



INTERACTIVE *Constitution*

**THE DECLARATION,
THE CONSTITUTION,
AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS**
LESSON PLAN

VISIT • LEARN • DEBATE

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



Independence Mall • 525 Arch Street • Philadelphia, PA 19106

THE DECLARATION, THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS

LESSON PLAN

Grade Levels: 6th, 8th, 12th

Number of class periods: 1 (approximately 55-minutes)

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ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson builds student understanding of the relationships between the United States’ founding documents by comparing and contrasting the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Using a close reading guide, students will explore the key concepts in Jeffrey Rosen and David Rubenstein’s “[Constituting Liberty: From the Declaration to the Bill of Rights](#),” accessible on the Interactive Constitution at constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution.

For classes visiting the National Constitution Center this lesson serves as an anticipatory activity to enhance student appreciation of the museum’s exhibit: *Constituting Liberty*. In the exhibit, students will see rare copies of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. This lesson will prepare students with content knowledge to familiarize them with the exhibit’s content.

Your students can more fully explore the U.S. Constitution’s history and what it means today with the new **Interactive Constitution**, where scholars of different perspectives discuss what they agree upon, and what they disagree about. These experts were selected with the guidance of leaders of two prominent constitutional law organizations—The American Constitution Society and The Federalist Society. This project is sponsored by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation.



6TH – 8TH GRADE COMMON CORE STANDARDS**KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS****CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6- 8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

12TH GRADE COMMON CORE STANDARDS**KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS****CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- ★ Why are the founding documents important?
- ★ What are their similarities and differences?
- ★ How did each document influence the next in America's ongoing quest for liberty and equality?



OBJECTIVES:**6TH GRADE**

- ★ Develop a basic knowledge and ability to identify the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- ★ Understand the purposes of government and why government serves those purposes.
- ★ Increase awareness, understanding, and interest in Constitutional rights.

8TH GRADE

- ★ Understand the basic principles and the history of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- ★ Understand the historical sources and current significance of natural rights and economic liberties.
- ★ Understand how the Constitution limits government, supports the rule of law, and protects individual rights.

12TH GRADE

- ★ Develop a social understanding of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights and their relevance to economic, political, and social development of the United States.
- ★ Identify and compare natural rights and rights granted by custom or common law.

PROCEDURE:**1. THINK AND WRITE: Preview / Hook Activity / Do Now:**

Famous Sayings: “The pen is mightier than the sword.” Post this on the board and ask students to copy it and write a reflection. What is the meaning of this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Please write a minimum of 5 lines in 5 minutes.

2. PAIR AND SHARE: Students will share their reflections with a partner and then the class.

Students will give each other feedback by writing one thing they like about their partner’s reflection on their partner’s work. The teacher can call on students to share their written responses or what their partner wrote about it.

3. ARTICLE ANALYSIS: Students can work individually or in small groups of three to four to read the article “Constituting Liberty: From the Declaration to the Bill of Rights” by Jeffrey Rosen and David Rubenstein. The close reading guide helps students to develop a deep understanding of the documents on display at the National Constitution Center.**4. SHARE:** Students will share their graphic organizers and responses to the questions in the close reading guide. This can be done as a jig-saw activity in which small groups of students present their responses to a specific section of the guide.**5. REFLECT:** (Exit Ticket) Based on what students have learned from reading the article “Constituting Liberty: From the Declaration to the Bill of Rights” by Jeffrey Rosen and David Rubenstein, ask them to write a reflection using information from their close reading guided to answer the question: *Is the pen mightier than the sword?*

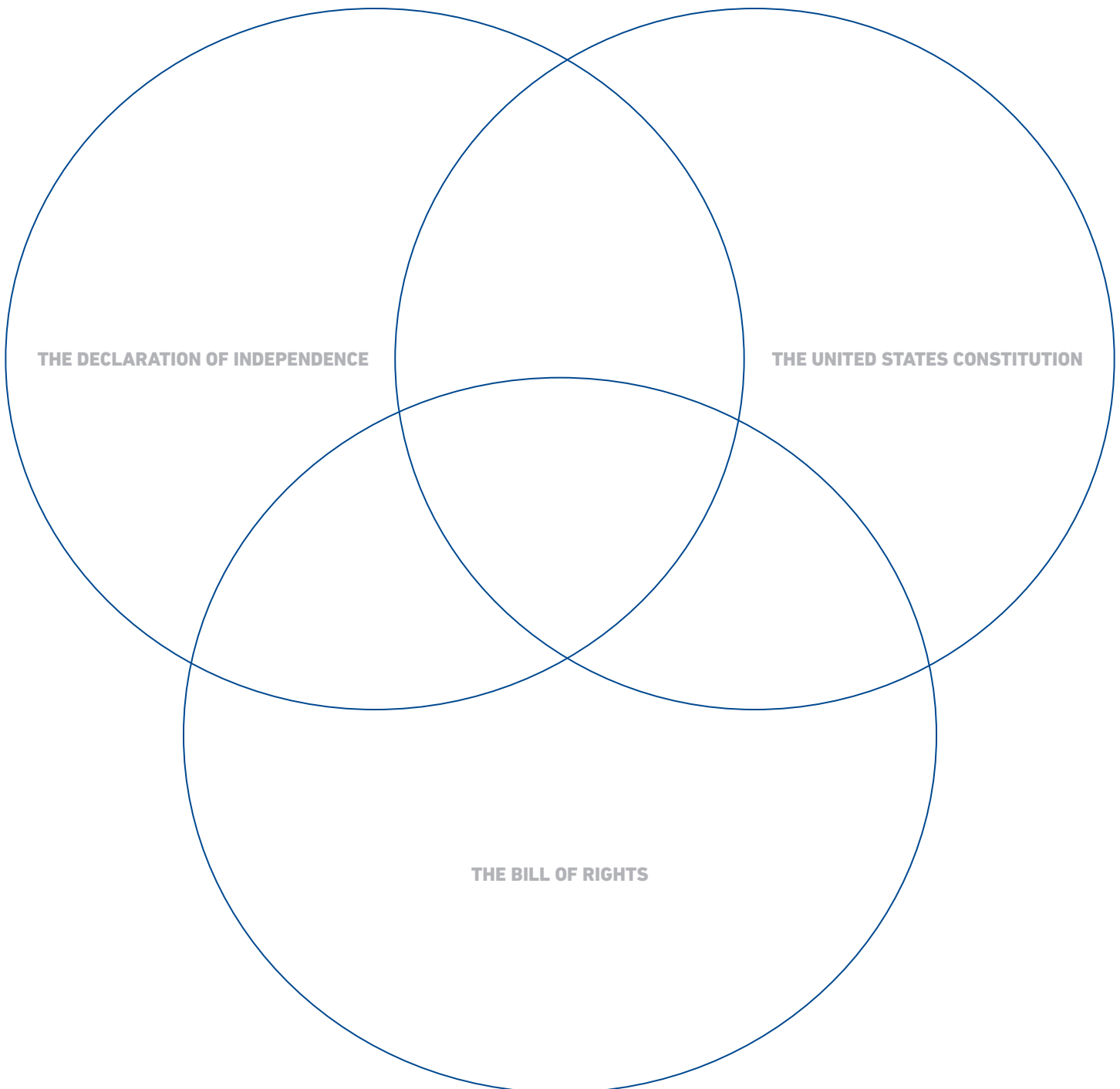
CLOSE READING GUIDE

NAME:

DIRECTIONS

Read the essay, "Constituting Liberty: From the Declaration to the Bill of Rights," by Jeffrey Rosen and David Rubenstein and complete the tasks below.

1. Read page 1. Fill in the diagram below with information from the essay.



2. Based on article and your notes in the diagram, what do you think are the most important similarities and differences between these three documents? (Minimum 3 lines)

JEFFERSON AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

3. Describe the three parts of the Declaration of Independence and its importance or purpose.

PART OF THE DECLARATION	IMPORTANCE / PURPOSE



4. What was is the relationship between the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address?

5. What were the promises of the preamble to the Declaration of Independence? Do you think these promises have been fulfilled? Why or why not? Give an example from history to support your position.

PROMISES – EVIDENCE FROM DECLARATION	YES / NO	EXAMPLE FROM HISTORY

6. Identify the following and how they relate to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and/or the Bill of Rights:

THOMAS JEFFERSON	
JAMES MADISON	
SENECA FALLS CONVENTION (1848)	
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.	
MAGNA CARTA	
WRITS OF ASSISTANCE	
GEORGE MASON	
THE VIRGINIA DECLARATION OF RIGHTS	
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION	
SHAYS' REBELLION	

7. The documents on display at the National Constitution Center have their own unique histories. As you read the descriptions of each document, answer the following questions:

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- ★ Why is the copy on display at the National Constitution Center called the Stone Engraving? How was it created?

THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

- ★ When and where was the Constitution first published? What is the significance of this publication?

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

- ★ How did the National Constitution center obtain a copy of the Bill of Rights?

