

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



"Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States"¹

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

Part 1: What is Constitution Day?

Directions: Here are two online resources with information about “Constitution Day”. Use those two resources to find the answers to the questions listed below.

“Schools ordered to observe ‘Constitution Day’,” AP / MSNBC.com (updated May 24, 2005)
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>

1. On what date was the US Constitution adopted?
2. In what year did Congress create “I Am An American Day” that was to be celebrated on the third Sunday in May?
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.

¹ Howard Chandler Christy, “Scene at the Signing of the Constitution,” painting, 1940, *Wikimedia Commons*, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scene_at_the_Signing_of_the_Constitution_of_the_United_States.png (accessed September 12, 2011).

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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

1. Fill in the blanks with the missing words for the 10th 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 10th 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**”² – a video by the Bill of Rights Institute. Then fill in the blanks to complete the quotations from the video and answer the 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 (in the video), “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 saw that _____ was just as dangerous to liberty 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 (Federalist No. 10), 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.”³

Note: 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). See the link in the footnote.

² Bill of Rights Institute, “Constitutional Principles: Representative Government”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVD0bZ5H4MY&feature=youtu.be> (accessed Sept. 15, 2011).

³ James Madison, “Federalist No. 10: The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection,” from the *New York Packet* (Nov. 23, 1787), *Library of Congress (Thomas section)* < http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html >, accessed Sept. 16, 2011.

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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.”⁴
12. True / False: The phrase “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people” is in the Preamble to the Constitution.

⁴ James Madison, “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>, accessed Sept. 16, 2011.