



## TEACHER TREASURES

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### SEPTEMBER 16 IS CONSTITUTION DAY!

Did you know that a 2004 provision passed by Congress, requires all schools receiving federal funds teach about the United States Constitution on September 16, 2005? **Constitution Day** will be recognized throughout the nation on September 16 and 17 in a variety of ways. Some public schools and higher education institutions may hold special assemblies and seminars, while others may limit activities to students' Social Studies and History classes. This special edition of **TEACHER TREASURES** hopes to highlight several resources the [Library of Congress](#) has related to the Constitution, as well as offer teaching ideas to help you plan activities and design learning experiences that suit your students best. A quick search of

[America's Library](#) using the term, "Constitution" showcases an article with primary sources that introduces [James Madison's Contribution to the Constitution](#) to elementary students. Search the LOC [Today in History Archive](#) on September 17, to reveal a variety of resources including links to the [Constitution](#) as originally adopted, the [Bill of Rights](#), George Mason's [Virginia Declaration of Rights](#) and the [Articles of Confederation](#). There are also several [American Memory](#) collections which contain abundant treasures in the form of portraits, letters, notes, documents, broadsides and political cartoons created by or about our Founding Fathers. So, enjoy this lesson planning opportunity and Happy Constitution Day!

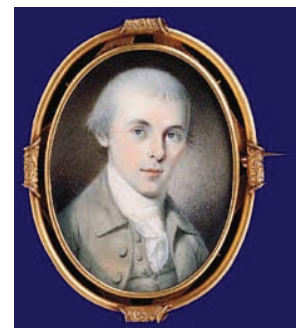
### ELEMENTARY IDEAS: EXPLORING THE 3 BRANCHES

One of the most important concepts in the United States Constitution is the idea of a strong federal government comprised of three branches, that check and balance one another. Looking at [James's Madison's Contribution to the Constitution](#) as an opener, and the [Constitution](#) itself, small groups of elementary students could do one of the following activities: 1. *Discuss, draw, or act out what classroom life would be like without rules and order and write a Classroom Constitution with 3 governing branches and appropriate checks and balances.* 2. *Design a "Kid's Version of the Constitution", by rewriting or drawing a pictogram of*

*Articles I, II, and III, that emphasizes the role of each branch and its specific powers.* 2. *Create a living monument or tableaux explaining the concept of Federalism or the three branches checking and balancing one another.* 3. *Use the AM Collection, [A Century of Lawmaking—Farrand's Records](#) to conduct a debate of the Virginia Plan v. the New Jersey Plan. Students could compare their ideas to those in the final document.* 4. *Discuss whether or not a strong federal government meets the needs of its citizens today.* These ideas would fulfill the Virginia Standards of Learning for Civics: K.8, 1.10, 2.10, 3.10, & VS.6a, VS.10a, and USI.7b.

### CONSTITUTION FOCUSED AMERICAN MEMORY COLLECTIONS:

- [A CENTURY OF LAW-MAKING FOR A NEW NATION](#)
- [DOCUMENTS FROM THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION](#)
- [THE THOMAS JEFFERSON PAPERS](#)
- [THE JAMES MADISON PAPERS](#)
- [BY POPULAR DEMAND: PORTRAITS OF THE PRESIDENTS AND FIRST LADIES](#)
- [WORDS AND DEEDS IN AMERICAN HISTORY](#)

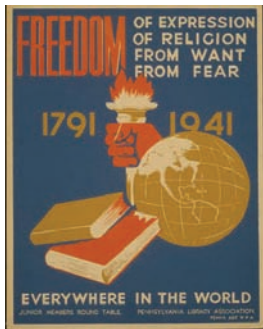


James Madison Miniature portrait by Charles Willson Peale, 1783, Rare Book and Special Collections Division

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON: TRACKING THE AMENDMENTS



Three suffragists casting votes in New York City, 1917.



Poster promoting FDR's Four Freedoms, WPA, 1936-1941.

When the Constitution was adopted in 1787, many found it flawed because it lacked a Bill of Rights. This lesson asks students to view primary sources depicting several of the Constitutional amendments and make a case for why such protections have been added. Students then compare their ideas to four great Virginians. **Teacher Note:** Many primary source images are available through the [Prints and Photographs Online Catalog](#) or [American Memory](#). If time permits, students can find and print these, otherwise the teacher should do so in advance.

**Entry Point:** Show students a copy of the [U.S. Constitution](#) as it was originally adopted and ask them to skim it, noting Article V. and determine what is missing. (*The Bill of Rights*) Briefly explain controversy between Federalists and Anti-Federalists and the call for including individual rights and liberties.

**Body of Lesson:** Divide students into

small groups and give each group a variety of primary source images and a copy of the 27 amendments. Ask students to look carefully at images, and identify those that reflect specific amendments. They must be able to explain why they made such identifications. Students should then categorize images/amendments and label each category. (e.g. *personal freedoms, rights of the accused, voting rights, etc.*) Ask which categories in their opinion, are most essential so as to demand specific Constitutional protections? **Conclusion and Assessment:**

Present students with [Washington's First Inaugural Address](#), [G. Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights](#), [Jefferson's views](#) on including a Bill of Rights, and [Madison's notes on this same issue](#). Students should individually compare their ideas to those of the Founding Fathers in written form. (VA SOLS: USI.1a, USI.7b, USI.10a, USII.1a, USII.3e, USII.5b, CE.1a, CE.1g, CE.2b, CE.3b, & CE.6d)

## HIGH SCHOOL IDEAS: CURRENT CONTROVERSIES

Strict v. loose interpretation of the U.S. Constitution has been hotly debated over time. Most recent discussion often centers upon the role of religion in public life and what the Constitution says regarding this topic. The LOC exhibit, [Religion and the Founding of the American Republic](#), offers high school students a strong background as to the religious convictions of the colonists and founders. [Section VI, Religion and the Federal Government](#), presents a fascinating view in [Part I](#), of religion and the writing of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, complete with primary source opinions from a multitude of participants. (Franklin, Washington, Madison, Adams, and Hamilton.) [Part II](#), focuses on Jefferson and Madison's views and the practice of religion as an "important prop for republican govern-

ment." This is well worth looking at with high school students. In addition, the WebQuest—[Civil Liberties, "It's a Balancing Act"](#), hosted on the [Adventure of the American Mind Northern Virginia](#) website, [www.aamnva.org](http://www.aamnva.org), poses the question: *How paramount are one's civil rights or does the public interest influence the rights and liberties of individuals?* (VA SOL Govt.11.d) This webquest puts students in role as "Clerks to the Supreme Court" and asks them to explore our civil liberties as specified in Foundational primary source documents and then look at primary source examples supporting or limiting such rights during U.S. history. Finally students use [THOMAS](#), the LOC congressional tool, to research legislation on a variety of current topics that address civil liberties issues.

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