

# PREAMBLE CHALLENGE

★★ Lesson Plan ★★



*We the People* of the United States  
insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general  
welfare, secure our Liberty, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States

## ABOUT THIS LESSON

In this lesson, students will dissect the six functions of government according to the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. They will identify key terms and language used within the context of 1787 and compare that language with society today. Then they will be prepared to take the Preamble Challenge!

By analyzing the Preamble to the Constitution, students will have a better understanding of the federal government, its structure, and its functions according to the document. Creating an understanding of the Preamble will help students better understand fundamental civic values and provide them with the tools to better understand the ways in which citizens play a great role in our nation's government.

## AUTHOR

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# WARM-UP ACTIVITY

## Reading the Preamble

Pass out a copy of the Preamble to your students. Have them read through it on their own, or as group. Lead a brief discussion of what it is and what it means.

- a. What is the Preamble?
- b. Why is it important?
- c. What role or function does it play as part of the Constitution?

# PREAMBLE ANALYSIS

Now that students have read and discussed the Preamble, have students break down each section to identify the six functions of the Constitution as established in the Preamble and determine their meaning.

1. “To form a more perfect Union” ... the Constitution created a federal government that oversees all of the states and unites these states under new power.
2. “Establish justice” ... governments will protect people who follow the law and punish those who break the law. The Constitution established a system with courts that protects the rights of its people.
3. “Ensure domestic tranquility” ... the atmosphere in our country is calm and peaceful so that the people can live happily and express their liberties freely.
4. “Provide for the common defence” ... the government will provide a military to protect its people from external threats.
5. “Promote the general welfare” ... the Constitution provided the people with the opportunity to have their needs heard and promoted/represented in the system of government.
6. “Secure the blessings of liberty” ... the people have natural rights given to them (life, liberty, property/pursuit of happiness) and it is the job of the government to protect these natural rights.

If you have time, briefly discuss the limitations on the Preamble. For example, according to the Supreme Court case *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* (1905), the Preamble to the Constitution is not a source of federal power or individuals’ rights. Those issues are addressed in the articles and amendments to the Constitution.

You will find additional extensions to this lesson at the end of this document to expand your discussion and exploration of the Preamble.

# PREAMBLE CHALLENGE

It's time to take the Preamble Challenge! Now that your students have a basic understanding of the importance of the Preamble to the Constitution, it is time to gather your students and lead them to your challenge location. Follow the steps below to have a great challenge!

**Step 1:** Register your class online at [civicsrenewalnetwork.org](http://civicsrenewalnetwork.org) [HERE](#), and receive your free Preamble Challenge Toolkit!

**Step 2:** Prepare your students! Using the Preamble Challenge Lesson Plan, discuss and analyze the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

**Step 3:** Gather your props and select your location! Pick a prominent location in your school or community to conduct your reading. Feel free to invite other classes, teachers, school administrators, or community leaders. Have students bring in or gather any props, costumes, or background pieces they would like to use as part of their reading. These can be as simple or as complicated as you choose.

**Step 4:** Read the Preamble! Once everyone is assembled, it is time to conduct the reading. The reading can be led by a teacher, administrator, or student, or the students can simply read on their own. You can get creative with your reading – perhaps read in rounds, or have each student recite one word. Students can read from cue cards or recite from memory. It's up to you! Don't forget to take a photograph (or video) of your reading and post to Twitter or Instagram using #ConstitutionDay2014! We want to see your students' creativity and enthusiasm when reading the Preamble!

**Step 5:** Celebrate Constitution Day!

# EXTENSIONS

## Higher level

The Preamble to the Constitution was written in 1787 when our new nation needed a federal government that would oversee and unite our thirteen states. Today, our nation faces different struggles but still functions by the words of the Preamble. Imagine you were recruited to rewrite the Preamble to fit the needs of our country today. What functions would you include in your new Preamble? Write your new Preamble and explain your reasoning in a short essay.

## Lower level

Our Constitution is 227 years old! Throughout our nation's history we have seen these functions put into action by members of government and also by "We the People." Can you think of ways you have seen the functions of government in your life? Draw a picture or write a few sentences describing the way you see the Preamble in your life.

## Literature Connection

[We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States](#) by David Catrow

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