

Promise Of Liberty:

Living Up to the Preamble

Thematic Question: Do we live up to the Constitution's Preamble?

Goals

Students will be able to:

- Learn more about why the U.S. Constitution was created
- Identify student attitudes and behaviors they want in a classroom community
- Collaborate with classmates
- Think critically about what they want their classroom to look like

Recommended Grades

5-8

Pair/ Small Group Discussion

Get together in pairs or small groups and identify the core values of your school. This may be quick for students to identify if your school has its values written on the walls or spoken in daily affirmations or could take some time for students to reflect on how their school ecosystem runs. Have students reflect on their role in school “society”. How do these identified values help them as students? Do these values provide empowerment, safety, empathy, learning, etc.?

After reflection, ask students, “What values do our school and our country share?”

Pre- Visit Discussion and Activity

Conduct a close read of the Preamble, defining words and discussing why the founding fathers may have chosen to open the constitution with these words. Ask student for examples of how the government and American society today both uphold and abandon the words of the constitution. In its own words, the nation is working “to form a more perfect Union”; mistakes can and will happen along the way. Hold an informal discussion or free-write asking students to answer the question (Do we live up to the Constitution’s Preamble?) based on their incoming ideas.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/pre-1/ALDE_00001231/

During Visit Discussion

Welcome students to try to read the Preamble of the US Constitution from its original form during your visit. Spoiler alert: it's difficult. Cursive handwriting can be difficult to decipher today, plus the language itself is one step away from old English.

Remind students of their in-class discussion. What do these clauses mean. How can you describe "insure domestic Tranquility" in your own words? Explore, as a class or in small groups, the documents in the exhibition. Find a few that really stand out to you, whether from look, content matter, or location in the gallery. All documents on view can be utilized in this discussion.

At the document of choice, ask students which clauses the government, group, or individual is attempting to fulfill at that time. For example, "insure domestic Tranquility" and "promote the general Welfare" at Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech".

Post- Visit Discussion and Activity

Hold a class discussion and/or extended writing answering the question, *Do we live up to the Constitution's Preamble?* Then, have students propose a clause they believe should be added, based on historical and present-day events.

Ask students: *What do you hope for America's future? Think about what you hope the country can achieve and how you can help make it a reality.*

Additional Resource

School House Rock: The Preamble -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_NzZvdsbWI&list=RD8_NzZvdsbWI&start_radio=1