

**Our Government
Grade 4**

**Developed for
Kansas Historical Society at the
Library of Congress, Midwest Region Workshop
“It’s Elementary: Teaching with Primary Sources,” 2012**

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Overview

This lesson is to give the students an overview of the Constitution and how it relates to the government. The students will also learn how the government works together to run a nation using the Constitution. They will also learn the functions of the branches of government. To relate this concept to state government the students will compare and contrast the principal buildings of each branch. In the end groups of students will develop a presentation which will illustrate their knowledge of the three branches of government. These lessons are set up for 45 minute sessions for approximately six days.

Standards

Civics-Government Standard:

Benchmark 1, Indicator 1: evaluates rules and laws using two basic criteria: the law or rule serves the *common good*, the law or rule must be possible to follow.

Benchmark 3, Indicator 3: recognizes the United States *Constitution* as the document that defines the *rights* and *responsibilities* of *citizens* in the United States.

Common Core ELA:

Writing

W.4.4: The student will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

Speaking and Listening

SL.4.1c: The student will engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

c. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

Objectives

Content

- The student identifies the purpose of the Constitution.
- The student will be able to identify the Branches of Government, who is in each branch and what each branch does.
- The students will compare/contrast the state and federal photographs

Skills

The student writes captions of what historic figures are thinking.

The students generate questions about a historical painting.

The students will practice writing a constitution.

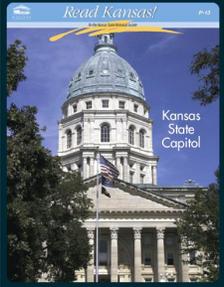
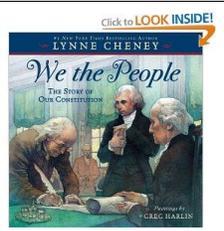
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Essential Questions

- Why is the Constitution important to our nation?
- Why are the Branches of Government important?

Resource Table

| Image/Resource | Description | Citation | URL |
|---|---|--|--|
|  | <p>Signing of Constitution The men that signed the Constitution for the first time. Produced in 1920</p> | <p>Theodor Horydczak Collection (Library of Congress) Horydczak, Theodor, ca. 1890-1971.</p> | <p>http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/thc1995014102/PP/</p> |
|  | <p>The United States Constitution A photographic copy of the Constitution</p> | <p>National Archives and Records Administration</p> | <p>http://www.usconstitution.net/gifs/docs/cpage1.jpg</p> |
|  | <p>Transcription of the United States Constitution</p> | <p>html version posted by George W. Baltzell, good for projection</p> | <p>http://constitutionus.com/</p> |
|  | <p>White House Photograph of the house where our president lives.</p> | <p>Harris & Ewing Collection</p> | <p>http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/hec2009001339/</p> |
|  | <p>Cedar Crest The home of the Governor of Kansas</p> | <p>Kansas State Historical Society <i>Kansas Memory</i>, Item 212979</p> | <p>http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/212979</p> |

| Image/Resource | Description | Citation | URL |
|---|--|--|---|
|  | Kansas State Capitol | Kansas State Historical Society <i>Read Kansas!</i> lesson P-13 "The Kansas State Capitol" | http://www.kshs.org/p/read-kansas-primary-p-13-the-kansas-state-capitol/14915 |
|  | United States Capitol | Architect of the Capitol | http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/c_wf_1.cfm |
|  | United States Supreme Court | Horydczak, Theodor, ca. 1890-1971, photographer | http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/thc.5a38062/ |
|  | Kansas Judicial Building in Topeka, Kansas photograph | Kansas State Historical Society <i>Kansas Memory</i> , Item 219520 Kansas Judicial Center Topeka, Kansas | http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/219520 |
|  | <i>We the People: The Story of Our Constitution</i> | Written by Lynne Cheney, published by Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books , 2008 ISBN-10 141695418X | http://www.amazon.com/We-People-The-Story-Constitution/dp/141695418X |
|  | <i>I'm Just a Bill</i> | <i>School House Rock</i> Music and lyrics by Dave Frishberg, performed by Jack Sheldon, animation by Phil Kimmelman and Associates http://www.schoolhouserock.tv/Bill.html | http://www.schooltube.com/video/fcde4d15a9276c9a09d3/ |

Lesson Plan

Day 1

1. Question the students about what the Constitution is and what they think it does?
2. Show the students the book: ***We the People: The Story of Our Constitution***. Discuss what they see on the front of the book and what they think the book is about.
3. Read the story to the students. Make a timeline to review the steps it took to create the Constitution.
4. Show the students a copy of the *Constitution*.
5. Discuss what they see: the appearance of the paper it was written on, the style of writing, etc.
6. Divide the students into groups of four and distribute to each group a copy of the painting, **Signing of the Constitution** (face down), four black squares and one copy of **What do you see?**
7. Ask the students to turn over the painting and study it for ten seconds. Then place the four black squares over each quadrant covering the entire picture.
8. Each group takes the first quadrant off and proceeds to fill out the worksheet with what they see in that portion of the painting. After they are finished with the first quadrant they continue on to the second and so on.
9. After the students have looked at all four quadrants conduct a class discussion of what they saw, what was happening, and why.
10. Pass out four thought bubbles to each group. Instruct the students that each person is to become one of those people in the painting, **Signing of the Constitution**. They need to think about what that person is thinking during this time and complete a speech bubble.
11. Give the students time to complete their thought bubbles. Go around the room revealing their thoughts and discussing why they chose that phrase and why that person would think about that.

Day 2

1. Review what the Constitution is and why it is important to our nation.
2. Show the students the words to the original Constitution--**Transcription of the United States Constitution**. Quickly review what is written in each section.
3. Divide the class into groups. Announce that the class will write their own constitution. Have each group brainstorm some things that they think should be in the class Constitution.
4. Give the groups 15-20 minutes discussion time.
5. After time is up bring the class back together and create a class Constitution.

Day 3

1. Review what the Constitution is and why we have a Constitution.
2. Watch the video **I'm Just a Bill--Schoolhouse Rocks**.

3. After the video ask the students to recall the branches of the government, who is in each branch and what each branch does. Create a chart on the board showing this information.
4. Next discuss how each state has a government set up like the federal government. Recalling that our leader of the state is the governor which is compared to the president, both state and federal has a Congress and that there is a Supreme Court in the state similar to the U.S. Supreme Court.
5. Project images of each federal building and each state government building.
6. Pass out one pair of each building (federal and state equivalent) to each group along with a **Photo Comparison Activity** sheet. Each group will look for comparisons and differences in the buildings.
7. Once they have found the similarities and differences they will then share their findings with the class.
8. Review the branches of the government with the students by having each group sort the branches, people and their duties using the **Sorting Cards—Three Branches of Government** .

Day 4-6

1. Once the students have an understanding of the branches of government they will create a project (a poster, power point or object) that shows the three branches, who belongs in each and what each branch does.
2. Students' present their projects in class. Use the Rubric at the end of the lesson to score the projects.

Assessment

- Observe the class discussion over the Constitution.
- Create a class constitution.
- Students will show the branches of government, who is in each, and what each branch does with a project.

For the Teacher

Prior to teaching this lesson:

- Obtain a copy of ***We the People: The Story of Our Constitution***, by Lynne Cheney. (optional)
- Obtain the video **How a Bill Becomes Law**.
- For each group of four, cut black construction paper into four squares (large enough to cover an 8 X 11 paper).
- Prepare enough speech bubbles for each group to have four.
- Make enough copies of **Signing of the Constitution** for each group. You might want to laminate these or place each copy in plastic sleeves for future use.
- Prepare copies of **“What do you see?”** for each group.

- Prepare card stock copies of the **Sorting Cards—Three Branches of Government** and cut out before the lesson begins. Prepare one set for each group of four.

Definitions

- Constitution— A plan of government.
- Legislative Branch— Branch of the government that makes the law.
- Executive Branch— Branch of the government that carries out the law.
- Judicial Branch— Branch of the government that makes sure the laws are constitutional.
- The branches of the government work together as a team to run our nation. They are set up using the checks and balance system in which one branch of the government does not become more powerful than another branch.

What do you see?

Directions:

Step 1: Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

Step 2: Divide the photograph into quadrants. (Use the construction paper that has been provided to cover the quadrants.) What details – such as people, objects, and activities do you notice?

Complete the graphic organizer.

| Step 2 | People | Objects | Activities |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quadrant 1 | | | |
| Quadrant 2 | | | |
| Quadrant 3 | | | |
| Quadrant 4 | | | |

Step 3: What other information can you gather from the photograph?

Step 4: How would you change your first description of the photo using the information noted in Step 2?

Step 5: What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find the answers to these questions?



**Photo Comparison Activity:
State and National Government Buildings**

Name: _____

Directions: Working with your group members, carefully examine the two photographs of government buildings. Use the chart below to record the similarities in the physical features of the buildings.

| | | | | Similarities | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--------------|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | |

**Branches of Government
Project Rubric**

Name _____

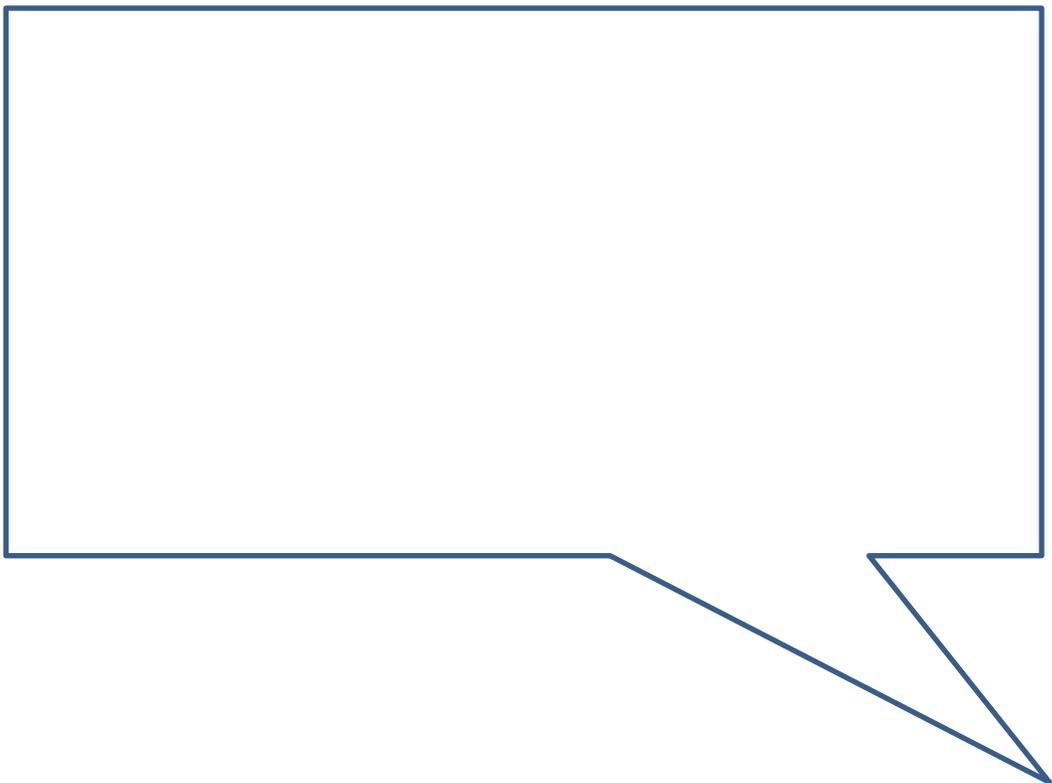
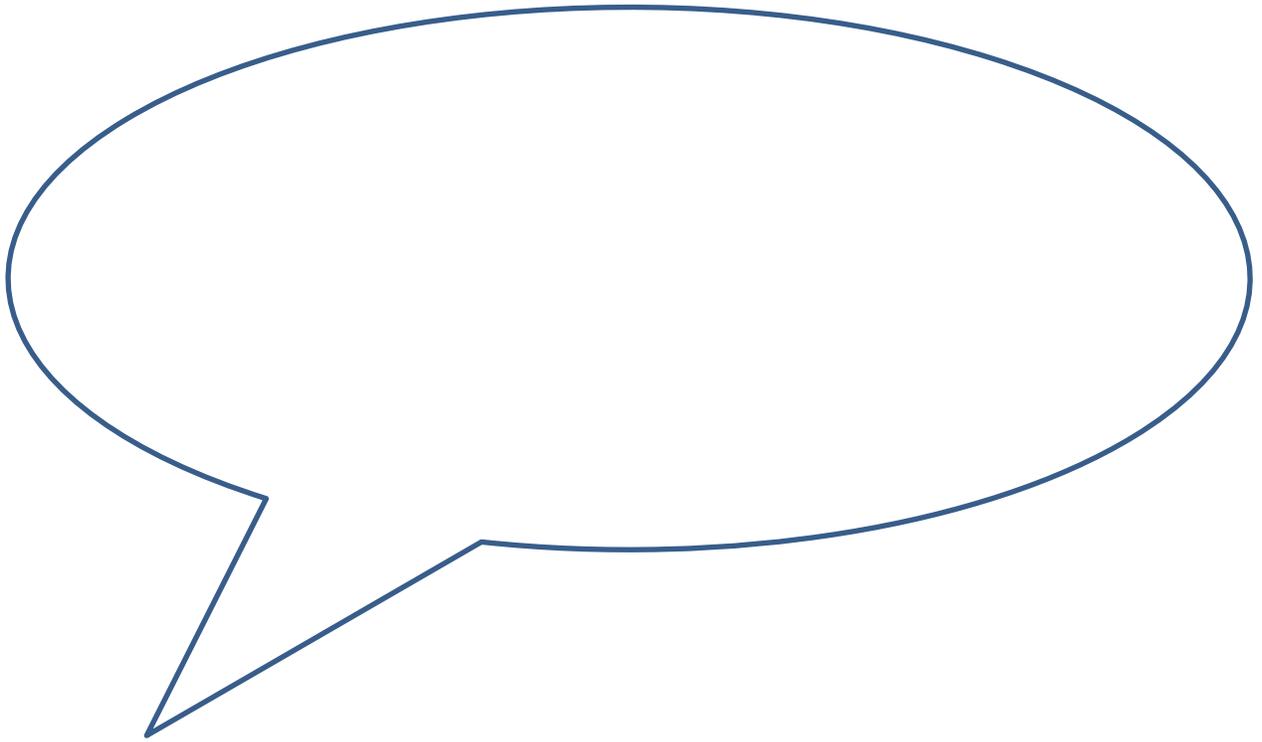
| | | |
|--|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Shows each Branch of the Government | (6) | _____ |
| 2. The leader/leaders of the Branch is displayed | (6) | _____ |
| 3. The job of each Branch is displayed | (6) | _____ |
| 4. Everything is correct | (10) | _____ |
| 5. Spelling is Correct | (5) | _____ |
| 6. Project is Creative | (5) | _____ |
| 7. Solid Presentation | (7) | _____ |
| | Total | (45) |
| | | _____ |

Comments:

Signing of the Constitution



Thought Bubbles



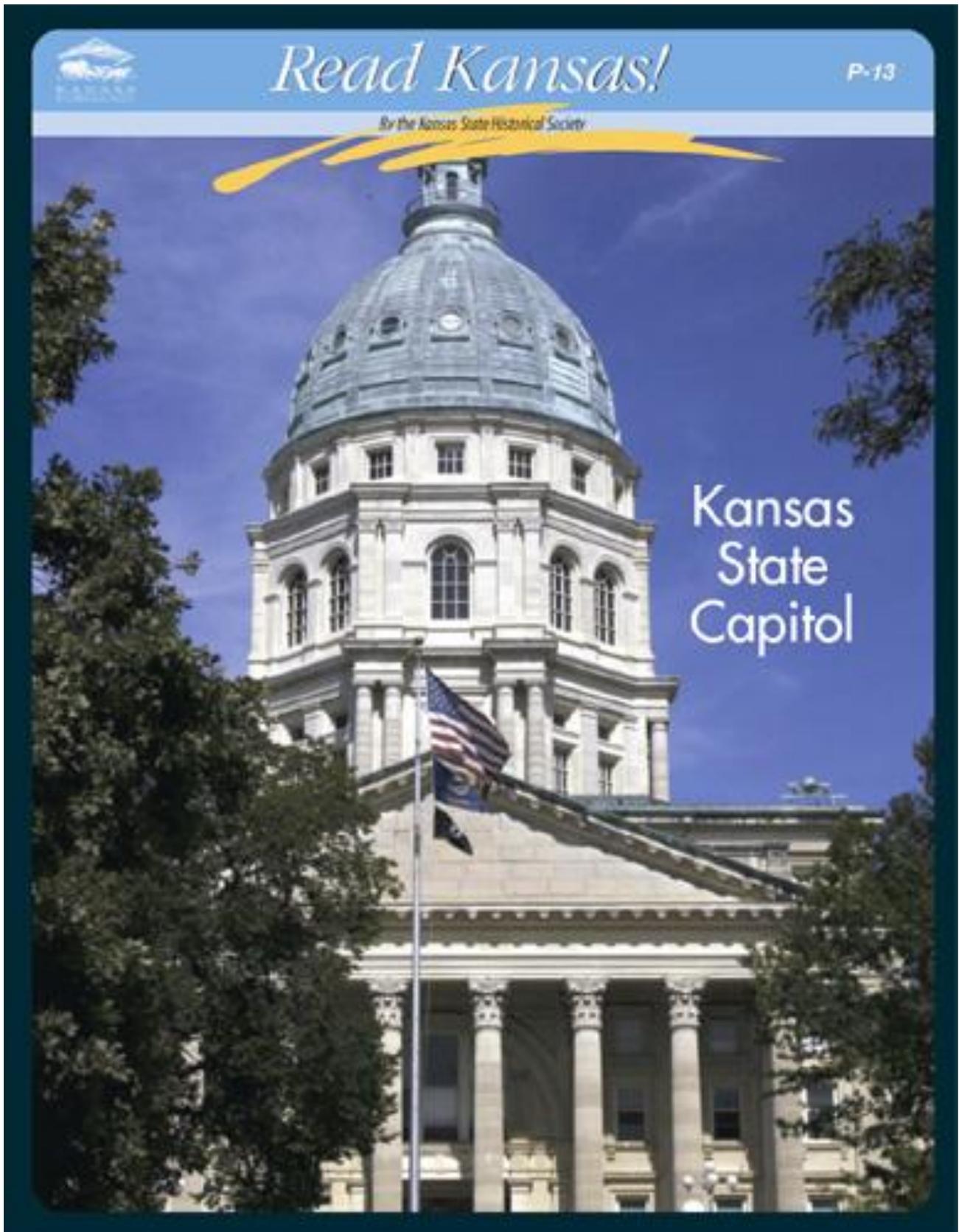
White House



Cedar Crest



Kansas Capitol



United States Capitol



United States Supreme Court



Kansas Judicial Building



Sorting Cards--



Executive Branch



Legislative Branch



Judicial Branch



President



**Congress-
House of Representatives
and Senate**



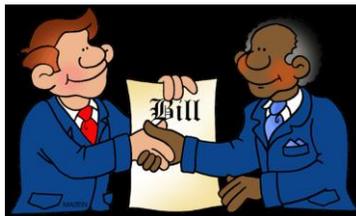
9 Supreme Court Justices



Carries out the Laws



Creates the Laws



**Make sure Laws are
Constitutional**

