

THE MAKING OF THE CONSTITUTION LESSON PLANS

Introduction: These lessons are based on the CALLA approach. See the end of the lessons for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach.

Lesson Elements

Prepare: Engage students in the topic and identify objectives for the lesson. Find out what students already know about it and motivate them to learn more. Teach new vocabulary.

Present: Present new information. Explain the target learning strategy for the lesson. Model what the students are asked to do. Discuss connections to students' prior knowledge.

Practice: Give students an authentic, active task that they can do in a small group or in pairs. Remind students to use the target learning strategy.

Self-Evaluate: Question students so they will reflect on their own learning. Ask students to evaluate their own learning rather than wait for the teacher to assess them. Find out if using the learning strategy helped students' understanding.

Expand: Guide students on how to apply what they learned to their own lives. Point out other contexts where the learning strategy may help. Make connections between content and language or to the student's first language. When appropriate, request that parents contribute to learning.

The Making of the Constitution can be broken into three lesson themes:

- The People Who Made the Constitution
- The Culture of the Time
- Events Surrounding the Making of the Constitution

These lessons can be presented sequentially or individually.

3. Lesson Plan: Events Surrounding the Making of the Constitution

Essential Question: When the world around us changes, how do we adapt?

Materials: Timeline showing events before and after the Constitutional Convention. May be shown on a screen or given out in paper form. Additional information on historical events may be given to students for a homework assignment based on the lesson.

See model at the end of this lesson.

Prepare

Introduce the story. "Today we are going to read 'The Making of the Constitution.' You probably know that the United States has a Constitution -- the law of the land, as we call it. But do you know about the events that happened around the time the Constitution was written? Of course, you can guess that these events beforehand included the Revolutionary War between Britain and the colonies. What else happened in the years before the Constitution was made? What happened during the Constitutional Convention? What happened afterwards?"

Give students time to respond. Possible previous events include the protests such as Shays' Rebellion. During the convention, there was a debate between small and large states. And, some delegates refused to sign the document. Some later events include Washington being elected president of the U.S. and the first meeting of the new Congress.

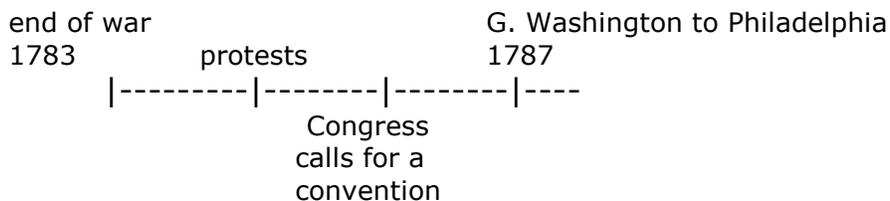
Lesson Plan - Events Surrounding the Making of the Constitution

Introduce the essential question for the lesson. "As we read today, I want you to keep this essential question in mind: when the world around us changes, how do we adapt? We will see how things are changing in the young nation. The leaders realize they need to change, or adapt, to these changes. This happens in our daily lives, too. We can learn from the past by finding out how the leaders of early America adapted to change."

Present

Explain the task and model the strategy. "As we read today, we will use visuals to help us understand the events surrounding the making of the Constitution. This is a strategy that helps us to both gather and organize information. I call it 'using graphic organizers.' The advantage of adding graphics to our learning is that some of us learn better through what we see. Having information in a visual form is another way that we can make connections that help us remember. Let's begin reading and I'll show you what I mean."

Read the story aloud to "Today we usually call it the Constitutional Convention."
Draw a horizontal line on the board or place a blank timeline on a shared screen. Write at the left side of the line "1783 - end of war." Make a perpendicular line to the right, and write "protests" above it. Make another line to the right of the second line. Above it write "George Washington goes to Philadelphia - 1787."



Explain, "I can make a visual to help me keep the events in order and have something to help me remember them. This visual is called a 'timeline.' The first thing I write on the timeline is the end of the Revolutionary War. The story tells us that happened in 1783. The next thing the story tells us is that some protests happened in 1786. They caused the leaders to worry about their government. The next event I can write on my timeline is that George Washington came to Philadelphia to talk with people from other states. Now I have the beginnings of a timeline. Do you see how this can be helpful when I want to review this story? Instead of reading everything again, I can just look at this and quickly remember what happened."

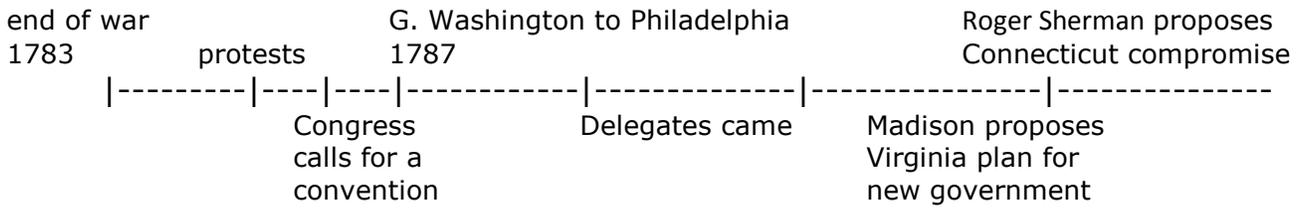
Practice

Pass out a paper with a blank timeline for students. Have students form pairs. Instruct students, "With your partner, you will make your own timeline. Then you will have your own graphic organizer to help you remember the facts of the story. Here's how you can do this: one student will read the story aloud. The other student will make notes and mark their timeline. Then together, you will check the order of the events. Do they move from the left side of the line to the right as you move forward in time? Begin by copying what I have on my timeline."

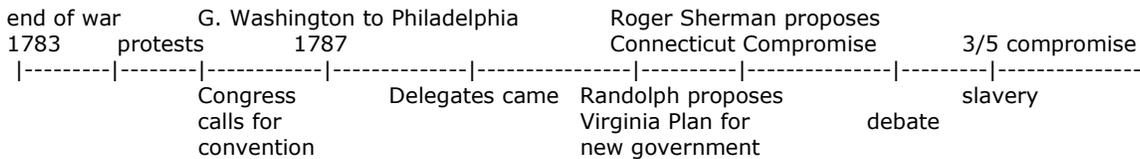
Give students time to form pairs and copy the beginning of the timeline. Instruct them to continue reading. "Let's begin reading at 'Eventually, 55 men from 12 states took part.' Stop when you get to 'But the Connecticut Compromise, as it was called, raised another question.' We will talk about the events in this section."

When most have read to the stopping point, bring students back to focus as a class. Ask several students to share what they have written on their timelines. Add items to the shared timeline on the screen or board.

Lesson Plan - Events Surrounding the Making of the Constitution



Talk through the events the students have suggested for the timeline. Instruct them to continue working in pairs to read up to 'And, they said officials in every state must return escaped slaves to their owners — even if the slave escaped to a state that banned slavery.' Add to the timeline: delegates argued about slavery; agreed on the 3/5 clause on how to count slave population.



Have students regroup and continue reading to the end of the story. Ask students to share the events they have added to their timelines.

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to reflect on the essential question: when the world around us changes, how do we adapt? Guide them to express their opinions on how well the delegates to the Constitutional Convention adapted to changes in their world. Point out that the U.S. Constitution has been the "law of the land" longer than any other written national constitution. It has been amended, but it has survived the test of time.

Ask student to evaluate their application of the focus strategy for the lesson: using a graphic organizer. "Did using and creating a timeline help you to understand the story? What will you do next week when I ask you to take a quiz on this topic? Will you use the timeline or will you use your written notes?" Lead a discussion and ask students to write their reaction to using the strategy on a piece of paper to hand in at the end of the class.

Expand

Suggest other applications for the strategy. "What other times can you use a graphic organizer when you learn? In science, we use graphics to learn about the life cycle of an animal. Or we look at a graphic that teaches us about the water cycle. In computer programming, we might use a flow chart to show how a computer program should work. There are many times in our daily lives that we use graphic organizers without even thinking about them. Look around you and see if you can find one after class. Tell me about it in our next class."

Words in This Story

timeline - *n.* a line that includes marks showing when particular events happened in the past

propose - *v.* to suggest something, such as a plan or theory, to a person or group of people to consider

slave - *n.* someone who is legally owned by another person and is forced to work for that person without pay

compromise - *n.* a way of reaching agreement in which each person or group gives up something that was wanted in order to end an argument or dispute

Additional resources:

Online exhibit on the Constitutional Convention:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/>

Constitutional Convention timeline:

<http://www.shmoop.com/constitutional-convention/timeline.html>

Timeline

The Articles of Confederation were ratified in 1781. They let the states (the former 13 colonies) have independence and their own power

Revolutionary War peace treaty was signed in 1783.

Shays' Rebellion, in 1786 and 1787, made some people think there should be a stronger national government.

Congress calls for a convention of state leaders; delegates meet in Philadelphia

Constitution ratified

Washington elected U.S. president