

RAMBLE THROUGH THE PREAMBLE

LESSON_1

The U.S. Constitution and the Roles of Government

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Ramble Through the Preamble

The US Constitution and the Roles of Government

Skill Level

Intermediate (6-8 grades), though this lesson could easily be adapted for high school government

Educational Standards Supported

Standards D2.Civ.3.6-8, D2.Civ.5.6-8 – **C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013)**

Standards 8.23 (Examine the principles and purposes of government articulated in the Preamble and principles stated in the Constitution, including: the separation of powers, federalism, and checks and balances) and GC.05 (Describe the purposes and functions of government as outlined in the Preamble of the Constitution) - **Tennessee State Standards**

Learner Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- Define the purpose of government and reflect on its relevance.
Success Criteria: I can share short ideas about why government exists. I can discuss and compare ideas with a partner.
- Analyze the language of the Preamble through writing and visuals.
Success Criteria: I can answer questions using evidence. I can draw real-life examples of Preamble phrases.
- Evaluate the Preamble's goals in today's context. **Success Criteria:** I can identify goals the government meets or misses. I can explain if the Preamble still matters today.

Tag or Keyword

Government, Purpose, Preamble, Constitution, Justice, Domestic Tranquility, General Welfare, Liberty, Representation, Civic Responsibility, Relevance, Interpretation.

Time Needed

60 minute class period (can be adapted for various lengths)

Materials Needed (per group)

- Lesson handouts (provided)

Authors

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Introduction to Content

This lesson guides students to explore the purpose and key ideas of the U.S. Constitution's Preamble through reading, discussion, and creative interpretation. It encourages critical thinking about how the government meets these goals today and engages students in reflecting on the relevance of foundational civic principles.

Students begin by writing short responses to the prompt "What is the purpose of government?" to assess prior knowledge. During the lesson, comprehension questions and drawings related to the Preamble help monitor understanding and interpretation. Finally, an exit ticket asks students to reflect on the Preamble's meaning, government performance, and its relevance today as a post-assessment.

Introduction to Methodology

Before teaching this lesson, ensure students have a basic understanding of the Constitutional Convention and the overall structure of the U.S. Constitution. This lesson builds on that foundation by focusing specifically on the Preamble and its goals, so be prepared to guide students in connecting historical concepts to today's government. Encourage open discussion and critical thinking—remind students there are no single "right" answers when evaluating government performance or relevance. Visual and partner activities help engagement, so circulate and support students as they share and reflect. Keep the focus on application and civic understanding rather than memorization.

Terms/Vocabulary/Concepts

Setting the Stage/Opening Question

In pairs/trios, students respond to the prompt: “What is the purpose of government?” on a shared handout. Each student writes 2–3 short (1–5 word) answers in a different color.

Optional: To enhance student engagement and provide memorable background, consider previewing the Preamble by showing the SchoolHouse Rock video on the Preamble as you introduce the lesson and explain daily instructions.

Structure: Explain norms, distribute handouts, set 3-minute timer. Each student writes silently. Then, lead a brief whole-class share-out with the optional video on the Preamble.

Experience

1. Students independently read a short text on the Preamble and answer comprehension questions (DOK 1–4) in complete sentences.
2. Students pick two phrases from the Preamble, write each in the designated space, and draw a simple real-life representation (color optional depending on teacher-specific instructions).

Structure: Distribute reading and activity sheet. Set a 20-25 minute timer. Monitor and support students as they work. End with a quick review of key terms.

Strategies to Increase Student Engagement

Share/Process/Generalize

Students regroup with their original partners or trios to share drawings and discuss: Why did you choose that phrase? How does your drawing show what it means?

Structure: Prompt students to take turns sharing. Circulate to listen and prompt deeper discussion as needed.

Apply

Students discuss and complete exit ticket questions with their partner or trio: What is the Preamble? What part is the government doing well today? What needs more work? Are the goals still relevant today? Why or why not?

Structure: Distribute or direct students to the exit ticket. Set a timer. Ensure each pair writes shared responses. Collect before dismissal.

References – The United States Constitution, Preamble.

- National Archives. *The Preamble to the Constitution*. Retrieved from <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/preamble>, accessed June 2025.
- Bill of Rights Institute. *Explaining the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution*. Retrieved from <https://billofrightsinstitute.org>, accessed June 2025.

Lesson content adapted from explanations and resources provided by the National Archives and the Bill of Rights Institute

Supplemental Information
Educational Standards Met

Student Worksheet



What is the purpose of government?

Exit-Ticket: Discuss the questions below with your partner, using your drawings and what you learned from the reading.

1. **What is the Preamble?**
2. **Which part of the Preamble do you think the government does well today, and which part needs more work?**
3. **Do you think the goals of the Preamble are still relevant today? Why or why not?**

Name _____

Date _____

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution is a brief but powerful opening that explains why the Constitution was written. The Constitution is the highest law in the United States—it creates our system of government and protects our rights. It begins with the words “**We the People**,” which shows that government gets its power from the people, not a king or ruler. This idea, called *popular sovereignty*, means citizens have the power and responsibility to shape their government.

The Preamble says the Constitution was written to “**form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty.**” These goals reflect the purpose of government. Each branch plays a role: the **legislative branch** makes laws that promote justice and the general welfare, the **executive branch** enforces laws and helps provide for the common defense, and the **judicial branch** interprets laws to ensure justice and liberty. Together, these branches work to carry out the vision set forth in the Preamble and serve the people who give them power.

The government’s job is to protect rights, keep peace, and promote the well-being of all citizens. But the success of our country depends on “**We the People**” actively taking part in shaping justice, freedom, and unity. Your voice and choices matter—they are the foundation of the democracy the Preamble describes.

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1. What does “popular sovereignty” mean and how does it show the power of the people in the government.

 2. Evaluate how the three branches of government work together to achieve the goals outlined in the Preamble. Provide examples of how each branch of government follows the preamble.

 3. In what ways can people participate in government? Explain how this participation helps shape justice, freedom, and unity, based on the ideas in the Preamble.

Illustrated Preamble of the United States Constitution

Objective: Show your understanding of the Preamble by creating two drawings that represent the ideas behind key phrases.

Instructions: Choose **two phrases** from the Preamble below. For each one, write it at the top of the box and draw a simple picture to show what it looks like in real life.

- Form a more perfect union* (Work together as one country)
- Establish justice* (Make laws fair and equal)
- Ensure domestic tranquility* (Keep peace at home)
- Provide for the common defense* (Protect the country)
- Promote the general welfare* (Support people's well-being)
- Secure the blessings of liberty* (Protect freedom now and later)

Phrase:

Illustration:

Phrase:

Illustration:

I.D.E.A.L. CITIZENRY

*Innovative Designs that Engage
Active Learning for Citizenry*

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Teacher Author Affiliations

K-12 Schools Where Educator Authors Teach

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