

We the People



A Video and Discussion Guide for Constitution Day

Inside

- About Constitution Day
- About the Video
 - ◆ Outline
 - ◆ Curriculum Connections
- Activities
- Other Resources

About

Constitution Day

Although some would argue that *every day* should be Constitution Day, the official observance falls on September 17, the date that delegates signed the U.S. Constitution in Philadelphia in 1787.

Many organizations hold events and make resources available for observance of Constitution Day since federal law ([Publ. L. 108-447](#)) stipulates that schools and federal agencies must offer education sessions on or near this date.

Outline of “We the People” (Video)

The Learning Center is pleased to offer a three-minute video about the phrase “We the People.” It is available online at courts.mi.gov/learningcenter. The video discusses:

- A constitution is plan for government.
- “We the People,” the first words, of the U.S. Constitution signify that power comes from the people and that laws apply equally to all, the principle known as the rule of law.
- The Constitution was debated by citizens and then ratified by delegates elected by the people before it became the law.
- The U.S. Constitution saves rights and responsibilities for the states, including Michigan. The constitution of the State of Michigan also begins with “We the people.”
- The Constitution is important today because it defines the powers of government and protects the rights of people of all ages.



Curriculum Connections

Grade Level Content Expectations for Social Studies

3 – C1.0.1; 3 – C3.0.5; 3 – C5.0.1; 4 – C1.0.3; 4 – C2.0.1-2;
5 – U3.1.8; 5 – U3.3.5; 5 – U3.3.6; 5 – U3.3.8; 8 – U3.3.1-7

Activities

What is a Preamble?

\ 'prē-, am-bəl\

A statement at the beginning of a document (often a law) that tells the purpose of what follows.

Listen to the word at [Merriam-Webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com).

Preparation

Before watching the video, students should know that the U.S. Constitution is one of the country's founding documents. Because "We the People" is a prominent feature, it may be helpful for students to see a copy of the Constitution, including the Preamble. An original copy and a typed transcript may be found online at [archives.gov/exhibits/charters/](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/).

Discussion Questions

After watching the video, ask students:

- Who are "We the People" in our schools and communities?
- What responsibilities do "We the People" have?
- Why do you think the U.S. Constitution and the Michigan Constitution both start with "We the People"?

Extension Activities

For in-depth lessons about the Preamble, see Other Resources on page 4.

The Power of "We the People"

All political power is inherent in the people. Government is instituted for their equal benefit, security and protection.

– Michigan Constitution of 1963, [Article I, Section 1](#)

[T]he constitution does not derive its force from the convention which framed, but from the people who ratified it[.]

– [Justice Thomas M. Cooley](#), Michigan Supreme Court
from [Constitutional Limitations](#)



Other Resources

Preamble

Preamble Challenge – Lessons, videos, and other resources, including a Preamble template for printing t-shirt transfers from the Civics Renewal Network, a consortium of civics education organizations. challenge.civicsrenewalnetwork.org

The Preamble to the Constitution – Extended lessons from EDSITEment that examine each phrase of the Preamble.

- Grades 3–5 edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/preamble-constitution-how-do-you-make-more-perfect-union
- Grades 6–8 edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/preamble-constitution-close-reading-lesson#sect-activities

What Was the Purpose of the Preamble? – Step-by-step lessons for close-reading the Preamble from Cal Humanities and the California History-Social Science Project. calhum.org/files/uploads/program_related/TD-Purpose-of-the-Preamble-Lesson.pdf

U.S. Constitution

Charters of Freedom – Images, transcripts, and essays, about the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights from the National Archives and Records Administration. archives.gov/exhibits/charters/

Michigan Constitution

Constitution of 1835 – Images of the state’s first constitution from the Archives of Michigan. seekingmichigan.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15147coll1/id/99/rec/1

Michigan’s Constitutions – Text of all four state constitutions (1835, 1850, 1908, and 1963) from the Michigan Legislature; includes search functions for the current constitution. [legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(ik0vcxdp4pktudk5hb0qm5lh\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=MCLconstitutionSearch](http://legislature.mi.gov/(S(ik0vcxdp4pktudk5hb0qm5lh))/mileg.aspx?page=MCLconstitutionSearch)

