

Preamble Breakdown

Interpreting the Intentions of the Preamble

Benchmark: SS.7.C.1.6 Interpret the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution.

Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will explain how the Preamble serves as an introduction to the U.S. Constitution, establishing the goals and purposes of government.
- Students will identify the goals and purposes of government as set forth in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution (i.e., form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity).
- Students will recognize that the intention of the phrase “We the People” means that government depends on the people for its power and exists to serve them.

Time: One class period

Materials:

- Preamble Breakdown PowerPoint
- Computer
- Projector
- Handout A – Preamble Breakdown

Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.
- Print Handout A

Lesson Overview

Distribute Handout A to students. Using the Preamble Breakdown PowerPoint, discuss the intentions of the Preamble of the Constitution. Students should complete worksheet as presentation progresses:

Discuss the definition of a Preamble: a preamble serves as an introduction; the Preamble to the United States Constitution serves as an introduction to highlight the reasons for writing the Constitution. Continue through the PowerPoint, breaking down each part of the Preamble:

- We the People – discuss that this means all people and establishes a social contract in which the people consent to live under this government and receive the protection of this government.
- In order to form a more perfect Union – discuss the definition of “Union” to mean the United States. The Framers wanted to work towards perfecting the United States.
- Establish Justice – discuss the need for fairness and putting law into practice.
- Insure domestic tranquility – discuss the definitions of “domestic” and “tranquility”. This phrase means to make sure there is peace within the country. Ask students to offer definitions in their own words.

- Provide for the common defense – Discuss what “common defense” means. It is the security of all people. Ask students for their own definition. (Note that in the US Constitution defense is spelled defence.)
- Promote the general welfare – define “Welfare” in context of the Preamble. General welfare refers to the overall well-being of all citizens. Ask students to offer this in their own words and how the government promotes the overall well-being of all citizens.
- Secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity - Discuss the definitions of liberty (freedom) and posterity (all future generations). This refers to the intention of securing freedom for those in the present as well as future generations.
- Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America – Discuss the definition of ordain (establish formally by law). Ask students to offer this in their own words.

Upon completion of the PowerPoint, students should have a complete outline of the Preamble, definitions of key vocabulary, and the Preamble written in their own words on Preamble Breakdown Student Handout. Students should then discuss and write down modern examples of how our government does the following: establish justice, provide for the common defense, promotes the general welfare, and secures the blessings of liberty for ourselves and future generations.

View Schoolhouse Rocks’ Preamble Video to reinforce the students’ understanding of and ability to recall the intentions of the Preamble.

Check for Understanding: The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.

Preamble Breakdown

Instructions: On the left is the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution. Define the vocabulary in the center “Vocab” box, then write the words of the Preamble in your own words in the far right column “In Your Own Words”.

Preamble	Vocab	In Your Own Words!
We the People of the United States,		
In Order to form a more perfect Union,	Perfect Union:	
Establish justice,	Justice:	
Insure domestic tranquility,	Domestic: Tranquility:	
provide for the common defense,	Defense:	
promote the general Welfare,	Welfare:	
and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity,	Liberty: Posterity:	
do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.	Ordain:	