

Tennessee Secretary of State

Blue Book Lesson Plans

Principles of the U.S. Constitution

Author: Lucinda Shaddock Bellamy, John Adams Elementary School

Grade Level: 4th grade

Date Created: May 2015 (updated May 2018)

For additional lesson plans, click [here](#).



There are a limited number of hard copies of Blue Books available. To see about ordering a set for your classroom, please contact the Secretary of State's office at (615) 741-2819 or one of your local legislators. The online version of the Blue Book is also available [here](#).

Introduction:

The goal of this lesson is to teach fourth graders the importance of the ratification process of the U.S. Constitution and the principles that are imbedded in the Constitution. The students will be able to identify and explain the three branches of the government and their powers, and analyze the separation of powers between the three branches. The students will also analyze the importance of the words "We the People," in the Preamble through a written opinion piece.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the Constitution of the United States?
- What was the importance of the ratification process of the U.S. Constitution?
- Explain the Preamble of the Constitution.
- Why do you believe the three words "We the People" are an important part of the Preamble? Give your opinion based on schema and facts.

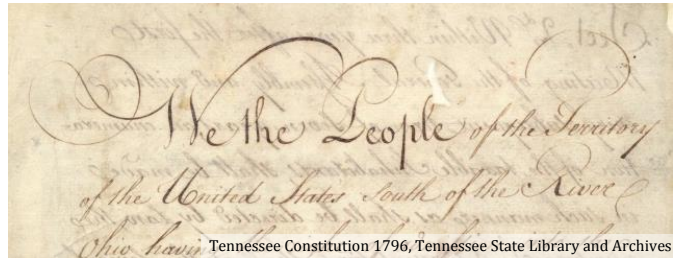
Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will...

- Examine the preamble of the U.S. Constitution, paying particular attention to the three words “We the People” and the importance of those three words in the ratification of the Constitution.
- View a copy of the Preamble and identify key information from the Preamble.
- Articulate/translate what the words in the Preamble mean.
- Write an opinion piece on why they believe the words “We the People” were so important and why there was a need for a stronger central government when the Constitution was written in 1787.
- Identify and analyze the three branches of government and how each branch works.

Curriculum Standards:

4.41- (Social Studies) Describe the principles embedded in the Constitution, including:

- purposes of government listed in the Preamble
- separation of powers
- branches of government
- checks and balances
- the amendment process
- principle of judicial review
- recognition of and protection of individual rights in the 1st Amendment



4.42- (Social Studies) Write an opinion piece with supporting detail from primary sources (Preamble/Constitution) that defends the ratification of the Constitution.

RL/RI 4.1 - Cite evidence.

W.4.1 - Write an opinion piece that has a clearly articulated point of view.

L.3.6 - Utilize academic, emotive vocabulary.

Materials Needed:

- 1) *Tennessee Blue Book* (PDF provided)
 - [pgs. 519 – 525, Preamble and the first three articles of the U.S. Constitution](#)
- 2) Book: “If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution,” Author: Elizabeth Ley

Background:

- [Brain Pop](#) (Social Studies – U.S. Government & Law - U.S. Constitution and Branches of Government)
- [National Constitution Center](#)
- [National Archives](#)
- [Library of Congress](#)

Lesson Activities:

- 1) Read the book, “If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution,” by Elizabeth Ley. Students could also read the book ahead of time as an assignment.
- 2) Response session where students will respond to the following questions:
 - What does the Constitution do?
 - What is the importance of the Constitution?
- 3) The students will observe the Preamble and the U.S. Constitution on the SMART Board downloaded from the *Tennessee Blue Book*.
- 4) The students will discuss and analyze the importance of the three words “We the People” from the Preamble.
- 5) The students will all be given a hard copy of the Preamble from the *Tennessee Blue Book* ([page 519](#)) to observe while they are writing.
- 6) The students will then write an opinion piece articulating/stating their opinion on the importance of the three words “We the People.” The students will use academic vocabulary in their opinion pieces (ratification, Constitution, Preamble, government, separation of powers, checks and balances).

Extending the Lesson:

Have students compare and contrast the preambles to the Tennessee Constitution and the U.S. Constitution. You can also incorporate analyzing primary sources. Below are links to the primary sources for both. Each link has the option to print off a transcript.

Tennessee Constitution

- *Tennessee Blue Book*, [pgs. 687-710](#)
- [Primary Source](#)

Page 3 of 4

U.S. Constitution

- *Tennessee Blue Book*, [pgs. 519-534](#)
- [Primary Source](#)

Option for extension: Invite state legislators or local elected officials to come speak to the classroom about their role in government.