

## **Exploring the U.S. Constitution -- Online**

**Objectives:** In this lesson we will:

- Study and discuss some interesting points about the US Constitution
- Practice using the Internet to access information about the US Constitution and related issues

**Instructions:** Follow the steps outlined below and find the answers to the questions.

### **Part 1: Constitution Day**

Here are two web pages with information about “Constitution Day”.

“Schools ordered to observe ‘Constitution Day’ ” – AP / MSNBC.com (May 25, 2005)  
[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7960256/ns/us\\_news-education/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7960256/ns/us_news-education/)

“Constitution Day and Citizenship Day” – US Law Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/constitution-day.php>

Use those two web pages to find the answers to the following questions.

1. On what date was the US Constitution adopted?
2. In what year did Congress pass the law creating the first “Citizenship Day”
3. In 2004, Congress changed the name (to "Constitution Day and Citizenship Day") and added two new requirements. What are those two requirements?
  - a.
  - b.
4. How is the school mandate (law) different from other areas of school curricula?
5. What keeps the federal government from mandating what schools must teach?

## **Part 2: Explore the Constitution**

You can explore the Constitution and related issues at the web site of the National Constitution Center:

[http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/index\\_no\\_flash.php](http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/index_no_flash.php)

1. Fill in the blanks with the missing words for the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution.

"The \_\_\_\_\_ not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor \_\_\_\_\_ by it to the \_\_\_\_\_, are reserved to the \_\_\_\_\_ respectively, or to the \_\_\_\_\_."

2. In what important way is the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment different from the other nine amendments in the Bill of Rights?

3. What is the longest part of the Constitution? Why is it so long?

## **Part 3: Is this a Democracy?**

Instructions: Click on the link (below), and watch "**Constitutional Principle: Representative Government**" – a video by the Bill of Rights Institute. Then answer the following questions.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVD0bZ5H4MY&feature=youtu.be>

1. According to the video, "The constitutional principal of \_\_\_\_\_ government means that the people select representatives to make and carry out laws."
2. The United States is not a \_\_\_\_\_. It's a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. According to Dr. David Marion, "For the American people of the revolutionary period, a \_\_\_\_\_ government would have been a government that would have \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the people and afforded certain \_\_\_\_\_ for those rights."
4. Did the framers of the US Constitution intend the United States to be a pure democracy?
5. The framers of the Constitution thought that monarchy was dangerous to the liberty of the people. They also thought that \_\_\_\_\_ was just as dangerous as monarchy.

6. True / False: The framers of the US Constitution set up the first real attempt at a real democracy.
7. At the Constitutional Convention, Elbridge Gerry argued for / against the direct election of the president by the people.
8. In the Federalist papers, James Madison said:
- “[Pure] democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found \_\_\_\_\_ with personal security or the rights of \_\_\_\_\_; and have in general been as \_\_\_\_\_ in their lives as they have been \_\_\_\_\_ in their deaths.”<sup>1</sup>
9. What did most of the founders believe was required for a republican government to be successful? They believed it would require a small \_\_\_\_\_ as well as a \_\_\_\_\_ citizenry.
10. What did Madison think about that?

11. How did Madison define a republic? (Note: Only part of this quotation is in the video.)

“ . . .we may define a republic to be, or at least may bestow that name on, a government which derives all its \_\_\_\_\_ directly or indirectly from the great body of the \_\_\_\_\_, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is ESSENTIAL to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the \_\_\_\_\_, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored \_\_\_\_\_ of it; otherwise a handful of tyrannical \_\_\_\_\_, exercising their oppressions by a delegation of their powers, might aspire to the rank of republicans, and claim for their government the honorable title of republic.”<sup>2</sup>

12. True / False: The phrase “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people” is in the Preamble to the Constitution.

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<sup>1</sup> To see the text of “The Federalist No. 10” by James Madison (Nov. 22, 1787), you can visit the web site of the Library of Congress (Thomas section) at: < [http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_10.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html) >, accessed Sept. 16, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Madison, James “The Federalist No. 39: The Conformity of the Plan to Republican Principles” For the Independent Journal. Library of Congress (Thomas section): <[http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_39.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_39.html)>, accessed Sept. 16, 2011