

Gerald R. Ford Becomes Our Nation's 38th President: The Twenty-fifth Amendment at Work



Lesson Objectives:

Students will learn about the Constitution, the Twenty-fifth Amendment, and President Gerald R. Ford. Students should be able to identify how amendments work, why the Twenty-fifth Amendment is important, and how Ford's character traits facilitated his appointment to the Presidency.

Grade Level: 3rd – 5th

Learning Standards Addressed:

Third Grade	Social Studies	3-H3.0.8	Use case studies or stories to describe how the idea or actions of individuals affected the history of Michigan.
		3-C5.0.1	Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
Third Grade	Common Core Language Standards	Demonstrate knowledge of language and its conventions when speaking, reading, or listening.	
		Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words or phrases in grade appropriate texts.	
		Acquire and use grade appropriate general academic and domain-specific words.	
		Demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage in writing and speaking.	
		Demonstrate command of written conventions, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.	
Third Grade	Common Core Writing Standards	Write opinion pieces on topics or text, supporting a point of view with reasons and evidence.	
		Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey information clearly.	

	Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards	Engage effectively in collaborative discussion on grade appropriate topics/texts.	
		Determine main ideas of and paraphrase/summarize texts read aloud.	
		Ask and answer questions about a speaker's main points and evidences.	
Fourth Grade	Social Studies	4-H3.0.4	Draw upon photos, artifacts, or other primary sources to compare the life of people in towns and cities in Michigan and the Great Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837-present.
		4-C1.0.1	Identify questions political scientists ask in examining the United States.
		4-C1.0.2	Explain probable consequences of an absence of government and rules of law.
		4-C3.0.1	Give examples of the ways the Constitution limits the power of the federal government.
		4-C3.0.3	Describe the organizational structure of the federal government.
		4-C3.0.6	Describe how the President and members of Congress come to power.
		4-C5.0.4	Describe ways citizens can work together to promote the values and principles of American Democracy.
	Common Core Language Standards	Demonstrate knowledge of language and its conventions when speaking, reading, or listening.	
		Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words or phrases in grade appropriate texts.	
		Acquire and use grade appropriate general academic and domain-specific words.	
		Demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage in writing and speaking.	
		Demonstrate command of written conventions, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.	
	Common Core Writing Standards	Write opinion pieces on topics or text, supporting a point of view with reasons and evidence.	
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey information clearly.			
Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards	Engage effectively in collaborative discussion on grade appropriate topics/texts.		
	Determine main ideas of and paraphrase/summarize texts read aloud.		

		Ask and answer questions about a speaker's main points and evidences.	
Fifth Grade	Social Studies	5-K1.4	Analyze events and circumstances from the vantage points of others.
		5-K1.7	Integrate concepts from at least two different social studies disciplines.
		5-U3.3.3	Explain why the Constitutional Convention was convened and why the Constitution was written.
		5-P3.1.1	Identify contemporary public issues related to the United States Constitution and their related factual, definitional, and ethical questions.
		5-P3.1.3	Give examples of how conflicts over core democratic values lead people to differ on contemporary constitutional issues in the United States.
	Common Core Language Standards	Demonstrate knowledge of language and its conventions when speaking, reading, or listening.	
		Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words or phrases in grade appropriate texts.	
		Acquire and use grade appropriate general academic and domain-specific words.	
		Demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage in writing and speaking.	
		Demonstrate command of written conventions, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.	
	Common Core Writing Standards	Write opinion pieces on topics or text, supporting a point of view with reasons and evidence.	
		Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey information clearly.	
	Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards	Engage effectively in collaborative discussion on grade appropriate topics/texts.	
		Determine main ideas of and paraphrase/summarize texts read aloud.	
		Ask and answer questions about a speaker's main points and evidences.	

Terms to Know and Identify:

(vocabulary flashcards included)

Constitution	Amendment
Rule of Law	Representative
Government	President
Vice-President	Twenty-fifth Amendment
Gerald R. Ford	Integrity
Courage	Determination

Materials Needed:

- Adapted Pass the Eraser activity guide (Included) Also available at: http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.lakebar.org/resource/resmgr/Docs/Lesson_Plan_K-5.pdf
- An eraser or other easy-to-pass object
- The Constitution and Gerald R. Ford Images Kit PowerPoint, at: <https://devoslearningcenter.org/lesson-plans/>
- Vocabulary Flashcards (Included)
- The Constitution KWL worksheet (Included)
- Qualities of a Leader list (Included)
- Optional: *Gerald R. Ford: A Test of Character*, available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/gerald-r-ford>

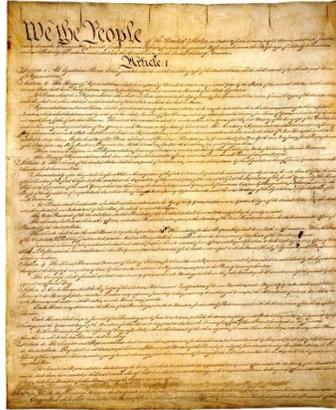
Procedure:**Part One: The Constitution (50 minutes)**

1. Have students complete the “Pass the Eraser” activity. Ask students how the activity made them feel (confused, frustrated, etc.). Prompt students to explain why they felt that way. Use this as a jumping off point to discuss the importance of known rules. Use the following prompts:
 - How would life be different if there were no rules to follow? What would the benefits be? How could having no rules have a negative impact?
 - How would your life be different if there was a new set of rules each day?
2. Share with students that the Constitution is a set of rules that tells us how to govern the United States:

The Constitution is all about the rights and responsibilities of both the citizens AND the government of the United States! The Constitution is often called a “living document” because it can change when the country needs it to. The Constitution changes through the addition of “Amendments,” which are additional laws that were added to the Constitution after it was written. Presently, there are 27

Amendments. One of them is the 25th Amendment, which tells the government what to do in the event the President or Vice President can no longer fulfill the duties of the office.

You may choose to project the picture of the Constitution, included in the Image Kit.



3. Ask the students who would run the school if the principal got sick. You may want to prompt students by asking the following questions:
 - a. Is there already a procedure in place for an event like this? Is there a designated person who takes over when the principal can't be there?
 - b. If there isn't already a procedure in place, should there be? What would that look like?
 - c. Imagine you are invited to select a new principal. What character traits would you look for in the new leader? Would you want him or her to be honest? Trustworthy? Respectful? What other traits can you think of that would make a good leader?
 - d. Are there certain character traits you would avoid when seeking a new leader?
3. Project the image of the Constitution from the Image Kit. Discuss how the Constitution sets forth both rights and responsibilities for citizens of the United States; have students brainstorm what some rights or responsibilities are.
4. Share with students that those who created the Constitution made it possible to amend it later. Because they knew the country, its citizens, and their needs would change over time, amendments allow lawmakers to add or change laws when events arise that haven't been previously accounted for.
5. Tell students they are going to learn about one very special amendment that has only been used twice in the history of the United States... and both times involved a man from Grand Rapids, Michigan named Gerald R. Ford.



Part Two: President Gerald R. Ford and the Twenty-fifth Amendment (45 minutes)

6. Remind students that they have previously discussed who would lead their school in the event that their principal/school leader was unable to do so. Now ask them to think about who would lead the country in the event that the president was unable to fulfill his/her duties.

- a. Is there a procedure in place for an event like this? Do the students know what it is?
- b. Ask students to imagine that they have the power to select a new president. What character traits would be important to them as they select this new leader?
- c. Can any of the students think of a person they would appoint to this position?

7. Project the text of the Twenty-fifth Amendment from the Image Kit. Have students read it aloud or to themselves. Ask students to summarize what they have read. Here is a sample:

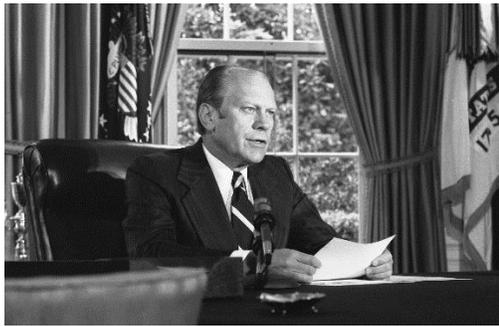
The Twenty-fifth Amendment is a plan for who will become President if the current President can't do his or her job for any reason. It starts with the Vice President. If the Vice-President cannot do his or her job, the current President gets to appoint a new Vice-President. It's not that easy, though! Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have to approve the person. The Twenty-fifth Amendment also states that if the President has to step down, the Vice President becomes the New President.

*You may also wish to explain that in the case of a Vice President and President both leaving office **at the same time** there is a line of succession that indicates the Speaker of the House would become the President.*

8. Share the following with the students:

The 25th Amendment was first used in 1973 when Gerald R. Ford, a Congressman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, was appointed by President Nixon to replace Vice President Agnew, who had been charged with tax fraud and could no longer serve as vice president. Just a few months later, the 25th Amendment was used again when President Richard Nixon resigned after being accused of covering up a break-in at the Democratic National Convention headquarters. Gerald R. Ford then became president and nominated Nelson Rockefeller to the position of vice president.

9. Explain to students that Gerald R. Ford was appointed to the vice presidency by President Nixon, but he had to first be approved by Congress before officially taking office. Ask the students to imagine how challenging it must be to find an individual that both Democrats and Republicans in Congress would approve. What character traits do they think Ford must have possessed to make him a good candidate?
10. Project The Constitution and Gerald R. Ford Images Kit PowerPoint, available at : <https://devoslearningcenter.org/lesson-plans/>
View the photos and read the captions together to learn more about the character of President Ford.
11. To learn more about the character of Gerald R. Ford, you may choose to also show a clip from *Gerald R. Ford: A Test of Character*, available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/gerald-r-ford>



Assessment Options:

1. Have students use the attached Constitution KWL graphic organizer. At the beginning of the lesson, have students fill out what they know about the Constitution under the “K” column and what they would like to know under the “W” column. After the lesson, have students write what they learned under the “L” column.
2. Put students in groups and ask them to look at the “Qualities of a Leader” list of character traits. Ask them to work together to prioritize this list – what traits are the most important in a leader? Which are the least important? Ask them to explain and defend their answers.
3. Have students/groups each come up with one law for a “Classroom Constitution” based on what they learned today.



This lesson was created by the education staff at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation. Additional resources as well as program information are available at devoslearningcenter.org.

Vocabulary Flashcards

CONSTITUTION

A set of rules that guides how the United States works; it identifies the different parts of government and tells what they can do, and how they should work. It also identifies the rights of citizens.

AMENDMENT

A law added to the United States Constitution after the Constitutional Convention in 1787

RULE OF LAW

The idea that the government can only do things that are written down in laws; this protects citizens from the government because, without Rule of Law, the government could do whatever it wanted without thinking about citizens.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

A system in which people elect leaders who will represent their needs to the government; the United States has a representative government.

PRESIDENT

The head of the United States government; he or she has many powers and responsibilities

VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice-President becomes President if the current President is unable to fulfill his or her duties

25TH AMENDMENT

A law in the constitution that says what will happen if the President or Vice President cannot do his or her job anymore

GERALD R. FORD

The 38th President of the United States who grew up in Grand Rapids, MI, and took over the Presidency when President Richard Nixon resigned in 1974

INTEGRITY

Being open and honest in all situations; doing the right thing

COURAGE

Facing situations that are frightening or intimidating

DETERMINATION

The ability to continue the pursuit of a goal, even amidst challenges

NAME: _____

THE CONSTITUTION

K
NOW

What do I know about the United States Constitution?

W
ONDER

What do I wonder about the United States Constitution?

L
EARNED

What did I learn about the United States Constitution?

Pass the Eraser Activity Guide

26 Law Day 2015 Planning Guide

Adapted from © 2015 American Bar Association *Playing by the Rules*

Grades:	K–5
Time:	30 minutes
Materials Needed:	“Passable” object (e.g., eraser, ball, stuffed animal, beanbag) to allow students to pass back and forth during the game.

This is a modern adaptation of a classic law-related education game known as the “Eraser Game.” This game allows students to actively think about the importance of rules in the classroom or in a community setting and what makes rules fair and legitimate. Students reflect on their ability to shape rules and then apply these concepts to laws in society.

Procedure:

1. Tell students that they will play a game. Do not say anything else, and do not give them any rules. Ask them to form two lines. Note: The students will probably look confused and ask you, “How do you play it?” or “What are we supposed to do?”
2. Tell the first person in each line to begin the game. Explain that the rule for playing is that the person at the front of each line should pass the object to the person behind him or her, and each person behind him or her should do the same.
3. After the object has been passed to a couple of students, interrupt the game and declare, “Oh wait, you are supposed to pass with your eyes closed. Let’s start the game over and follow these new directions.”
4. After a minute or so, interrupt again and explain, “Actually, you are supposed to pass the eraser with your left hand.” Once again, start the game from the beginning. Continue to periodically interrupt the game with new “rules,” making the game start over with each new direction.
5. Continue the pattern of changing directions and restarting the game until students begin to seem annoyed, exasperated, or ask for clarification of the rules. Once students begin to express dissatisfaction with the process of the game, end the game.

Qualities of a Leader

When electing a leader, it is important to consider how your beliefs align with those of the candidates. While we must be aware of where each candidate stands on important issues, it is also important to consider the *character* of the individual as well. In a group, prioritize this list of traits by putting them in order of “most important” to “least important”. You may have different opinions from those in your group – remember to listen, compromise, and work together to come up with your list.

Respectful

Treats others kindly, regardless of background, beliefs, etc.

Brave/Fearless

Not afraid to do whatever is necessary to secure our safety

Compassionate

Cares deeply about other people, acts in ways that will help others who are in need

Honest

Will tell the truth in all situations, even if it may harm his or her popularity

Attractive

Is good looking and charming

Has Integrity

Makes the right choice even when it may be difficult; conducts himself or herself in an honest manner and has strong moral principals

Humorous

Is able to laugh at himself or herself, can make jokes and includes humor in speeches

Confident

Is able to interact with a variety of people, operates with a sense of certainty that a chosen course of action is correct

Powerful

Is well respected by other leaders, is influential and sometimes intimidating to some

Intelligent

Is well educated on a variety of subjects, has a good understanding of history, is well-read

Instructor Background

The following content is provided as teacher background for the lesson on the Constitution.

The Constitution

“What Is a Constitution? A constitution is a set of fundamental customs, traditions, rules, and laws that set forth the basic way a government is organized and operated. Most constitutions are in writing, some are partly written and partly unwritten, and some are not written at all.

By this definition of a constitution, nearly every nation has a constitution. Good governments and bad governments have constitutions. Some of the worst governments have constitutions that include lists of the basic rights of their citizens. A list of rights does not mean that the citizens actually enjoy those rights.

The U.S. Constitution was written at a convention held in Philadelphia in 1787. Many political leaders, including Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, were dissatisfied with the government under the Articles of Confederation. They claimed the government was inadequate for meeting the problems of the United States. A number of prominent leaders suggested holding a meeting of representatives of all the states. This idea of holding a special meeting, or convention, to discuss constitutional changes, instead of using the legislature, was an American invention. Most of the early state constitutions had been written by state legislatures. In 1780, Massachusetts became the first state to hold a constitutional convention. By 1786, Madison and other leaders decided that if a convention could be used successfully in a state, it was worth trying at the national level. In 1786, a meeting to discuss commercial problems was held in Annapolis, Maryland. Only five states sent representatives. Disappointed at the low turnout, Hamilton, Madison, and others wrote a report asking Congress to call a meeting in Philadelphia to suggest ways to change the Articles of Confederation to strengthen the national government. Congress did so after a delay of several months. Delegates to the Philadelphia Convention were authorized only to propose amendments to the Articles, not to develop an entirely new constitution, which is exactly what they did.”

Source: Center for Civic Education. (2008). “Constitution Day Across the Country.” *Constitutionday.civiced.org*.

The 25th Amendment

The 25th Amendment was created to establish an order of succession should a standing President die, be removed, or resign from office. It also accounts for a temporary inability for the President to perform his duties. The 25th Amendment also sets up a system in which a

President can nominate a Vice Presidential candidate should his original Vice President become unfit for the position.

It was ratified in 1967, and was inspired in part by the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Although there was a precedent for Vice Presidents becoming President upon the inability of their predecessor to maintain the position, the constitutional language was vague. In the years following its ratification, the 25th Amendment was used twice.