

# Constitution Day Lesson Plans

## Social Education staff

This year, Constitution Day will be observed on Friday, September 16, 2011, as the official date of September 17 falls on a Saturday. Teachers interested in finding suitable lesson plans and class activities can find a useful selection in the publications archives in the NCSS members-only section of our website ([www.socialstudies.org/publications](http://www.socialstudies.org/publications)).\* The list below also includes some other selected educational websites with lesson plans or special programs relating to this year's Constitution Day.

### **Constitution Day: Start the School Year with Civics**

Eli Lesser

*Social Education* 70, 5 (September 2006): 294-300.

This Constitution Day lesson plan looks at the influence of specific thinkers and their writings on the Constitution.

### **The Constitutional Amendment Process**

Kahlil Chism

*Social Education* 69, 7 (Nov/Dec 2005): 373-382.

Why have only 27 amendments out of 10,000 been passed? Why did congressional pay raises take 203 years to be ratified? What sparked the repeal of Prohibition? A close-up look at the 18th, 21st, and 27th amendments sheds light on the intricate amendment process.

### **The First Act of Congress**

Lee Ann Potter

*Social Education* 68, 7 (Nov/Dec 2004): 430-434.

In the early days of this nation, Congress considered numerous acts as it established the laws of the land. Yet the first ever act of Congress concerned an oath to support the Constitution.

### **Frederick Douglass, the Constitution and Slavery**

Vanessa Rodriguez

*Middle Level Learning*, 33 (September 2008): 2-13.

In this activity for middle school classes, students debate

Douglass versus...Douglass! Before 1851, he argued that the U.S. Constitution abetted slavery. But then he proclaimed, "Let the North now make that instrument [i.e., the Constitution] bend to the cause of freedom and justice." Handouts provide eight passages from the Constitution and Douglass's statements about them.

The following two articles also deal with the same subject in *Social Education*:

### **Was the Constitution pro-Slavery? The Changing Views of Frederick Douglass.**

Robert Cohen

*Social Education* 72, 5 (September 2008): 246-250.

Many have questioned whether the document on which our nation is based sanctioned slavery. But renowned abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who originally condemned the Constitution, came to view it in a much different light.

### **Frederick Douglass Changed My Mind about the Constitution**

James Oakes

*Social Education* 72, 5 (September 2008): 251-252.

Like Frederick Douglass, this historian had originally viewed the Constitution as pro-slavery. Yet a close look at Douglass's writings revealed a Constitution that empowered the federal government to abolish slavery.

\*To access the members-only website, log in using your member number (which is on the address label of all NCSS publications mailed to you). If you have forgotten your member number or password, click on the appropriate line on the log-in page to have them sent to your e-mail address immediately.

### **George Washington’s Printed Draft of the Constitution and Mike Wilkins’s Preamble**

Lee Ann Potter and Elizabeth K. Eder

*Social Education* 73, 4 (May-June 2009): 156-160

Many well-known words in the Constitution underwent many changes before reaching their final form.

### **History Matters: An Institutional Approach Examination of the U.S. Constitution**

Tawni Hunt Ferrarini and Mark C. Schug

*Social Education* 71, 2 (March 2007): 57-60.

The authors examine the economic implications of the evolution of the Constitution.

### **Lesson Plans on the Constitution**

Stacie Fieth and Neil Deason,

*Social Education* 69, 5 (September 2005): 236-247.

“*Private vs Public Rights*” (High School)

A Supreme Court case highlights the concept of eminent domain and explores the Fifth Amendment’s connection to private property.

“*It’s My Right*” (Middle Grades)

Students learn how the Bill of Rights impacts their daily lives.

“*No Time for Tea*” (Elementary Grades 3-5)

This vignette about the Boston Tea Party demonstrates the meaning of “No Taxation without Representation” and the significance of having elected representatives.

### **Resolution and Letter to Congress from the Constitutional Convention**

Lee Ann Potter

*Social Education* 69, 5 (September 2005): 232-235.

The U.S. Constitution is one of the most influential and most enduring constitutions in the world. Two little-known documents from the Constitutional Convention shed light on the Constitution’s evolution.

### **War Powers: A New Chapter in a Continuing Debate**

Charles F. Williams

*Social Education* 67, 3 (April 2003): 128-133.

Written in 2003, this article points out that the Constitution gives Congress—not the president—the power to declare war, but Congress has used that power only five times.

### **What Having Students ‘Write the Constitution’ Taught Me**

Thomas Ladenburg

*Middle Level Learning*, 32 (May/June 2008): 2-3.

By playing the roles of delegates, fifth graders become familiar with the choices facing the Constitutional Convention.

### **The Words We Live By: The Constitution in Context**

Linda Monk

*Social Education* 67, 7 (Nov/Dec 2003): 381-385.

When students understand the historical context of a given document, they learn much more than simply the words of a text.

### **Selected Other Sites with Free Resources for Constitution Day**

Annenberg Public Policy Center

[www.annenbergclassroom.org/page/a-guide-to-the-united-states-constitution](http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/page/a-guide-to-the-united-states-constitution)

A guide to the Constitution presents and explains each article and amendment.

Bill of Rights Institute

[www.billofrightsinstitute.org](http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org)

Offers lesson plans, founding documents, quizzes, and games.

Center for Civic Education

<http://new.civiced.org/resources/curriculum/constitution-day-and-citizenship-day>

Provides lesson plans for all levels from kindergarten through grade 12.

Constitutional Rights Foundation

[www.crf-usa.org/constitution-day/constitution-day.html](http://www.crf-usa.org/constitution-day/constitution-day.html)

Offers lesson plans for elementary, middle and high school.

National Archives

[www.archives.gov/education/lessons/constitution-day](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/constitution-day)

Offers historical documents and teaching units based on primary sources.

National Constitution Center

[http://constitutioncenter.org/ncc\\_progs\\_constitution\\_day.aspx](http://constitutioncenter.org/ncc_progs_constitution_day.aspx)

Offers a free webcast all day on September 16, as well as lesson plans, founding documents, puzzles, and games.

For further sites, connect to [www.socialstudies.org](http://www.socialstudies.org).

★ **SEPTEMBER 16, 2011** ★

**Celebrate Constitution Day with a free, fun and fascinating webcast for your students!**

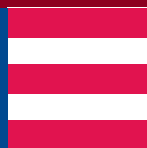


**September 17, 2011 (observed September 16, 2011)**

Meet your Constitution Day education requirement by turning to the National Constitution Center! Tune in to our Constitution Hall Pass—viewed by over a million students on Constitution Day last year! This FREE, fun and fascinating webcast allows teachers and students to learn more about this historic day while chatting live with the National Constitution Center's education staff. All you need is an internet connection to participate! This year's NEW episode, Constitution Hall Pass: Freedom of Expression, brings the story of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights to life and celebrates artists, writers and musicians throughout history who have exercised their right to free expression.

**[www.constitutioncenter.org/constitutionday](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/constitutionday)**

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