



# We the People

## 9

### ☑ **Lesson Objectives**

---

#### **Core Content Objectives**

---

Students will:

- ✓ Identify that the government of the United States is based on the Constitution, the highest law of our land
- ✓ Identify James Madison as the “Father of the Constitution”
- ✓ Explain that the United States is founded on the principle of consent of the governed, American citizens: “We the People”
- ✓ Explain the basic functions of government (making and enforcing laws; settling disputes; protecting rights and liberties; etc.) by making analogies to familiar settings such as the family, the school, and the community
- ✓ Identify the Bill of Rights as a document amending the Constitution

#### **Language Arts Objectives**

---

The following language arts objectives are addressed in this lesson. Objectives aligning with the Common Core State Standards are noted with the corresponding standard in parentheses. Refer to the Alignment Chart for additional standards addressed in all lessons in this domain.

Students will:

- ✓ Compare and contrast similarities and differences between the rights citizens are given by the U.S. Constitution and the lack of those rights that some people experienced in their homelands as heard in read-alouds in this domain (RI.2.9)
- ✓ Participate in shared brainstorming of ideas as they write and amend a “Classroom Constitution” after listening to “We the People” (W.2.7)

- ✓ Make personal connections to the U.S. Constitution and the writing of a Classroom Constitution (W.2.8)
- ✓ Make personal connections to the process of creating amendments and the process called “consent of the governed” as they amend and vote on the Classroom Constitution (W.2.8)
- ✓ Ask and answer a *what* question to deepen understanding of what they heard in “We the People” (SL.2.3)
- ✓ Use known words to determine meanings of unknown words formed when the prefix *dis-* is added to a known word, such as *agreements/disagreements* (L.2.4b)

## Core Vocabulary

---

**amendments, *n.*** Changes; improvements

*Example:* Cassie and Devon made several amendments to the list of books they wanted to read during their summer vacation.

*Variation(s):* amendment

**the Bill of Rights, *n.*** A document that contains additions to the Constitution which limit the power of the government

*Example:* The Bill of Rights is made up of the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

*Variation(s):* none

**consent, *n.*** Approval or permission

*Example:* Peter’s mom gave her consent, allowing him to go to the arcade with his friends.

*Variation(s):* none

**the Constitution, *n.*** A document that lays down the foundation for the laws of the United States and explains how the U.S. government works


*Example:* James Madison is often called the Father of the Constitution.

*Variation(s):* none

**disagreements, *n.*** Arguments or differences of opinion

*Example:* Disagreements between the colonists and the king of England eventually led to the Revolutionary War.

*Variation(s):* disagreement

<b><i>At a Glance</i></b>	<b>Exercise</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
<b><i>Introducing the Read-Aloud</i></b>	<b>What Have We Already Learned?</b>		10
	<b>Purpose for Listening</b>		
<b><i>Presenting the Read-Aloud</i></b>	<b>We the People</b>	U.S. map	15
<b><i>Discussing the Read-Aloud</i></b>	<b>Comprehension Questions</b>		10
	<b>Word Work: Disagreements</b>	chart paper, chalkboard, or whiteboard	5
 <b>Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day</b>			
<b><i>Extensions</i></b>	<b>Classroom Constitution</b>	chart paper	20



# We the People

9<sub>A</sub>

## ***Introducing the Read-Aloud***

**10** minutes

### **What Have We Already Learned?**

Ask students how much they know about the U.S. government. Students who have previously participated in the Core Knowledge Language Arts program will have already learned about some key presidents and American symbols, and will have heard the story of our nation's birth. If some students in your class are unfamiliar with any facts about the U.S. government, you may wish to prompt discussion by asking the following questions:

- Who is the leader of our country? (the president)
- Where does the U.S. president live? (the White House, in Washington, D.C.)
- The United States is not a kingdom but a . . . ? (democracy) If a country has a democracy, that means it is a country ruled by the people.
- What official document was written to declare independence from the King of England? (the Declaration of Independence)
- What do we mean when we say the “Founding Fathers”? What did they write? Hint: It was a plan for how the new country of the United States should be run. (The Founding Fathers were the leaders from each state who helped write the Constitution.)

Tell students that today they are going to learn more about the U.S. Constitution, what it does, and who did the most to write it.

### **Purpose for Listening**

Tell students to listen carefully to learn more about the Constitution, one of the people who helped write it, and why it is so important to the citizens of the United States.



- 1 [Point to the Constitution on the left and the Bill of Rights on the right.]
- 2 Today these two important documents are located at the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. [Point to Washington, D.C. on a U.S. map.]



## We the People

### ◀ Show image 9A-1: The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

**The Constitution and the Bill of Rights** are two of the most important documents in U.S. history.<sup>1</sup> A constitution is a document that describes the basic plan for the laws and government of a country. It explains the main laws of a country and how its government works. That means that the U.S. Constitution states the basic laws of the United States and explains how the U.S. government works.<sup>2</sup>

### ◀ Show image 9A-2: James Madison

One of the men who helped write the U.S. Constitution was James Madison. A small, quiet man, James Madison was born in 1751 in Virginia. He did not enjoy crowds, nor did he enjoy speaking to them. When he did, he had such a soft voice that listeners had to lean closer in order to hear Madison's words. Yet, many people took the trouble to do so, because they thought Madison's words were worth hearing. He was well-known for having great ideas and making the most confusing problems clear.



### ◀ Show image 9A-3: Continental Congress

Often at the end of a conversation, this polite, quiet man would inspire people to think seriously about his important ideas. That is what happened when leaders of the new nation called the United States of America met in 1787 to decide what sort of government they wanted to form.<sup>3</sup> The leaders came from all parts of the country, and had all sorts of ideas. In the end, however, Madison's ideas had the greatest influence, or effect, in shaping the organization of the new American government. For example, Madison's idea of having three branches, or sections, of government—a president, a Congress, and a Supreme Court—is very important today. Together these three branches in the American government balance each other's power so that no one

- 3 This was just a few years after the colonists declared their independence from England in 1776.

branch can be too powerful and make all of the nation's decisions. When it was time to write down what they had agreed upon, Madison did more than anyone else to write the Constitution of the United States.



← **Show image 9A-4: Madison working on the Bill of Rights**

James Madison's job was not done after the Constitution was written. In 1789, Madison helped write an extra part to add to the Constitution, called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten **amendments** to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights protects the rights of Americans, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion.<sup>4</sup> Over the years, as the United States changes, Americans have found that the Constitution needs to change a little bit, too. To do this, Americans add amendments, which are changes or additions to the Constitution. The amendments are believed to make the Constitution better for the lives of the American people.

4 Do you remember how the Separatists were persecuted in their homeland for having a religion different from the king? The U.S. Constitution protects the rights of American citizens to practice their own religion.



← **Show image 9A-5: Madison as president**

James Madison's fine work in developing the U.S. Constitution earned him the nickname the "Father of the Constitution." Later, James Madison was elected to serve as the fourth president of the United States. Today, hundreds of years later, America's government and laws are based on what Madison and his fellow Founding Fathers created. The U.S. Constitution is the highest law of the land, so no one and no state is allowed to pass a law that goes against the Constitution's principles.<sup>5</sup>

5 Who remembers what principles are?



← **Show image 9A-6: Close-up of "We the People"**

But what does the Constitution say? Well, right from the start the authors made a bold<sup>6</sup> statement. The Constitution begins with a very famous introduction, called the Preamble.<sup>7</sup> It starts, "We the People of the United States . . ." This means that the greatest power behind the American government is the American people—all citizens—rather than a king or queen, or just the Founding Fathers who wrote the Constitution. The government

6 or brave

7 [Have students repeat the word *preamble* after you.] A preamble is an introduction or opening.

- 8 If I ask to borrow your book, and you say, “yes,” then you are giving me consent, or approval, to borrow your book. Who gives consent and is the greatest power behind the American government?



of the United States represents all of the citizens of the United States. The citizens of the United States can vote to change how our government does things. This is called “the **consent** of the governed.” In return for this power, the people agree to live by and follow the laws.<sup>8</sup>

← **Show image 9A-7: White House, Capitol building, Supreme Court, fighter jet**

The Preamble goes on to say that citizens want the Constitution to make the nation run fairly for everyone, and the states will unite, or work together, to help make the nation work smoothly. The Preamble, or introduction to the Constitution, also tells us that American laws, or rules, must protect the liberties, or freedoms, of *all* citizens, not just some. It is an agreement that the Constitution is our most important set of rules. The Preamble says that the federal government will include an army, navy, and other military forces to protect Americans from enemies. It also says that the government and the laws are meant to protect the liberties or freedoms for Americans now and in the future.<sup>9</sup>

- 9 What are some things the Preamble tells us? How does the Constitution affect you?
- 10 [As you read the next sentence, point to the following images for the following references: the image of the White House for the office of the president, the image of the Capitol building for the Congress, and the image of the Supreme Court building for the Supreme Court.]
- 11 What does the Constitution go on to say after the Preamble?
- 12 Why do you think it would be difficult to plan for problems that do not yet exist?

This long list of big jobs is just in the Preamble! The rest of the Constitution goes on to describe the different things the government is supposed to do. The government makes laws and carries them out. It solves problems. And the government protects Americans from certain dangers. It tells us how we are supposed to make those things happen.<sup>10</sup> The Constitution also created the office of the President of the United States, the Congress, and the Supreme Court, which are made up of people who try to follow the principles of the Constitution.<sup>11</sup> One reason the writers of the Constitution are still so admired is that they did an amazing job of creating a form of government that would not only help solve the problems of their own time, but would also help solve all sorts of problems they thought might come along later.<sup>12</sup>



← **Show image 9A-8: Madison and other Founding Fathers**

Today, “We the People of the United States” have a Congress made up of people from every state where laws are made. We

have a president to carry out those laws and courts to help us settle **disagreements**<sup>13</sup> and keep the peace. Our country has military forces to protect us. And there are other parts of the government, all of which are based on the ideas that James Madison and other Founding Fathers wrote down over two hundred years ago in the U.S. Constitution. As time goes on and our country grows, bringing new problems and wonderful new opportunities, we continue to add laws to deal with these new problems. Whenever we do, it is our job—our responsibility—to make sure that the new laws agree with the principles in the Constitution. So the Constitution is not something that stopped being important a long time ago. It is still at the center of how our government is supposed to work even today.

## Discussing the Read-Aloud

**15** minutes



### Comprehension Questions

**10** minutes

#### ◀ Show image 9A-6: Close-up of “We the People”

1. *Literal* What important document begins with the words “We the People”? (the Preamble to the Constitution)
2. *Inferential* Why is the Constitution so important to the citizens of the United States? (It lays the foundation for the laws and government of the United States.)



#### ◀ Show image 9A-5: Madison as President

3. *Literal* Who was nicknamed the “Father of the Constitution”? (James Madison) Why? (because he helped to write a great deal of the U.S. Constitution) What other title did Madison have? (President of the United States)
4. *Evaluative* Why are the words “We the People” in the Preamble so important and remembered by U.S. citizens? (Those words are important because they let everyone know that American citizens are the greatest power behind the American government.)



5. *Inferential* What are some things the Preamble and the Constitution say? (The people want the Constitution to make the nation run fairly for everyone. American laws must protect the liberties, or freedoms, of all the people. The people can use the government to make laws and carry them out, to settle arguments among Americans, to protect Americans from certain dangers, etc.)
6. *Inferential* What is the Bill of Rights? (The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It protects the rights of the American people, including freedom of speech and freedom of religion.) Who have you heard about in this domain who immigrated to this country and benefited from these rights? (Answers may vary, but may include the Pilgrims who were looking for the freedom to practice their religion and Charles Steinmetz who valued freedom of speech.)
7. *Evaluative* What are some adjectives you might use to describe the people who wrote the Constitution of the United States? (Answers may vary.)
8. *Evaluative* How is the U.S. Constitution important to you? (Answers may vary.)

[Please continue to model the *Question? Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

9. *Evaluative What? Pair Share:* Asking questions after a read-aloud is one way to see how much everyone has learned. Think of a question you can ask your neighbor about the read-aloud that starts with the word *what*. For example, you could ask, “What did you learn about in today’s read-aloud?” Turn to your neighbor and ask your *what* question. Listen to your neighbor’s response. Then your neighbor will ask a new *what* question, and you will get a chance to respond. I will call on several of you to share your questions with the class.
10. After hearing today’s read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

## Word Work: Disagreements

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “[We] have a Congress [that is made up of people from every state where laws are made; a president to carry out those laws; [and] courts to help us settle *disagreements* . . . .”
2. Say the word *disagreements* with me.
3. Disagreements are arguments or differences of opinion.
4. Sometimes Gabriella and her brother have disagreements, but they talk and work things out.
5. Have you ever had any disagreements? Try to use the word *disagreements* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “My best friend and I had many disagreements about . . . .”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about?

Use a *Word Parts* activity for follow-up. Write the words *agreements* and *disagreements* on a piece of chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard. Ask students what they notice about the words. Prompt them to see that the word *disagreements* has the prefix *dis-*. Tell the students that the prefix *dis-* is often added to the beginning of a word to mean the *opposite of* or *not*. For example, disagreements are the opposite of agreements. Directions: I will say several words with the prefix *dis-*. Listen carefully to the word that you hear after the prefix *dis-* to help you discover the meaning of the word. For example, if I say, “disagreeable,” then you would say, “That means not agreeable.”

1. disrespecting (That means not respecting.)
2. disorder (That means not in order.)
3. dissatisfied (That means not satisfied.)
4. disliked (That means not liked.)
5. disorganized (That means not organized.)



**Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day**



# We the People

9<sub>B</sub>

## Extensions

20 minutes

### Classroom Constitution

Remind students that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are the two most important documents in the United States government, and that the Constitution is the highest law of our land. Tell students that the word *constitution* can describe any laws and/or principles that outline the functions and limits of an organization or group. Tell students that their classroom is a kind of group or organization. If you have classroom rules, tell students that the rules of your classroom are like laws, and all of these rules together are your classroom constitution. Share with students that as a class you will share these rules and that you, the teacher, will write them down as a “Classroom Constitution,” just like James Madison wrote everything down when the Founding Fathers created the U.S. Constitution.

Using a large piece of chart paper, have your students recite the classroom rules as you write them down. Then label the document “Classroom Constitution.” Once the rules are written down, reread them to the class. Tell students you will now vote on these rules. To help students vote, you may wish to ask if they think they will be able to follow the rules, if they think the rules are fair, or if they think the rules will benefit everyone in the class. Students may wish to change some of the rules. If they do, ask students to vote on whether they all like or dislike the proposed changes. Tell students that if the majority of them like the proposed changes, these changes will become amendments to their Classroom Constitution. Take this moment to reinforce the term *amendment*. Share with students that, in our Constitution, amendments are very rare—only twenty-seven have been added since the Constitution was first approved more than two hundred years ago.

After the class has voted on all of the rules and amendments, explain to students that as citizens of the classroom they have the power to change how the classroom is run. Tell students that they just made these changes by voting and that this is called “the consent of the governed.” Ask if everyone is in favor of these rules as a Classroom Constitution. If students are in favor of the rules, have them all sign the Classroom Constitution.

If you do not have classroom rules, you may wish to use this extension to brainstorm some classroom rules and to vote on them.