

American Government
Research Topic – Constitution of The United States of America

Research Topic	Constitution of the United States of America
Grade Level	High School/Grades 9 – 12
Time Requirement	1 class period (60 minutes)
Ohio’s Learning Standards	American Government – Topic: Basic Principals of the U.S. Constitution: Principles related to representative democracy are reflected in the articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution and provide structure for the government of the United States.
Common Core Standards	<u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4</u> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. <u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4</u> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.
Objective	Students shall understand the influences upon the Founding Fathers on their formulating the U.S. Constitution and how the foundation of the new nation was established by them through the creation of the U.S. Constitution.
Research Statement	The Constitution of the United States establishes America’s federal government and fundamental laws which guarantee certain basic rights for all its citizens.
Military Service	In attendance at the Constitution Convention, of the 55 delegates, two were Veterans. George Washington, Veteran: Branch – Colonial militia, Virginia Regiment, Continental Army, United States Army Rank – Colonel, General, Commander in Chief, Lieutenant General, General of the Armies Battles – French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War Alexander Hamilton, Veteran: Branch – New York Provincial Company of Artillery, Continental Army, United States Army Rank – Major General Battles/Wars – American Revolutionary War
Introduction	The U.S. Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787 by 39 of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Under its predecessor , the Articles of Confederation, the national government was weak, and states operated like independent countries. At the 1787 convention, delegates devised a plan for a stronger federal government with three branches — executive, legislative and judicial — along with a system of checks and balances to ensure no single branch would have too much power.
Supporting Idea I	The Constitution didn’t just materialize in the minds of the Convention members. In addition to the Articles of Confederation, the writing of the U.S. Constitution was influenced by other documents. Among them are, the Magna Carta (England, 1215); Edward Coke's, The Institutes of the Lawes of England (England, 1628 to 1644); the Flushing Remonstrance (Dutch New York, 1657); Two Treatises of Government by John Locke (England, 1689); and, The Spirit of the Laws by Montesquieu (France, 1748). Also, two documents submitted at the Constitutional Convention, The Virginia

	Plan (drafted by James Madison) and the New Jersey Plan (submitted by William Paterson, shaped the Constitution.
Supporting Idea II	There are six reasons for the Constitution. They can be found in its very beginning. The six reasons are to Secure the Blessings of Liberty, Promote the General Welfare, Insure Domestic Tranquility, Establish Justice, Provide for the Common Defense, and to form a More Perfect Union. Five usually listed principles that the Constitution is based on are: popular sovereignty, separation of powers, checks and balances, individual rights, and federalism. Two other principles, often excluded because they overlap the listed five, are republicanism and judicial review.
Supporting Idea III	The ratification campaign was iffy. It took a “vote now, amend later” compromise to help secure victory in Massachusetts and eventually in the remaining holdouts. The U.S. Congress has sent 33 proposed Constitutional amendments the states for ratification since the Constitution was put into operation on March 4, 1789. The first ten amendments, known collectively as the Bill of Rights, were adopted and ratified simultaneously in 1791. Seventeen more having been ratified by the requisite number of states (the legislatures or ratifying conventions of three-fourths of the states) are also part of the Constitution. Six amendments adopted by Congress and sent to the states have not been ratified by the required number of states. Only four of these amendments are still pending
Conclusion	<p>William Gladstone (1809-1898), British statesman and prime minister said, “The American Constitution is, so far as I can see, the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man.” Gladstone was not alone in recognizing the U.S. Constitution’s value. Its influence appears in constitutions of other democracies via similarities of phrasing and borrowed passages, as well as in the principles of the rule of law, separation of powers and recognition of individual rights.</p> <p>The National Veterans Memorial and Museum honors the service and sacrifice of our nation’s Veterans by sharing their stories and connecting students to the Veteran experience. Visit our website www.nationalvmm.org for more educational resources.</p>
Recommended Readings	<p>Klarman, Michael J., <i>The Framers’ Coup: The Making of the United States Constitution</i>, Oxford University Press, 2018</p> <p>Stewart, David O., <i>The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution</i>, Simon & Schuster, 2008</p> <p>Strange, Mark A. (2018). <i>Understanding the U.S. Constitution: Middle and upper grades</i>. Mark Twain Media/Carson-Dellosa, LLC.</p> <p>Paine, Thomas. (2012). <i>Works of Thomas Paine</i>. Cayote Canyon Press.</p>
Resources	<p>https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/the-constitution/</p> <p>https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm</p> <p>https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/constitution</p> <p>https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution/how-did-it-happen</p> <p>https://www.factmonster.com/us-constitution-primer</p> <p>https://libquotes.com/thomas-jefferson/quotes/constitution</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU5gasRxYdU</p> <p><i>The constitution of the united states of America</i>. American Civil Liberties Union.</p>
Critical Thinking Questions	<p>1. Former Supreme Court Justice Antonin and other Justices have based their decisions on Originalism – trying to figure out precisely what the ratified document means. Scalia has said, "The Constitution is not a living organism. It's a legal document, and it says what it says and doesn't say what it doesn't say." However, Thomas Jefferson’s viewpoint is that, “No society can make a perpetual constitution, or even a perpetual law. The earth belongs always to the living generation.” What are some implications for issues currently in the United States,</p>

and in your future, with regard to Scalia's versus Jefferson's view of the Constitution?

2. Thomas Jefferson said, "The greatest danger to American freedom is a government that ignores the Constitution." People elected or appointed to an office of honor or profit in the civil service or uniformed services take an oath that contains words in which they pledge to uphold the Constitution (the Museum alcove titled "Taking the Oath" contains an oath that military personnel take). What should happen to those that pledge to uphold the Constitution but act in ways that are in violation of the Constitution?
3. The First Amendment is often in the news. It provides for freedom of religion, speech, and the press; and, rights of assembly and petition. What, if any, limits should be placed on these freedoms?
4. The U.S. Constitution is referred to as "The Supreme Law of The Land. What does this mean?



Howard Chandler Christy
Signing of the United States Constitution
Oil on Canvas
20' x 30'
1940
U.S. Capitol, House Wing, East stairway



Title

George Washington

Summary

George Washington, full-length portrait, with right arm extended holding sword, on horseback.

Created / Published

New York : Cosmos Pictures Co., [between 1890 and 1900]

Subject Headings

- Washington, George,--1732-1799--Military service

Headings

Halftone photomechanical prints--1890-1900.

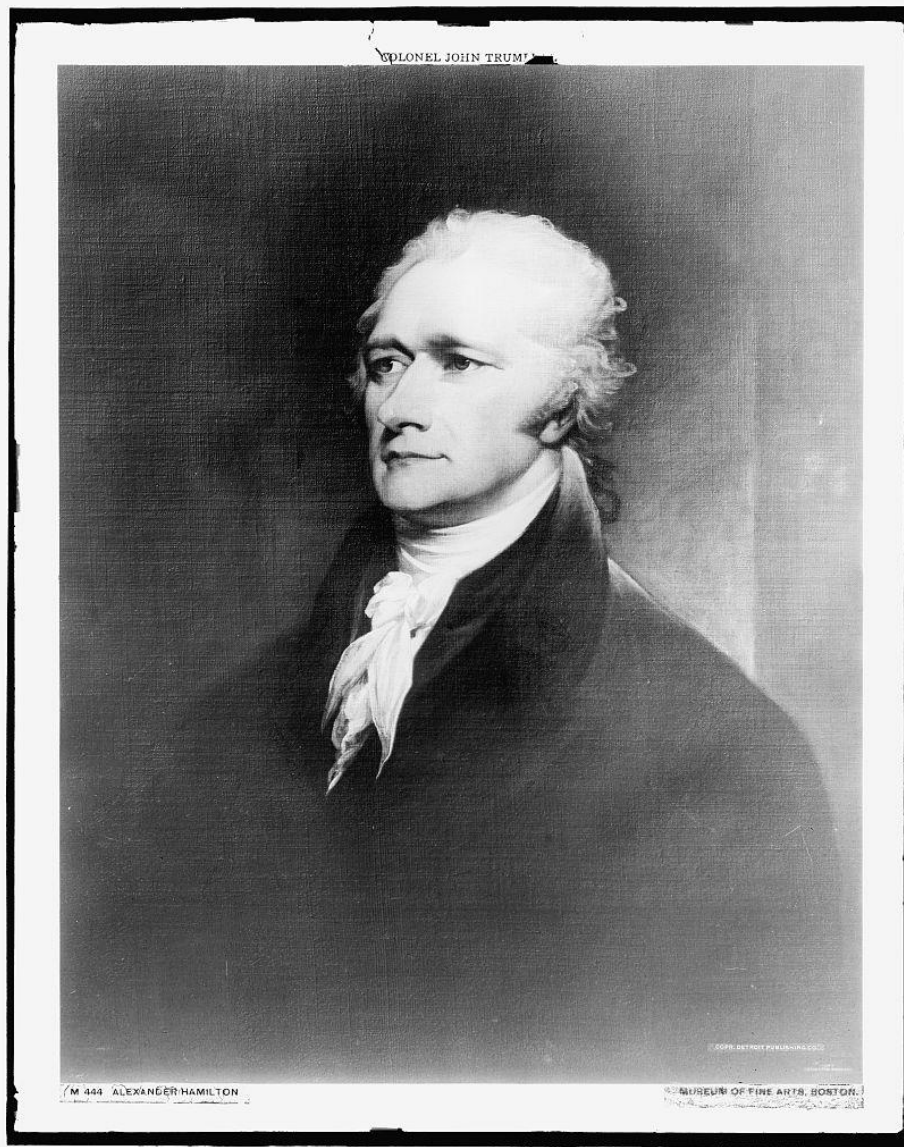
Portrait paintings--Reproductions--1890-1900.

Notes

- Reproduction of painting: "Washington receiving a salute on the field of Trenton"(?).

Medium

1 photomechanical print : halftone.



Title

Alexander Hamilton

Contributor Names

Trumbull, John, 1756-1843, artist
Detroit Publishing Co., copyright claimant
Detroit Publishing Co., publisher

Created / Published

c[between 1900 and 1912]

Subject Headings

- Hamilton, Alexander,--1757-1804

Headings

Dry plate negatives.
Portrait paintings--Reproductions.

Genre

Portrait paintings--Reproductions
Dry plate negatives

Notes

- Date based on Detroit, Thistle Publications (1912).
- Photograph of painting at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
- Detroit Publishing Co. no. M444.
- Gift; State Historical Society of Colorado; 1949.