

# 02\_Unit 2: The Constitution, American Ideals and the American Experience

Content Area: **Social Studies**  
Course(s):  
Time Period: **Full Year**  
Length: **8 weeks/ 40 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:**

The Preamble to the United States Constitution outlines its purposes and ideals in the following language: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States...”

This unit will investigate the challenges and triumphs to fulfilling our American ideals. The unit will begin with an examination of the goals highlighted in the Preamble of the Constitution. By tracing the preamble through American history, students will assess the effectiveness of our early citizens in meeting the goals of the Constitution. Students will evaluate how each American ideal has grown and expanded to be more inclusive. As we continue to struggle in fulfilling the potential of the American ideals, students will be encouraged to identify additional areas of growth toward a “more perfect union.”

## Essential Question(s):

- How have economic, political, and cultural decisions promoted or prevented the growth of personal freedom, individual responsibility, equality, and the respect for human dignity?

## Enduring Understanding(s):

- Political and civil institutions impact all aspects of people’s lives.
- The United States system of government is designed to realize the ideals of liberty, democracy, limited government, equality under the law and of opportunity, justice, and property rights.
- Fundamental rights are derived from the inherent worth of each individual and include civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights.
- Social and political systems have protected and denied human rights (to varying degrees) throughout time.
- Historical contexts and events shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.
- 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.CivicsPI.3.a | Cite evidence to evaluate the extent to which the leadership and decisions of early administrations of the national government met the goals established in the Constitution.   |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b | Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution (i.e., consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and individual rights) in establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time. |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsDP.3.a | Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans, and Native Americans during this time period.   |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.a | Explain how and why constitutional civil liberties were impacted by acts of government during the Early Republic (i.e., Alien and Sedition Acts).   |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.b | Evaluate the impact of the institution of slavery on the political and economic expansion of the United States.   |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.c | Construct an argument to explain how the expansion of slavery violated human rights and contradicted American ideals.   |
| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsDP.4.a | Research and prioritize the most significant events that led to the expansion of voting rights during the Jacksonian period.  |

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| SOC.6.1.8.CivicsHR.4.a  | Examine sources from a variety of perspectives to describe efforts to reform education, women’s rights, slavery, and other issues during the Antebellum period.   |
| SOC.6.1.8.HistoryUP.5.a | Analyze the effectiveness of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution from multiple perspectives.  |
| SOC.6.3.8.CivicsDP.2    | Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and the limitations of First Amendment rights (e.g., U.S. Supreme Court decisions).  |
| SOC.6.3.8.CivicsDP.3    | Use historical case studies and current events to explain why due process is essential for the protection of individual rights and maintenance of limited government.   |
| SOC.6.3.8.CivicsPR.2    | Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution (i.e., consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and individual rights) in establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time. |

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

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| 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.W.7.2.B      | Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.  |
| 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.   |
| LA.W.8.8        | Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation. |
| 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.   |

## **STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS**

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### **Declarative Knowledge**

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

- One of the great successes of the American experience is demonstrating to the world that citizens could establish a government based on a social contract with the “consent of the governed”. A founding generation drafted a Constitution that joined political ideas and practical experience, making real what had previously only been a theory.
- The Constitution addressed many of the deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation.
- The right to vote, initially granted to a limited segment of the population, has gradually been extended to different groups enhancing the concept of “the consent of the governed”.
- Ensuring the right to vote is an essential component of a successful democracy.
- The desire for “fairness” or “justice” is a primary reason why people are willing to create a government. These concepts are difficult to precisely define. The Constitution and state constitutions establish a court system to help decide questions of justice.
- The right to “due process” is considered one of the most fundamental guarantees of individual right
- Procedural Due Process means that the government must follow rules and procedures that are reasonable, fair, and not arbitrary.
- Substantive Due Process means that the government cannot make or interpret laws in a way that violates fundamental rights.
- The Fifth Amendment established the concept of “due process” in the Constitution regarding the federal government.
- The Fourteenth Amendment extended the concept of “equal protection under the law” to the states.
- Domestic tranquility refers to the expectation by citizens that government will ensure an orderly society based on due process and an inviolate/minimum sphere of personal liberty.
- Democracy places a high value on the right to privacy, which is the basis for many of the more specific protections enshrined in the Bill of Rights.

- The right to privacy and other rights have sometimes been restricted during times of war as the need to ensure national security conflicts with more expansive individual rights enjoyed during times of peace. It is the role of the courts to help determine the appropriate constitutional balance between individual rights and national security and to review acts of the legislative and executive branches.
- Habeas corpus is a fundamental right that prevents arbitrary abuse of authority by the government and indefinite detentions of political opponents.
- The peaceful transfer of power is a critical element of democracy, requiring both constitutional procedures and the commitment by citizens to uphold a free society and a republican form of government.
- The use of force by the government must be within constitutional constraints in a democratic society. A cornerstone of American democracy has been a professional, non-political military that takes an oath to support the Constitution.
- The American system of limited government is designed to promote a specific definition of liberty. This definition differs from that used by other nations with different forms of government.
- The American system of government is based on the concept of social contract theory and the idea that individuals agree to place some limits on their absolute liberty in order to actually enjoy the greatest possible amount of liberty. What these limits should be is an important part of Constitutional law and public discourse.
- Democracies must also balance individual liberty and “the common good”. Debates about how to best achieve this balance is an important element of politics and public policy.

## **Procedural Knowledge**

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

- Identify and describe the goals of the Constitution.
- Cite evidence to evaluate the extent to which the leadership and decisions of early administrations of the national government met the goals established in the Constitution.
- Define/explain consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances and individual rights.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution in

establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time.

- Describe the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence.
- Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans and Native Americans during this time period.
- Describe the Alien and Sedition Acts.
- Define and describe civil liberties.
- Explain how and why constitutional civil liberties were impacted by acts of government during the Early Republic.
- Define Manifest Destiny.
- Identify and describe motivations for westward expansion in the United States.
- Evaluate the impact of the institution of slavery on the political and economic expansion of the United States.
- Define human rights.
- Construct an argument to explain how the expansion of slavery violated human rights and contradicted American ideals.
- Identify and describe the Antebellum period.
- Identify and describe the Second Awakening.
- Identify Nat Turner and President James Buchanan.
- Examine sources from a variety of perspectives to describe efforts to reform education, women's rights, slavery and other issues during the Antebellum period.
- Describe First Amendment Rights.
- Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and limitations of First Amendment Rights (e.g., Supreme Court decisions/Zenger Trials).
- Define due process.
- Use historical case studies and current events to explain why due process is essential for the protection of individual rights and maintenance of limited government.
- Identify and describe the Jacksonian period.
- Research and prioritize the most significant events that led to the expansion of voting rights during the Jacksonian period.
- Identify and describe the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments.

- Analyze the effectiveness of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the United State Constitution from multiple perspectives.

## **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 may include:**

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

Alternative:

- anecdotal notes
- exit tickets

## **Summative Assessments**

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**For this unit, summative assessments may include:**

- graphic organizers
- homework
- tests/quizzes
- culminating activity

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

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**Resources Include:**

Core:

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

Supplemental:

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

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

## **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.