

# 01\_Unit 1: Foundational Documents

Content Area: **Social Studies**  
Course(s):  
Time Period: **Full Year**  
Length: **7 weeks/ 35 lessons**  
Status: **Published**

## **General Overview, Course Description or Course Philosophy**

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### Social Studies 8

All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past and present interactions of people, cultures, and the environment shape the American heritage. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions that reflect fundamental rights and core democratic values as productive citizens in local, national, and global communities.

## **OBJECTIVES, ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS, ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS**

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### **Unit Summary:**

This unit examines how the foundational concepts identified in Unit One are articulated in the nation's founding documents and established in the structure of American government. Students will explore the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, providing the background for the next unit's study of how the Declaration inspired generations of Americans to more fully realize its core concepts of liberty, equality, and justice. The United States Constitution and the state constitutions provide the structural framework for limited government and constitutional democracy, and understanding these documents is a crucial component of active citizenship. The unit concludes with an examination of the Bill of Rights and the amendment process as students come to understand that the Constitution is a living document and American democracy is an ongoing experiment requiring their active participation.

### **Essential Question(s):**

- How have economic, political, and cultural decisions promoted or prevented the growth

of personal freedom, individual responsibility, equality, and respect for human dignity?

### **Enduring Understanding(s):**

- Historical contexts and events shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.
- Political, economic, social, and cultural factors both change and stay the same over time.
- Governments have different structures which impact development (expansion) and civic participation.
- Members of society have the obligation to become informed of the facts regarding public issues and to engage in honest, mutually respectful discourse to advance public policy solutions.
- In a democratic government, there are multiple processes by which individuals can influence the creation of rules, laws, and public policy.

### **CONTENT AREA STANDARDS**

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| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsPD.3.a  | Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.  |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.d  | Use data and other evidence to determine the extent to which demographics influenced the debate on representation in Congress and federalism by examining the New Jersey and Virginia plans. |
| SOC.6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.a | Use primary sources as evidence to explain why the Declaration of Independence was written and how its key principles evolved to become unifying ideas of American democracy.                |
| SOC.6.1.8.HistoryCC.3.d | Compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution in terms of the decision-making powers of national government.   |
| SOC.6.3.8.CivicsPR.5    | Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society.   |

### **RELATED STANDARDS (Technology, 21st Century Life & Careers, ELA Companion Standards are Required)**

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| LA.W.7.2.B  | Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.  |
| LA.RH.6-8.3 | Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered). |
| LA.RH.6-8.4 | Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.                  |
| LA.RH.6-8.6 | Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded   |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
|                 | language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).   |
| LA.WHST.6-8.1.A | Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.  |
| LA.WHST.6-8.4   | Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.  |
| WRK.K-12.P.1    | Act as a responsible and contributing community members and employee.  |
| WRK.K-12.P.4    | Demonstrate creativity and innovation.   |
| WRK.K-12.P.5    | Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.   |
| WRK.K-12.P.6    | Model integrity, ethical leadership and effective management.  |
| WRK.K-12.P.8    | Use technology to enhance productivity increase collaboration and communicate effectively.   |
| TECH.8.1.8.B.1  | Synthesize and publish information about a local or global issue or event (ex. telecollaborative project, blog, school web).   |
| TECH.9.4.8.CI.3 | Examine challenges that may exist in the adoption of new ideas (e.g., 2.1.8.SSH, 6.1.8.CivicsPD.2).  |
| TECH.9.4.8.CT.1 | Evaluate diverse solutions proposed by a variety of individuals, organizations, and/or agencies to a local or global problem, such as climate change, and use critical thinking skills to predict which one(s) are likely to be effective (e.g., MS-ETS1-2). |
| TECH.9.4.8.CT.3 | Compare past problem-solving solutions to local, national, or global issues and analyze the factors that led to a positive or negative outcome.  |
|                 | There are strategies to improve one's professional value and marketability.  |

## **STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS**

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### **Declarative Knowledge**

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#### **Students will understand that:**

- The United States Constitution and Bill of Rights were designed to provide a framework for the United States system of government, while also protecting individual rights.
- Debates about individual rights, states' rights, and federal power shaped the development of the political and economic institutions and practices of the new Republic.
- Congress represents the diverse interests of the American people.
- Congress is the most important link between citizens and the federal government.
- Lawmaking is the primary and most important function of Congress.
- Members of Congress must fulfill several roles as lawmakers, politicians, and servants of their constituents.
- State and local legislatures carry out many of the same powers as the national legislature
- The Constitution defines the roles and qualifications of the President
- The role of the Executive Branch has expanded since our nation was founded.
- Historically the President has stretched the powers of the office and debate continues

over this issue today.

- The Cabinet members are the President's top advisors and are influential in decisions that affect the country.
- The Electoral Process has led to much controversy in recent Presidential elections.
- The State and local levels include executive offices which carry similar responsibilities to those of the President of the United States. The Constitution created a Supreme Court, its jurisdiction and the manner and terms of federal judicial appointments
- The Constitution created a Supreme Court, its jurisdiction and the manner and terms of federal judicial appointments.
- The Supreme Court will make decisions that will impact the country for years to come.
- The inferior constitutional courts form the core of the federal judicial system
- The power of judicial review laid the foundation for the judicial branch's key role in government.
- Federalism promotes national unity while giving states control over state and local matters.
- The guarantees in the Bill of Rights reflect the nation's commitment to personal freedom and to the principle of limited government.
- The due process clause of the fourteenth amendment ensures that state governments do not limit or take away rights given to citizens by the national government.
- The establishment clause sets up "a wall of separation between church and state".
- The free exercise clause protects religious beliefs but does not religious actions that violate laws or threaten safety
- The guarantees of free speech and press are intended to protect the expression of unpopular views.
- The rights of peaceable assembly and petition protect the people's right to bring their views to the attention of public officials.

## **Procedural Knowledge**

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### **Students will be able to:**

- Identify the Declaration of Independence.
- Define principle and American democracy.
- Describe the principles of the Declaration of Independence.
- Use primary sources as evidence to explain why the Declaration of Independence was written and how its key principles evolved to become unifying ideas of American democracy.
- Describe the Articles of Confederation and its decision making powers.
- Describe the United States Constitution and its decision making powers.
- Compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution in terms of the decision-making powers of national government.
- Describe the New Jersey Plan.

- Describe the Virginia Plan.
- Use data and other evidence to determine the extent to which demographics influenced the debate on representation in Congress and federalism by examining the New Jersey and Virginia plans.
- Identify the Bill of Rights.
- Define compromise.
- Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- Define democracy.
- Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society

## **EVIDENCE OF LEARNING**

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Alternative:

- Portfolios
- Verbal Assessment (instead of written)
- Multiple choice
- Modified Rubrics
- Performance Based Assessments

Benchmark:

Standards based through Pear Assessment

## **Benchmark Assessments**

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- Benchmark Assessments using Pear Assessments three times per year

## **Formative Assessments**

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**For this unit, formative assessments can/will include:**

- observation
- one-on-one
- questioning
- graphic organizers

Alternative:

- anecdotal notes
- exit tickets

## **Summative Assessments**

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**For this unit, summative assessments can/will include:**

- graphic organizers
- homework
- tests/quizzes
- culminating activity
- Research/Discussion Question: The Declaration of Independence states "that all men are created equal." What did Thomas Jefferson and other Founding Fathers mean by "all men"? How has this changed over time in American history?

## **RESOURCES (Instructional, Supplemental, Intervention Materials)**

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**Resources Include:**

**Core:**

[teachtci.com](http://teachtci.com) - History Alive! The United States Through Industrialism

<https://civiced.rutgers.edu/documents/civics/middle-school-civics/117-curriculum-guide-for-middle-school-civics/file> - Rutgers New Jersey Center for Civic Education

The Articles of Confederation

[The Declaration of Independence](#)

Supplemental:

<https://www.history.com>- History Channel

### **INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS**

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**English/Language Arts** - implementation of conventions of Standard English

**Technology/Multi-Media** - Audio/visual media analysis

**Math** - computations

**Visual and Performing Arts** - debate

### **ACCOMMODATIONS & MODIFICATIONS FOR SUBGROUPS**

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See link to Accommodations & Modifications document in course folder.