



Honorable Mention Lesson Plan By Mr. Gerald Huesken

Constituting America's "We The Future" Contest

The Preamble Video Challenge

Lesson Plan for Constitution Day, 11th Grade Government & Economics

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OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

On September 17th, educational institutions across the United States take time from their busy curriculum and class schedules to celebrate and remember the lessons of the US Constitution. In honor of this, students in Mr Huesken's 11th Grade Government & Economics class at Elizabethtown Area High School in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania participate in an event known as the "Preamble Challenge" which encourages student to look at, interpret, and reinvent the meaning of the Constitution's Preamble for their own modern-day worldview. Students, individually or with a partner, will develop a short, 35 seconds to 1 minute video to explain their version of the Preamble and its meaning today. Inspired by the Civic Renewal Network's annual Preamble observance, this assignment is designed to foster interpretation skills, while also promoting teamwork and 21st Century technological knowledge.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop an understanding of the Preamble to the US Constitution & what it is trying to say to the citizens of our country
2. Encourage original interpretation of what the Preamble stands for in 21st Century America
3. Apply those original interpretations and understandings to a meaningful, hands-on project and / or a modern-day discussions or controversy

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. An iPhone, iPad, or similar device that can work with apps
2. A dependable partner (if desired)
3. Access to the free [Shadow Puppet for Edu](#) app on iTunes or the App Store

ACTIVITY

Introduction:

At the start of the week, students are re-introduced to the Preamble in a kind of comical way. For many students, they may have discussed the Preamble when they studied the Constitutional Convention in their middle school history classes, but by the time they get to high school the ideas behind this introduction to the Constitution are hazy. I like to start off by showing my students the [famous scene](#) from *The Andy Griffith Show*, when Barney tries to recite the Preamble from memory. Often students find this to be funny and also amazing that students had to memorize this passage in the first place. This will often lead to a discussion of why it is important for someone to know the context of the US Preamble.

From here, I will often introduce them to the basics of the project, review our in-class workshop timeline, and some of the tricks / tips I have found work the best when approaching a project such as this. The following points are heavily emphasized with this assignment:

1. The Preamble **MUST** be featured in the video somehow (audio, text, etc.)
2. Image / graphic selection and how it related to the words / meaning or your interpretation of the Preamble
3. Music / audio effects may be used with the Preamble's words; feel free to put your own spin on the reading as well (rap, dramatic readings / interpretations, etc.)

Students are also directed by my [classroom website](#), where example projects can also be found from past students who have participated in the challenge

Work Session:

As the week progresses, students work individually and collaboratively with a partner on their projects. I will often pass out a copy of the Preamble and work with students who may be stuck on breaking down the Preamble into sections that can become the basis for their video, asking them what they think these words mean on a broader scale and how they might impact American life. Students can utilize images, music, and stop-motion effects to create their final product through the app. Students can also expand out and use their own apps or video creation sites, but for students who are new to using technology like this or to video production, the app works well.

Conclusion:

At the end of the work week, students submit their finished Preamble videos to me and we have a kind of Preamble “film festival” in class on Constitution Day itself, allow students to give positive and constructive feedback on their work and provide a lesson they drew from seeing their fellow student’s interpretations. This is also a good time when students ask deeping, more meaningful questions about the Preamble itself, foreshadowing future topics of history, civics, and government that we will be discussing later in the course. I also enjoy showcasing my students videos on my classroom website and [classroom Twitter feed](#) for partners, fellow teachers, and other Constitutional enthusiasts to enjoy.

Extension Activity:

Since the week of Constitution Day often falls in the middle of our introductory Economics unit, a way that I like to also tie the Preamble Challenge back into our discussions is by using resources provided by the DBQ Project and their [Mini-Qs in Civics Collection](#), specifically their “The Preamble and the Federal Budget: Are We Slicing the Pie Correctly?” doc set. Structured like a traditional Document-Based Question for a Advanced Placement Exam, the program provides all the materials needed for a prompt, but instead of doing a written response, I like to use it as a fishbowl debate or Socratic discussion. Here, students can take their new-found interpretations of the Preamble and apply them back to where we are in the curriculum of our course, looking at the application of the Preambles words to aspects of US Federal budget and our county’s fiscal policy