

Field Trip to Washington, D.C.

Founding Documents & Our Government: Explain why the Constitution was created and how the Bill of Rights was drafted, the purposes in the Preamble, key ideas in the founding documents, and the functions of the three branches of government.

Learning target: I can explain how the Constitution divides power among three branches and which rights the Bill of Rights protects.

Success looks like: Students use the vocabulary correctly, complete the virtual field trip, and score 80% or higher on the evidence-based exit ticket.

Materials: Student devices, the printed lesson worksheet (one per student), projector for the mini-lesson presenter.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

60 minutes

Time	Part	Teacher does	Students do
0:00-0:08	Warm-up	Project the warm-up. Circulate, then call on 2-3 students. Save question 3 for the debrief.	Answer Part 2 of the lesson worksheet; share with a partner.
0:08-0:20	Mini-lesson	Teach with the 4-step presenter. Run each quick check with the whole class.	Complete worksheet Parts 4-11 as each slide appears; answer checks with fingers.
0:20-0:48	Virtual Field Trip	Launch Field Trip to Washington, D.C.. Assign mission levels; circulate with the answer key.	Play solo or in pairs; record code pieces; complete any written evidence task.
0:48-0:52	Debrief	Ask 2 debrief questions and revisit warm-up question 3.	Finish worksheet Part 13 (prediction check + one thing learned).
0:52-1:00	Exit ticket	Hand out the exit ticket. Collect and sort with the mastery guide.	Answer with evidence independently.

Key vocabulary

Word	Student-friendly definition
Constitution	The supreme law of the United States, written in 1787.
Legislative branch	Congress (Senate and House). Makes laws.
Executive branch	The President. Carries out and enforces laws.
Judicial branch	The Supreme Court and federal courts. Interpret laws.
Checks and balances	Each branch can limit the power of the others.
Amendment	A change or addition to the Constitution. The first ten are the Bill of Rights.

1. WARM-UP

0:00–0:08 · 8 min

Warm-up expectations (post these): Answer in Part 2 of the lesson worksheet (or on this sheet). Number each answer to match the question. Answer in complete sentences. For math, show your work. Work silently for 5 minutes, then share with a partner for 2 minutes. Be ready to share one answer with the class.

#	Question	Look for
1	Why do classrooms need rules? What would happen with no rules?	Rules keep order and fairness; without them it would be chaotic or unfair.
2	Who should decide the rules: one person or a group? Why?	Answers vary; look for a reason about fairness or power.
3	Name one freedom you think every American should have.	Examples: speech, religion, press, assembly, fair trial.

2. MINI-LESSON

0:08–0:20 · 12 min

Project the Lesson presenter from the room page. It runs the whole hour: target and agenda, warm-up with timer, hook vote, 4 teaching steps (key idea, interactive tool, turn and talk, check for understanding), I do / we do / you do, a work-time screen with a timer and expectations, debrief, and the exit ticket. Press N for teacher notes, T to pause the timer, and P to pick a student.

Hook (1 min): Should one student make all the class rules, enforce them, AND judge who broke them?
Class vote: Yes, it is faster / No, it is too much power / Not sure

Step 1 (3 min): Why a Constitution?

Teach	The Articles of Confederation made a weak national government: no power to tax, no president, no national courts. In 1787, leaders wrote the Constitution in Philadelphia.
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	List one weakness of the Articles of Confederation.
Turn and talk	Why would a very weak national government be a problem? Think about money and defense.
Worksheet Part 5A	The ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION were too weak, so leaders wrote the CONSTITUTION in 1787.
Check for understanding	What was one problem with the Articles of Confederation? Answer: (A) The government could not collect taxes

Step 2 (3 min): We the People

Teach	The Preamble begins "We the People." Power comes from the people: popular sovereignty.
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Write what "We the People" means in your own words.
Turn and talk	What is the difference between a government run by "We the People" and one run by a king?
Worksheet Part 6A	The Preamble starts with "WE THE PEOPLE," meaning power comes from the PEOPLE.
Check for understanding	What does "We the People" show? Answer: (C) The government's power comes from citizens

Step 3 (3 min): Three branches

Teach	Legislative (Congress) makes laws. Executive (President) carries out laws. Judicial (courts) decides what laws mean.
Interactive tool	Flip cards: Legislative, Executive, Judicial
Students do	Draw three boxes for the branches and write each one's job.
Turn and talk	Why not let one branch do everything? It would be faster.
Worksheet Part 7A	Congress MAKES laws, the President CARRIES OUT laws, and the courts INTERPRET laws.
Check for understanding	Which branch decides whether a law follows the Constitution? Answer: (D) Judicial

Step 4 (3 min): Checks, balances, and rights

Teach	Each branch can check the others: veto, override with a 2/3 vote, courts ruling laws unconstitutional. The Bill of Rights (1791) protects freedoms like speech and religion.
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Draw one arrow showing one branch checking another. Label it.
Turn and talk	Which freedom in the Bill of Rights matters most to you at school? Why?
Worksheet Part 8A	The President can VETO a bill. Congress can override it with a 2/3 vote. The BILL OF RIGHTS protects our freedoms.
Check for understanding	Why did the Founders create checks and balances? Answer: (A) So no branch becomes too powerful

I do: worked example (shown one step at a time)

1. Three boxes: Legislative (Congress) | Executive (President) | Judicial (courts).
2. Step 1: Congress passes a bill.
3. Step 2: The President vetoes it (a check on Congress).
4. Step 3: Two-thirds of Congress votes to override (a check on the President).
5. Result: the bill becomes law anyway. No branch has all the power.

What to say on every slide is in the presenter script PDF.

We do: guided practice

The Supreme Court rules that a new law breaks the First Amendment. Which check is this, and which branch is being checked?

1. The Supreme Court is the judicial branch.
2. Congress (the legislative branch) wrote the law.
3. The courts can declare a law unconstitutional.
4. So the judicial branch is checking the legislative branch.

Answer: Judicial checks legislative

You do: independent check (2 min)

The President nominates a judge, but the Senate votes no. This shows: (A) Popular sovereignty only (B) The Articles of Confederation (C) A veto (D) Checks and balances

Answer: (D) Checks and balances. Students who miss it: 3-minute reteach at the teacher table, then start the room at the Explorer level.

Misconception: "The President is the boss of the whole government." The three branches are equal and check each other.

Misconception: "The Bill of Rights gives people rights." It protects rights people already have from government interference.

Misconception: "Freedom of speech means you can say anything anywhere with no consequences." It limits government, not every consequence.

3. VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP: FIELD TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

0:20–0:48 · 28 min

Launch: project the start screen, read the story aloud, and assign mission levels (Explorer = extra support, Agent = on level, Legend = challenge). Students can open Supports any time for read-aloud, bigger text, a word bank, and a scratch pad.

- Frame it as a real trip: "Buses leave in 1 minute!" Project the start screen and read the story together.
- Stops go in order along the route. Remind students that each stop's info card is their "tour guide," so they should read it first.
- Ask early finishers to write a postcard (3 sentences) home describing the most interesting stop.

Students turn in: the completion code plus their copied "turn in your work" block (Canvas Text Entry).

4. DEBRIEF

0:48–0:52 · 4 min

1. Why did the Founders divide power into three branches?
2. Which right in the Bill of Rights matters most to you, and why?
3. Describe one check and balance in your own words.

Close the loop: return to warm-up question 3. Answer: Examples: speech, religion, press, assembly, fair trial.

5. EXIT TICKET

0:52–1:00 · 8 min

Print the exit ticket PDF (page 2 is the key and mastery guide). Every item requires evidence: Part A asks students to justify each choice, Part B asks for an explanation, and Part C applies the standard to a new situation using Historian's Claim (Claim, Evidence, Source, Explain). Sort results into Mastered, Approaching, and Beginning to plan tomorrow's groups.

LESSON RESOURCES

Resource	How it fits the lesson
Warm-up worksheet (PDF)	Optional standalone warm-up (also Part 2 of the lesson worksheet), with a key.
Mini-lesson presenter	Projectable, step-by-step interactive lesson with tools and quick checks (room page).
Lesson worksheet (PDF + key)	One printable packet students complete during the whole lesson: short fill-ins and quick checks in 13 small parts that match the presenter slides.
Field Trip to Washington, D.C. (.html)	The virtual field trip for Canvas, with differentiated levels, supports, and a turn-in.
Exit ticket (PDF + key)	Evidence-based check with a rubric and a mastery sorting guide.
iCivics (extra)	Games like "Branches of Power" and "Do I Have a Right?" https://www.icivics.org/
Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government (extra)	Kid-friendly explanations from the Government Publishing Office. https://bensguide.gpo.gov/
National Constitution Center: Interactive Constitution (extra)	The full text with plain-language explanations. https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution
National Archives: DocsTeach (extra)	Founding documents and activities. https://www.docsteach.org/

ANSWER KEY: FIELD TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Stop 1: The National Archives (code piece: V)

1. Match each document to its purpose. -> Declaration of Independence = Explained why the colonies broke from Britain; Constitution = Set up how the government works; Bill of Rights = Protects individual freedoms
2. Put the documents in the order they were written. -> Declaration of Independence (1776) -> Constitution (1787) -> Bill of Rights (1791)
3. Tap the building where the original Constitution is kept. -> Tap National Archives

Stop 2: The U.S. Capitol (code piece: O)

1. Put the steps of how a bill becomes a law in order. -> A member of Congress introduces a bill -> A committee studies the bill -> The House and Senate both vote to pass it -> The President signs it into law
2. Which branch of government meets in the Capitol? -> Legislative
3. Tap the building where the branch that MAKES laws meets. -> Tap U.S. Capitol

Stop 3: The White House (code piece: T)

1. What is the minimum age to be President? -> 35 years old

2. Which is a job of the President? -> Commander in Chief of the military

Stop 4: The Supreme Court (code piece: E)

1. What did the Supreme Court decide in Tinker v. Des Moines? -> Students keep their freedom of speech at school

2. What does "Equal Justice Under Law" mean? -> Everyone should be treated the same by the law

3. Which amendment protected the students in the Tinker case? -> 1st Amendment

4. Tap the building of the branch that INTERPRETS laws. -> Tap Supreme Court

Stop 5: Your Role as a Citizen (code piece: R)

1. Sort each item. -> Right: Freedom of speech, Practicing your religion, A fair trial | Responsibility: Serving on a jury, Obeying laws, Paying taxes

2. At what age can U.S. citizens vote? -> 18

Final code: VOTER