

A Teacher's Guide to THE CONSTITUTION **DECODED**

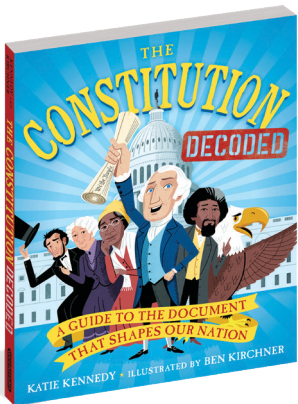
A GUIDE TO THE DOCUMENT THAT SHAPES OUR NATION

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FOR THE TEACHER

Congratulations on choosing this amazing book for your students. This text will take your students on an informational journey where they will learn about the Constitution and how our democratic government was designed to function. You will travel back in time but also journey forward to our present day. Along the way will be many important stopping points for your class to explore. Students will read and discuss the articles that built the foundation of the Constitution, then continue to explore the *Bill of Rights* and the amendments. Students will learn the details of this living document. All of the text deserves careful reading and thoughtful discussion. The goal of this guide is to help you, the teacher, build an informational timeline with your class and have many thought-provoking detours on your journey. It will teach your students to value these freedoms for the present day and their futures. You will enable a new generation of citizens to learn about our government and how it was designed to work.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The Constitution Decoded explains our rights and responsibilities as citizens of the United States of America. For that purpose, the author has written this book to teach us about the defining document that details the rules and responsibilities for living life in our democracy. The entirety of the Constitution is included in this text. The author uses the word “Decoded” in the title as a way to provide us with an explanation of the complex ideas that make up the Constitution. It is a document that dates back to the earliest years of our nation’s history. The language is translated in everyday terms to build our knowledge of the laws of our democracy. The vocabulary words are defined so that the reader can better understand the content of the document. This guide’s purpose is to support you, the teacher, in using the book as a teaching text for your students.

USING THE CONSTITUTION DECODED IN THE CLASSROOM

This text includes many supports for students but at the same time, it includes information on each article and amendment in detail. In order for students to navigate this text, it is important to read together the beginning part of the book and locate the areas of support. Content area vocabulary and their definitions are included at the bottom of many pages to further support students. There are additional sections to enhance the students’ background knowledge. These include:

- **Text of the Constitution with a side-by-side translation of original text**
- **A *Did You Know?* section with additional background information**
- **A *Content Vocabulary* section with definitions pertaining to each article and amendment at the bottom of most pages**
- **A *Constitution in Action* section explains how the document is used in practice**

The discussion questions are designed to align with the *Common Core Standards* that include the four domains of Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening. The Grade 5 Common Core standards are referenced throughout this guide, but all of the activities and questions can be adapted to meet your grade level. This text can be used in Grades 3 through 8 with appropriate adaptations.

Name: _____

Date: _____

THE CONSTITUTION DECODED ANTICIPATION GUIDE:

Let's test our knowledge. Answer *T* (True) or *F* (False) to the following 10 statements.

1. Nothing could be added to the Constitution once it was written and signed.
2. The Constitution established two branches of government.
3. The Constitution allows the president to serve two or more terms in office.
4. The *Declaration of Independence* was signed on July 4, 1776.
5. The 15th Amendment gave women the right to vote.
6. The judicial branch of government passes laws.
7. The executive branch of government includes the president and vice president.
8. States can make their own laws.
9. You can become president if you are 30 years old.
10. The Constitutional amendments made changes to the original seven articles.



THE CONSTITUTION DECODED SCAVENGER HUNT

Let's find it! Participate in this scavenger hunt to locate important sections of the Constitution.

1. Find Article VII. What color-coded section and page does Article VII begin on?
2. Find the glossary. What is the meaning of the word *bills* in the Constitution?
3. Find the *Did You Know?* section on the 19th Amendment page. What information did it give?
4. Find the chart in Article I (page 26) that gives information about Congress. What information does it give?
5. Locate the *Constitution in Action* segment in Article V. What is the heading of the segment?
6. Find the illustration on page 158. Who is illustrated with the 24th Amendment?
7. Find the *Declaration of Independence*. What color-coded section and page does this begin on?
8. Find Article II, Section 4 on page 66. Which words are listed in the vocabulary section?
9. Find the text feature on page 87. Identify the text feature and describe the information it represents.
10. Which amendment does the illustration on pages 146 and 147 explain?
11. Find the section in the book to look up a word and its definition. What is this section called?
12. Find the timeline on pages 42–43. What happened in 1865?

PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read aloud the Introduction to the text. Tell students to listen for the following information:

- Why was the Constitution written?
- When was the Constitution written?
- What does the Supremacy Clause say and what does it mean?
- Which original thirteen states did the Constitution mean to govern? (Refer to *Did You Know?* on page 6.)

Your task: Working with a partner, use sticky notes to record what you learned, citing evidence from these pages.

DIVING INTO THE CONSTITUTION

The Preamble (Page 6)

The *Preamble* states the goal of the Constitution. Students need to understand the meaning of these important academic vocabulary words that define the goal.

Read aloud to class. Have students read along. Review the translation. Discuss the following:

- What is the purpose of the *Preamble*?
- After reading the *Preamble*, highlight the following important vocabulary words that are included in this section: *justice, tranquility, common defense, general welfare, liberty, and posterity*. Define each word as it is used in context.
- Then, as a class, using chart paper, rewrite the *Preamble* using everyday words to replace the highlighted words. Explain what it means.

Optional task: Students will represent the important vocabulary words in the *Preamble* using graphics, illustrations, and/or technology. The use of illustrations, graphics, and technology provides a modification and accommodation to respond to students based on specific learning needs and allows full engagement of all using the principles of Universal Design for Learning.*

Articles in the Constitution

There are seven articles in the Constitution. Each article is dedicated to a certain aspect of formation and function of our democratic government. Each article describes the way in which the government is structured and how it operates.

General discussion/questions about each of the seven articles:

These questions can be used as oral discussions with students in small groups or pairs. Then return to the whole class to reexamine the ideas.

What is the main focus of Article I?

- Article I, page 11: What does the diagram on page 11 represent?
- Review the three-column chart on pages 12–13. Record one example of an assigned power that is different from one other in each of the three different levels of government.
- How is the Senate different from the House of Representatives? How are they the same?
- Using a T-Chart, on one side write facts about the House of Representatives, and on the other, write facts about the Senate.
- Section 4 details elections for Senators and Representatives. How are these elections determined? Who monitors the members of the House and the Senate?
- What is an *enumeration*? What is its purpose and how is it different today? How is the census of today different from the original one stated in Article I, Section 2? How does redistricting work after a census has been counted, and how can it affect election outcomes today?
- What is the subject of Article I, Sections 6–9? Describe one common idea running through these four sections.
- Review the timeline on pages 42–43. Which events are listed? What is their significance to Section 9, Article I?
- What powers did the states lose in Section 10 of Article I?



Executive Branch: Article II

- Who makes up the executive branch of government?

After reading this article, discuss the following:

- Section 1 sets up the executive branch and the Electoral College.
- What are the requirements for becoming president of the United States? What is the succession of power for the president?
- Describe the role and responsibilities of the president. Cite evidence from the articles in your response.
- Article II, Section 4 refers to the impeachment of the president or vice president. What crimes does the Constitution refer to as impeachable offenses?

Article III

- What branch of government is set up in Article III?
- Who makes up this branch of government? What kinds of judicial cases does this branch of government oversee?
- How is treason defined in Article III?

Article IV discusses the relationships of the states to one another and the relationship between the states and the federal government.

- Locate the opening pages of Article IV. Think about what this illustration is showing. What do you think this article will be explaining? What was the goal of Article IV?
- What rights did citizens have when visiting other states? What was the significance of the Dred Scott Decision?
- How can a state become part of the United States? What territories are part of the United States but lack voting rights?

What is the main focus of Article V?

What issues are included in Article VI?

After reading and reviewing Article VII, discuss the following:

- How many states initially ratified the Constitution?
- What did its citizens agree to as part of their state's ratification?

THE AMENDMENTS

The Bill of Rights: Amendments 1-10

Personal freedoms were an important concept for the people in the original states. They had fought for freedom from England and the King and wanted to ensure their rights to these freedoms were an essential part of the Constitution. To that end, these ideas were added as the first ten amendments and are referred to as the *Bill of Rights*.

Think about the rights that each of the first ten amendments represent, then create a visual representation that includes each of these ten amendments and the right the citizen gained with that amendment. Visual presentation could be: PowerPoint, display board, video, or graphic presentation.



Amendments XI to XXVII

In response to these questions, refer to not only the text of the Constitution and its translation, but use the information from the Did You Know? and Constitution in Action sections for a thorough explanation.

- What is the gist of Amendment XI?
- Section 1 of Article II, the 12th Amendment, and the 20th Amendment all address voting for president and vice president. Describe how each element addresses the election. What is in place today?
- The Civil War divided the nation into the North and South. The issue of slavery was contentious between them. After the war, three amendments were added to the Constitution that addressed the rights of African Americans. What issues pertaining to enslaved people were the subjects of these amendments?
- Amendment XVI: What is an income tax and what does this amendment establish?
- What did the 17th Amendment change about the election of senators?
- Amendment XVIII and Amendment XXI are related to prohibition. What is prohibition and how are these two amendments related?
- Amendment XIX: What is the main idea of this amendment? Describe this amendment in your own words.
- How are the 20th, the 22nd, and the 25th amendments related? What is the topic of these amendments? What are the requirements of each of these amendments?
- Amendment XXIII: The White House is located in the District of Columbia. What did the 23rd Amendment establish?
- Amendment XXIV: What additional freedom did this amendment give citizens?
- What restrictions on voters were lifted with the 26th Amendment?
- Amendment XXVII: Describe why this amendment was finally ratified in 1992.
- Read the *Declaration of Independence*. What did you learn about why this document was written?

Looking Back—Discussion Questions:

These can be oral discussions or written prompts.

- What is the role and responsibility of Congress? Cite evidence from the text in your response.



States' rights is an important theme in the Constitution. Review the articles that pertain to states' rights. Use that information to explain the power of the states versus the federal government. Cite evidence with your examples.

- The first article, Article I, is the most detailed article in the Constitution. What was the reason it was put first and what details did it include and why?
- Why was freedom such an important theme throughout the Constitution?
- What freedoms have been the most challenging to enact?
- Which articles and amendments refer to individual freedoms and rights?
- Write a paragraph describing the House of Representatives and its members. Include information from the *Did You Know?* section on page 14.

Extension Idea:

In the opening pages of the book, the author includes nine illustrations of famous Americans. Choose one of these figures from history and provide additional research information. Include any information about their connection to the Constitution. When completed, students could provide a representation of this historical figure in any representative form.

Using the *Preamble* as your guide, write a set of five articles for your classroom. Using the articles from the Constitution as examples, decide what rules and regulations are most important for your class to follow. Make sure these essential principles serve as a structure for your classroom while acknowledging your freedoms and responsibilities.

Common Core Standards:

Reading

CCSS.RI.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

Writing

W.5.1.a, b, c, 5.2.a, b, c, d, e

Language

CCSS.L.5.4.a, b, c

Speaking and Listening

SL.5.1.a, b, c, d, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5

**Universal Design for Learning*
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