevents abuse of power.

3. Rights, Liberties, and Limitations

- Identify rights protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
- Explain how early laws limit participation (e.g., voting rights, citizenship restrictions).
- Evaluate how different groups (women, Black Americans, Indigenous peoples) experienced these limits.
- Investigate how individuals and groups have created change historically and today.
- Analyze how different perspectives influence civic decisions.

Vocabulary and Key Terms: Constitution, Articles of Confederation, Constitutional Convention, compromise, Great Compromise, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, limited government, popular sovereignty, republic, Preamble, justice, liberty, domestic tranquility, general welfare, Bill of Rights, amendment, suffrage, citizenship, rights, responsibilities, civic participation, democracy, majority rule, minority rights, perspective, bias, credibility, primary source, secondary source, evidence, claim, reasoning, argument

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- ELA

Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

Students will be able to...

- Explain the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
 - *Why might a government with too little power struggle to succeed?*
- Describe why the Constitutional Convention was needed.
 - *What problems were the Founders trying to fix?*
- Analyze the compromises made during the creation of the Constitution.
 - *Why is compromise important when creating rules for a group?*
- Explain separation of powers and the three branches of government.
 - *Why is it important to divide power?*
- Describe checks and balances.

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- *How can one group prevent another from having too much power?*
- Explain the concept of federalism.
 - *Why might power be shared between national and state governments?*
- Analyze the idea of popular sovereignty.
 - *What does it mean for people to have power in government?*
- Explain the Preamble of the Constitution.
 - *What values are most important in a government?*
- Identify rights protected in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.
 - *Why are rights important to protect?*
- Analyze how rights were limited for certain groups.
 - *Is it fair that some groups had fewer rights? Why or why not?*
- Compare perspectives on who should have the right to vote.
 - *What factors influence people's opinions about rights?*
- Explain how different groups experienced the Constitution differently.
 - *Can one law affect people in different ways?*
- Analyze a primary source related to the Constitution.
 - *How does the source's creator influence its message?*
- Compare multiple sources about the same topic.
 - *Why might sources disagree?*
- Identify credible evidence and distinguish fact from opinion.
 - *How do we know if a source is trustworthy?*
- Develop a claim about the importance of a Constitutional principle.
 - *What evidence best supports your thinking?*
- Construct an argument using evidence from multiple sources.
 - *How does evidence strengthen an argument?*
- Critique another argument for clarity and evidence.
 - *What makes an argument convincing?*
- Explain how individuals and groups have created change.
 - *How can ordinary people influence government?*
- Identify a problem in the school or community.
 - *What makes an issue important to solve?*
- Propose a solution using democratic processes.
 - *What steps are needed to create change?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Sentence starters
- Teacher modeling
- Think-write-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals

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- Small group instruction
- Visual exemplars with teacher and student critiques
- Text and video chunking
- Spiraling back to guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

EL Differentiation Strategies

- Word Banks and Word Walls with visuals
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic Grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Academic Discourse
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework

Performance Task -- “We the People: Creating Change Through Civic Action”

- Teacher’s rubric/scoring guide

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz: Vocabulary, Principles of the Constitution, Limitations of the Constitution (EU1, EU2, and EU3)
- Listen/Interpret FIAB
- Unit Task: “We the People: Creating Change Through Civic Action”: (EU1, EU2 and EU3)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: “We the People: Creating Change Through Civic Action”

Description: Students will identify a real-world issue (school, community, or historical) and create a civic action project. Students will develop a compelling question based on a real-world issue, research using multiple sources, and analyze different perspectives. They will then construct a claim with evidence and propose a solution or action plan. Finally, students will present their ideas through a podcast, speech, or digital presentation

Evaluation: Teacher’s Scoring Guide

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Unit Resources
● Google Classroom ● NewsEla ● Readworks ● PBS Learning Media ● Library of Congress ● National Constitution Center – Constitution 101 Resources ● National Archives – Constitution of the United States ● Bill of Rights Institute – Founding Documents Resources ● Library of Congress Primary Source Sets ● Civics Renewal Network ● National Geographic Education Maps and Colonies Resources