

Constitutional Comparison Lesson Plan

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Title of Lesson: Primary Document Analysis of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Israel.

Introduction: This lesson is intended to be used in a World Geography, Civics, U.S. History or World History class since it involves a political aspect of the U.S. colonial era and that of another nation in the post-WWII era. Other documents in the group project would cross curricular lines and include aspects of American Literature. This lesson could be used in conjunction with those if taught at the same grade level.

Time: 15 minutes for teacher led instruction / 30-45 minutes for student activity

Do Now: As a bell ringer, students will be asked: to define a constitution & develop at least three reasons a nation would create such a document.

Lesson Objective: The student will compare the United States Constitution with a 2006 proposed document for the State of Israel. The student will evaluate both the make-up and the need for a constitution in a new nation. The student will answer basic multiple choice / fill-in-the-blank questions concerning the mechanics of each document. At the end, the student will have a chance for critical analysis of the two constitutions and will be able to compare and contrast the documents.

Grade Level Expectations (GLE):

US History:

H-1A-H1: Contrast past and present events or ideas in U.S. history, demonstrating awareness of differing political, social, or economic context

H-1A-H3: Evaluate and use multiple primary or secondary materials to interpret historical facts, ideas, or issues

H-1A-H4: Analyze and evaluate the credibility of a given historical document (e.g., in terms of its source, unstated assumptions)

Geography:

G-1C-H4 analyzing the characteristics, distribution, and interrelationships of the world's cultures

G-1C-H6 analyzing how cooperation, conflict, and self-interests impact social, political, and economic entities on Earth

Civics:

C-1A-H1: Explain competing ideas about the purposes of politics and government and identify reasons why government is necessary

C-1A-H1: Analyze ways in which the purposes of the U.S. government, as defined in the U.S. Constitution, are achieved (e.g., protecting individual rights, providing for the general welfare)

C-1B-H1: Explain the meaning and importance of principles of U.S. constitutional democracy in American society

Anticipatory Set/Essential Question: How does the United States Constitution establish the order and rules of our federal government compared to a proposition for establishing the same for the State of Israel?

Materials Required:

Primary source readings – copies of the U.S. Constitution and the proposed document for the State of Israel

Worksheets of the DBQs that question each primary source

Instructional Strategies Used:

PowerPoint lecture

Think-pair-share

Performance assessment

Topical homework assignment

Guided Practice or Mini Lesson: The teacher will give a short PowerPoint lecture on the following topics to give a historical setting: the Second Continental Congress and the political creation of the State of Israel.

Process or Activity Period:

The student will work on reading the documents on their own. After they have completed the reading, they are to answer the included questions for each constitution. If time permits, they could engage in a think-pair-share activity with their neighbor to see how each student has interpreted the document. However, this could only be done using the critical thinking questions. The activity could easily be adapted to group work if necessary.

Assessment:

The assessments are the DBQs that follow with analysis of each document. They include a variety of question types including: multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short sentence. As a constructed response, each worksheet includes two critical thinking questions as they relate to compare and contrast the two documents.

Closure Activity:

Students will leave class with the following homework assignment: to write a letter to the heads of the State of Israel taking a side for or against ratification of this proposed document. The letter is to provide concrete examples from the U.S. Constitution to base their argument. Since the documents have significant differences in certain areas, the students viewpoint must include the effect of ratification on all the people of the nation.

Attachments: United States Constitution, Israeli Constitution (excerpt), Student Activity sheet with questions related to each document

U. S. Constitution accessible:

<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/constitution/text.html>

The Constitution of the State of Israel accessible:

<http://u.cs.biu.ac.il/~koppel/constitution-english-04%5B1%5D.07.06-published.pdf>

Document Based Questions: United States Constitution

Instructions: Students are to answer all of the following questions based on the United States Constitution as it is presented in class.

1. Which part of government is NOT created by the U.S. Constitution?
a. Executive b. Military c. Judicial d. Congressional
2. Article I establishes both a House of Representatives and a _____.
3. Article I Section 3 states that the Vice President will also be
a. Head of the Supreme Court b. Only the Vice President
c. President of the Senate d. Head of the Military
4. Article II Section 2 established that the President
a. is Commander of the military branches b. can fill vacancies in the Senate
c. can grant pardons d. all of the above e. none of the above
5. Article II Section 1 states that the President can only be what type of citizen of what minimum age?
6. According to Article III, who creates 'inferior' courts other than the Supreme Court?
a. the President b. Congress c. the Supreme Court d. State governors
7. Article IV discusses the rights of
a. the military b. the Supreme Court c. the States of the Union d. the people
8. List at least three powers that Congress is granted under Article I Section 8:
9. Why is Article V important?
a. it gives the President supreme power b. it makes the Constitution expire in 100 years
c. it allows the document to be amended in the future d. it makes war illegal
10. Under Article III Section 2, does judicial power extend to cases of controversies & citizens in the states or does it only apply to federal cases?

Critical thinking questions: Students are to answer the following questions in complete sentences

11. How does the Constitution establish a basic presidential succession order in case of death or removal from office? Explain why it was necessary to later amend the statements. Conclude how you think the amendment was justified.
12. The U.S. Constitution as it was originally written does not include the Bill of Rights, or the first ten amendments. Based on prior class discussion, explain why was it necessary for the Bill of Rights to be added. Does any of that information already appear in the Constitution? Infer the basic importance of adding a Bill of Rights.

Document Based Questions: Constitution of the State of Israel

Note: After its creation in 1948, Israel was supposed to draft a full written constitution. Talks in 1949 were inconclusive. Since then, Israel has resulted in a legislature, the Knesset to enact its basic laws, elect Presidents & Prime Ministers, etc. This document is a draft of a constitution written in 2006 for the State of Israel. It has not yet been approved by the Knesset.

1. How does the Israeli constitution begin in comparison with that of the United States?
2. What is NOT a Basic principle of the Israeli state?
 - a. its sovereignty comes from its citizens
 - b. parts of the constitution cannot be altered
 - c. it does not have a national religion
 - d. it is democratic
3. Israel's version of a Bill of Rights is found in which section of the constitution?
4. In the section discussing Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, list three factors that express this:
5. In relation to question four, how do these statements compare to the U.S. constitution?
6. Israel's Knesset is composed of only a Senate / House of Representatives.
7. Members of the Knesset are elected every _____ years.
8. In the section on the Judiciary, what types of courts handle matters of marriages & divorces?
 - a. the civil court
 - b. the District court
 - c. the religious court
 - d. the Supreme Court
9. The Section on The President of the State allows for the president to
 - a. serve 1 term for 7 years
 - b. serve two terms for 8 years total
 - c. serve a life term
 - d. be re-elected as the people see fit
10. In comparison to the U.S. Constitution, Israel's document includes directions for one additional government official. The office is
 - a. the Commander in Chief
 - b. the State Comptroller
 - c. the Governor of Territories
 - d. the High Rabbi of the land

Critical thinking questions:

Compare Israel's section on The President of the State with Article II of the U.S. Constitution. What are major differences established in each?

Examine the section on Ratification & Amendments to the Israel constitution. How does it differ from that of the United States? Explain how Israel's differences in this point could not be applied to the U.S. document.