

TEACHING NOTES

Book title: What's the U.S. Constitution?

Series: First Guide to Government

Who wrote the Constitution? What is the Preamble? How can the Constitution be changed? This book answers these questions and more. Readers will discover the history and importance of the United States Constitution. They will also learn how the Constitution divided the U.S. government into branches and what each branch does.



Text Structure: Problem and Solution

Have students read pages 10–12. Point out that these pages use a problem-and-solution text structure. The paragraph on page 10 states the problem: *The Articles of Confederation did not give the government a lot of power over the states. People realized this was not working.* The paragraphs on pages 11–12 tell how the problem was solved. Have students use their own words to explain how the problem was solved. (*The states held a Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in order to rewrite the Articles of Confederation and make the government stronger. The people at the meeting wrote the U.S. Constitution to replace the Articles of Confederation.*) Then, direct students' attention to *Article Five: Changing the Constitution* on pages 22-23 and read aloud the text. Ask: What problem did the writers of the U.S. Constitution anticipate with the Constitution? (*They realized the Constitution might need to be changed from time to time.*) What solution did they provide in the Constitution for this type of problem? (*The solution was Article Five, which made it possible for the people of the United States to change the constitution when necessary.*)



Text Feature: Glossary

Explain to students that this book includes a glossary. It provides a list of words that appear in boldfaced print throughout the text and gives definitions for those words. Encourage students to use the glossary to look up boldfaced words they do not know. For example, students may not be familiar with the word *amendments* on page 7. Have students turn to the glossary on page 30, find *amendment*, and read the definition. Explain that students can use the glossary help them better understand what they read.



Comprehension Strategy: Determining Main Ideas and Supporting Details 

Tell students that the author organizes this book by presenting main ideas and supporting them with details. Read aloud the text on page 4 and model for students how to determine the main idea of this section.

Think Aloud:

"I know that sometimes writers state the main idea of a paragraph in the first sentence. After I read the first paragraph on page 4, I know the main idea of the paragraph is in the first sentence: *The United States Constitution is a very important document (paper)*. The rest of the sentences in this paragraph give me details about who wrote the Constitution and when it was written. For example, the Constitution was written by a group of men who lived in the United States of America. The Constitution was written when the United States was a new country."

Model how to record the main idea and the supporting details on a graphic organizer like the one on the reproducible. As students continue reading this section, encourage them to identify the main ideas and supporting details in other paragraphs and record the information on their reproducibles. You may wish to pass out multiple main idea and supporting details charts to each student to use as they read.



Word Study: Content Vocabulary

What's the U.S. Constitution? includes many words that specifically relate to the study of the Constitution. This vocabulary may be unfamiliar to some students. Some unfamiliar words are defined in the sentences in which they appear. Other words are defined in the glossary on page 30. Before reading, write the words *amendment* (p. 7), *Articles of Confederation* (p. 10), *Bill of Rights* (p. 26), *Constitutional Convention* (p. 11), *executive branch* (p. 18), *federal government* (p. 13), *legislative branch* (p. 18), and *judicial branch* (p. 18) on the board. Ask students to identify words that they have heard before and record their explanations of these words. After reading, revisit the list and revise the definitions based on the information learned in the text as well as the glossary. Reinforce the words' meanings by having students write sentences using the words.



Writing and Responding: List

Have students make a list of the three branches of government. After each branch, have students write a short explanation of what each branch of government does. Remind students to use the information in the book and the glossary to write their explanations.

[Insert Main Idea and Supporting Details chart]

 Indicates a graphic organizer is linked to this activity.

NAME

