



INSTRUCTIONS

As you know from studying your *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* textbook, members of Congress make laws. These laws should protect our rights and promote our welfare. To make good decisions about which laws they want to pass, members of Congress need to gather information. This information will help them understand how to address our nation's problems and pass good laws.

One way that members of Congress get the information they need is by holding congressional hearings. At these hearings, they ask experts to answer questions about important issues that affect proposed laws.

For this activity, you will play the role of an expert who has been asked to speak at a congressional hearing. Each unit group will act as a team of experts on one of the six units of your text.

You will need a good understanding of your unit. You will also have to prepare answers to the questions assigned to your unit. At the hearing, committee members might ask you other questions about the information you have presented.

Your unit group should meet before the congressional hearing to prepare answers to your assigned questions. Most of the information you need for preparing good answers is in your text. In some cases, you might want to ask parents, teachers, and friends for their ideas about government in the United States today. Each member of your group should contribute to the presentation and speak at the hearing.

**UNIT 1****WHAT WERE THE FOUNDERS' BASIC IDEAS ABOUT GOVERNMENT?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee. This committee will examine the U.S. Constitution and the purposes of government. The members of your group are expert witnesses who will appear before the committee. You will be asked to testify on the following questions.

1. John Locke was an English philosopher who thought about why it was necessary to have a government.
 - What did Locke think would happen without government?
 - What did Locke believe to be the purpose of government?
 - Do you think government might have purposes that Locke did not mention? Explain your answer.

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2. The Founders were concerned with how to preserve a republican form of government.
 - According to the Founders, what was republican government?
 - What weaknesses did the Founders think would lead to the failure of republican government?
 - How did the Founders think these weaknesses could be prevented? Do you think the Founders' solutions were correct? Why or why not?

**UNIT 2****WHAT SHAPED THE FOUNDERS' THINKING ABOUT GOVERNMENT?**

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1. The Declaration of Independence told the world why the Americans wanted to free themselves from British rule. The Declaration stated the Founders' beliefs about government.
 - Using the Declaration as your source, in your own words describe the principles of good government.
 - Where did the Founders get these ideas?
 - Do you think these principles are valid today? Why or why not?

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3. By the late 1780s, many Founders believed that the Articles of Confederation were not working well.
 - What were some achievements of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation?
 - What shortcomings did many Founders see in the Articles?
 - What arguments could you have made in support of the Articles?

**UNIT 3****WHAT HAPPENED AT THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION?**

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1. Because of different economic systems, Northern and Southern states had different interests. These conflicting interests led to disagreements at the Philadelphia Convention.
 - Describe at least two disagreements between Northern and Southern states at the convention.
 - What parts of the Constitution are the result of compromises that settled disagreements between the Northern and Southern states?
 - Do you think the Framers should have made these compromises? Why or why not?

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2. Articles I, II, and III of the Constitution list the powers of the Congress, president, and the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the national government.
 - Describe some of the powers the Constitution gives to the Congress. In what ways does the Constitution limit the power of Congress?
 - Describe some of the powers of the president. In what ways does the Constitution limit the power of the president?
 - Describe some of the powers of the judiciary. In what ways does the Constitution limit the power of the U.S. Supreme Court?

**UNIT 4****HOW WAS THE CONSTITUTION USED TO ESTABLISH OUR GOVERNMENT?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee. This committee will examine the U.S. Constitution and the purposes of government. The members of your group are expert witnesses who will appear before the committee. You will be asked to testify on the following questions.

1. One of the enduring contributions of the Framers was the creation of the federal system of government.
 - What is a federal system of government? Compare it with a unitary or a confederal system of government.
 - How are powers distributed between the states and the national government under our federal system? Give examples.
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of the federal system? Give some current examples.

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2. Judicial review is an important part of our constitutional system of government.
 - How did the Supreme Court acquire the power of judicial review?
 - Do you think the Supreme Court should have the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional? Why or why not?
 - How should justices determine the meaning of the words of the Constitution?

**UNIT 5****HOW DOES THE CONSTITUTION PROTECT OUR BASIC RIGHTS?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee. This committee will examine the U.S. Constitution and the purposes of government. The members of your group are expert witnesses who will appear before the committee. You will be asked to testify on the following questions.

2. Due process of law has been called the “primary and indispensable foundation of individual freedom” because it protects the individual from government wrongdoing.
 - What is the right to due process? Where in the Constitution is due process protected and how is the meaning of due process applied?
 - How does the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prevent state governments from practicing unfair discrimination?
 - Should young people under the age of eighteen have the same due process rights as adults? Why or why not?

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3. The First Amendment states that laws shall not be passed that abridge freedom of speech.
 - Why did the Founders think freedom of speech was so important?
 - Do you believe there are times when freedom of expression should be limited? Explain your response.
 - Should a public speaker who calls for violent action be protected by the First Amendment whereas an audience member who performs the action can be sent to prison? Why or why not?

**UNIT 6****WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee. This committee will examine the U.S. Constitution and the purposes of government. The members of your group are expert witnesses who will appear before the committee. You will be asked to testify on the following questions.

1. Many people believe that an informed citizenry is essential if democracy is to work.
 - Should people be required to pass periodic citizenship tests to maintain their citizenship? Why or why not?
 - Would you favor requiring literacy tests, fairly administered, before allowing citizens to vote? Why or why not?

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2. Voting is one way a citizen may participate in politics. Many other activities are available.
 - What activities besides voting are available to citizens?
 - Which of these activities, if any, do you think is most useful?
Explain your answer.
 - How should a citizen decide which of these various activities to participate in?