

Teacher's Guide for COBBLESTONE: *Our Constitution*

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NOTE: The lesson plans for this issue are all based on the following activity: In one class period, students will create a "constitution," consisting of seven parts, for their "newly-liberated island country." Working in small groups, the students will create rules, which must answer the following questions in no more than two-three sentences.

Part 1: Each section of the island will elect representatives—how many will there be and what powers will they have?

Part 2: A leader and an assistant leader will be elected—what will their jobs be?

Part 3: Judges will make sure the laws are enforced—how will that work?

Part 4: What rights and responsibilities does each section of the island have?

Part 5: What if this document needs to be changed?

Part 6: What are some other important matters that need to be included?

Part 7: How many sections of the island need to approve this document?

Following this opening activity, give students an opportunity to take a look at the copy of the Constitution reproduced starting on page 39; discuss the fact that their one-class-period-creation of a set of rules for a country to live by no doubt provided them with just a few hints of the actual time, effort, differences of opinion, etc. which faced those creating the United States Constitution.

Then turn to "The New Nation in Trouble" (pages 2-4.) Provide students with the following study guide for making their way through this article.

1. What were two reasons for establishing some kind of unifying element for the 13 Colonies at the time of the Revolutionary War?
2. What was the set of rules established by the Second Continental Congress called?
3. What was its major recommendation?
4. Why did many delegates fear a government with a strong central authority?
5. How long did it take for ratification?
6. Briefly summarize the five weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation.
7. Explain the term "rope of sand."
8. List three effects of the depression after the Revolutionary War.

For "Three Men, Three Plans" (pages 8-10). Begin by reading aloud the introduction (page 8, ending at top of page 9). Ask students to then write three "ads," promoting the Virginia, New Jersey, and Connecticut plans for the

Constitution. The advertisements should be in some kind of a graphic form and include "quotes" from the proponents.

For "Adding Detail and Style: Composing the Constitution" (pages 12-15):
After reading through the article, ask students to choose one of the "parts" of their island country constitution they wrote earlier, and—working again with their groups—add "detail and style."

For "The Road to Ratification" (pages 20-24):
In order to break down the complicated process through which the Constitution became ratified, give students the opportunity to create a comic strip using stick figures and other simple drawings to show the various events along the way. Provide students with large sheets of paper, which will be divided into frames.

In the way of guidelines you might provide the following list of names, numbers, etc. to be included:

- Hamilton
- Federalists
- Anti-Federalists
- Patrick Henry
- Newspapers
- June 1788
- October 1787
- "Publius"
- James Madison
- John Jay
- 85, 29, 5
- "Brutus"
- "The Federal Farmer"
- January 1788
- February 1788
- June 1788
- March 4, 1789

For "Give the People What They Want" (pages 26-28):
Begin by reading aloud the last paragraph on page 27, which explains why some people objected to writing a bill of rights—and how that problem was solved. Then ask students to summarize, step-by-step, Madison's progress in working toward a bill of rights. Bonus question: How did the number evolve from 17 down to 10?

FINAL ACTIVITY: Ask students to read through "Calling the Constitution's Bluff" (page 36) and to jot down their opinions on the issues presented. The ensuing discussion could also include reflections on what kind of changes it is likely the "constitution" they created at the beginning of this unit of study would probably eventually call for.

Then turn to "Making Changes" (page 29) and ask students to choose the amendment they personally consider the most significant.