

**Title: “The Constitution: Then and Now”**

**Grades:** Community College Students

**Subjects:** U.S History, U.S Government, U.S to 1860, Survey

**Standards:** (from AP US History)

- provides opportunities for students to apply detailed and specific knowledge (such as names, chronology, facts, and events) to broader historical understandings.
- provides opportunities for students to develop coherent written arguments that have a thesis supported by relevant historical evidence.
- provides opportunities for students to identify and evaluate diverse historical interpretations.
- provides opportunities for students to analyze evidence about the past from diverse sources, such as written documents, maps, images, quantitative data (charts, graphs, tables), and works of art.
- provides opportunities for students to identify and analyze patterns of continuity and change over time and connect them to larger historical processes or themes.
- provides opportunities for students to connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place, and to broader regional, national, or global processes.

**Materials:**

- Analyzing Books and Other Printed Texts (Teacher’s Guide)
- Analyzing Primary Sources (Teacher’s Guide)
- Primary Source Analysis Tool (Students)

**Resources:**

Constitution Annotated  
<http://beta.congress.gov/constitution-annotated/>

American Memory Timeline: The New Nation  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/newnatn/newnatn.html>

American Memory Timeline  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/>

Primary Documents in American History  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/PrimDocsHome.html>

**Primary Sources with Citations** (do we need pictures?)

*Articles of confederation and perpetual union between the states*, Williamsburg: 1777. From Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division.  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.17802600>

Rodney, Thomas. *Articles of Confederation Ratified*, March 1, 1781. Diary entry. From Library of Congress, *Rodney Family Papers*, Manuscript Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/road-to-the-constitution.html#obj2b>

Committee of Congress. *Draft Report of Northwest Ordinance*, March 1784. Broadside. From Library of Congress, *Thomas Jefferson Papers*, Manuscript Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/road-to-the-constitution.html#obj5>

Doolittle, Amos. *The looking glass for 1787. A house divided against itself cannot stand*. Engraving with watercolor. New Haven: 1787. From Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661778/>

Washington, George. *The Diaries of George Washington*, Vol. V. July 1786 – December 1789. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979. Page 255. From Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers*.  
<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgwd&fileName=mgwd/gwpagewd05.db&recNum=2546>

[*Newspaper Articles and Notices Printed in 1787 During the Constitutional Convention in Phila.*]. 28 May 1787. From Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.  
<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2002705836/>

Hamilton, Alexander. *Notes for a Speech Proposing a Plan of Government at the Federal Convention*. 18 June 1787. From Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.  
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID%2B@lit\(mcc/018\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID%2B@lit(mcc/018)))

Washington, George. *Constitution, Printed, with Marginal Notes by George Washington*. 12 September 1787. From Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers*. Image 233.  
<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw4&fileName=gwpage097.db&recNum=232>

Washington, George. *George Washington to United States Congress*. 17 September 1787. From Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, Introduction to the Annals of Congress*.  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/ac001/intro3.html>

*United States Constitution [as Originally Adopted]*. 17 September 1787. From Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, Annals of Congress, Vol 1*.  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/ac001/intro4.html>

[Front Page of *The Boston Gazette*.] 26 November 1787. From Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2004679481/>

Jefferson, Thomas. *Chart of State Votes on the United States Constitution*. 1788. From Library of Congress, *Thomas Jefferson Papers*. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib0039977>

Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the United States Constitution*. 1788. Page 678. From Library of Congress, *Thomas Jefferson Papers*.  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib003996>

Madison, James. *Notes on the Constitutional Convention*, July 16, 1787. Manuscript. From Library of Congress, *James Madison Papers*, Manuscript Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/convention-and-ratification.html#obj3>

Mason, George. “*Objections to the Constitution of Government Formed by the Convention*,” ca. September 17, 1787. Manuscript. From the Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers*, Manuscript Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/convention-and-ratification.html#obj9>

Publius (pseudonym for James Madison). *The Federalist*. No. X in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1787. From Library of Congress, Serial and Government Publications Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trt049.html>

Proposed Amendments to the Federal Constitution (Bill of Rights), September 1789. Manuscript engrossed and signed by John James Beckley. From Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/demand-for-a-bill-of-rights.html#obj12>

## **Procedure:**

Pre-Class Assignment: Using primary sources such as Jefferson’s chart of the votes, various notes, and Washington’s letter presenting the Constitution to add layers of interest to the documents, have students prepare a brief (approximately 500 words) history of the development of the Constitution.

Have students compare persuasive techniques and rhetorical devices used by George Mason in “Objections to the Constitution” (Sept. 1787) and by James Madison (writing as “Publius”) in “*Federalist* No. X” (Nov. 1787). Outline each man’s arguments, and then compare their ideas to the final version of the Constitution. Are the arguments they make similar to the current debates about the Constitution? How have additional amendments changed the interpretation of the Constitution as a whole?

Analyze the cartoon “Conflict in Ratification of the Constitution.” (If desired, direct students to record their thinking on the Library’s Primary Source Analysis Tool. Select questions from the Teachers Guide: Analyzing Political Cartoons to guide and focus their thinking). What issues are raised by the cartoon? How has the artist used satire? How are the same techniques used in political cartoons today? Are political cartoons still effective?

Compare the “Constitution with marginal notes by George Washington” (1787) with Jefferson’s “Notes on the United States Constitution” (1788). What do each man’s reactions tell us about his views about the Constitution and the newly formed government?

Divide students into 12 groups. Assign each group an amendment from the 12 proposed in the draft of the Bill of Rights and make a case to their classmates for its ratification. After the class debates each amendment and votes on its ratification, compare the class’s list of rights with the Bill of Rights as it was eventually passed. How do current events affect the arguments for each amendment? How would the nation be different if your class’s list of rights were in effect? What groups would be most affected by your class’ changes?

Have students compare their prepared history of the Constitution to accounts from textbooks or other secondary sources. How do they differ? How are they the same? Discuss choices made by publishers to include or omit particular information or details. How does this change our understanding of the Constitution?

**Evaluation:**

- Beginning Assignment
- Final Assignment
- Class Participation

**Extensions:**

- Have students sponsor a reading of the Constitution in a public place on campus.