

THE NATION'S BEGINNINGS

Enrichment: Document-Based Assessment

The Constitution

The Constitution of the United States sets out a plan for the federal government, delegating certain powers to the federal government and reserving other powers for state governments. As originally written and ratified, the Constitution does not contain any protections for civil liberties, or citizens' rights. These protections were added in the first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, in 1791, and in later amendments. Still, the Constitution embodies key principles of democratic thought, including the ideas of limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and popular sovereignty.

Your assignment: Review the chart entitled "Principles of the Constitution" in Section 3 of your textbook. Then, work in groups to review the Constitution and find the ways in which it reflects these principles. Select one of the principles to illustrate in a display, using images of modern events, institutions, and activities.

Suggested materials: a complete copy of the Constitution; notebook paper for recording information from the document in graphic organizers; poster board for making a display; at least five images depicting one of the principles listed in the chart

Suggested procedures:

1. Review the principles listed in the textbook, and discuss what they mean as a group.
2. Assign each member of your group one or two principles to research. Then, review the Constitution, including its amendments, to find ways in which the document reflects your assigned principle(s). Reproduce the graphic organizer on the next page to record your information.
3. Come together as a group, and share what you learned.
4. Select one principle to illustrate in a display. Look for images that illustrate your principle in action, and write a brief description for each image that you use. Check magazines, newspapers, and school-approved websites. Then, write a paragraph answering the questions on the following page to go with your display.
5. Be creative with your display but consider carefully how your images reflect your principle.
6. Share your display with the class by explaining the principle you selected and the reasons you selected each image.

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Directions: *On a separate sheet of paper, reproduce this graphic organizer for each of the principles that you research. Each student in your group should look for provisions in the Constitution that reflect one or more of the following: popular sovereignty, limited government, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, representative government, and individual rights.*

Principle:				
Definition:				
Provision:	Provision:	Provision:	Provision:	Provision:

Directions: *After your group has completed a graphic organizer for each principle, select one principle to illustrate in a display. Find images that show your principle in action today. Answer the questions below, and think about your answers when selecting and assembling your images. Rewrite your answers as a paragraph to go with your display.*

1. Why do you think the framers of the Constitution considered this principle important to the government of the new nation?

2. In what ways do laws, political leaders, and citizens uphold this principle today?

3. Why do you think that this principle is important, and what actions can you take as a citizen to support this principle?
