

The Promise of a Constitution

OU Teach-In Series 2017

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	3-4 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	200 minutes
Course	U.S. Government, World History		

Essential Question

How do we know we are free? Are societies reflective of their system of government? Can a system of government be destroyed?

Summary

Students will explore the freedoms granted in a democratic constitution, representative of its citizens and expressed throughout the society. Students will identify how a democratic constitution can be threatened by world events. This lesson includes video clips and excerpts from the 2017 University of Oklahoma Teach-In which was a symposium of renown US academics and lectures at OU.

Snapshot

Engage

Students respond to the question, "How do you know you are free?"

Explore

Students examine photos of U.S. society and describe how the U.S. (democratic) Constitution supports a free society. Students also infer how culture is shaped by a free society.

Explain

Students watch a short video clip from Eric Weitz's lecture about the Weimar Republic of Germany that describes this democracy in German society after WWI. Students also conduct guided research of the rise and fall of the Weimar Republic.

Extend

Students create a CER statement that supports a claim about democracy or the Constitution.

Evaluate

The notes from the guided research, the photo match, and the CER statement all serve as assessments for this lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))

USG.1.1: Compare the essential characteristics of limited versus unlimited governments.
USG.1.2: Compare historic and contemporary examples of unlimited governments to examples of limited systems.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—The Promise of a Constitution.pptx
- Photo Match - Teacher Answer Key.docx
- Photo Match - Teacher Answer Key.pdf
- Photo Slides for Explore Activity.pptx
- Weimar Republic Guided Research - Spanish.docx
- Weimar Republic Guided Research - Spanish.pdf
- Weimar Republic Guided Research.docx
- Weimar Republic Guided Research.pdf

Materials

- Student devices with internet access
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Guided research handout (attached)
- Photo slides

10 minutes

Engage

Show **slide 3** to the class, which asks, "How do I know I am free?" Ask students to think about what this question means and how they know they are free. Pair students and ask them to share their thoughts and opinions about this statement with one another. Encourage them to think of "proof" for their response to this statement. What proof do they have that they are free? Allow five minutes for discussion.

Have students partner with another pair of students and continue the discussion as a group of four. Allow another five minutes for this discussion. Ask groups to choose a spokesperson and share their opinions and "proof" related to the statement. This is a variation of the Think, Pair, Share strategy.

Teacher's Note: Think, Pair, Share

Typically students can discuss that they are free to worship as they please, to move about freely, to express their thoughts or even criticize the government. Discuss with students that it might not always be apparent in our society, but these are freedoms in the United States not always afforded in other countries. Students could also discuss that citizens might not receive equal treatment even though the Constitution guarantees certain rights. When this happens, is there legal recourse? Are protests for equal rights allowed? Ask students if they can name some freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the amendments. Have them share how citizens might act or behave because of these guaranteed freedoms. These freedoms are often expressed in our society by the way we conduct ourselves and create our culture.

Explore

How is the Constitution expressed in our society? Keep students in their groups of four from the Engage activity and display **slide 4**. Tell groups that they are going to receive 10 photos and access to the Constitution. If this is a U.S. Government class, students should have access to the Constitution in their textbooks. or online.

Explain to students that they will look at the photos and discuss with their group how the Constitution supports these activities in our society. Allow time for groups to discuss the photos and find statements expressed within the Constitution that support these activities.

Once photo matches are complete, have groups share their matches. Discuss as a class how our society might look different without these rights guaranteed by the Constitution. A teacher answer key is provided to drive the discussion.

This activity should take 30 to 35 minutes and will end Day 1 of this lesson.

Teacher Note: Using Photo Slides

Ten photos have been placed onto PowerPoint slides and numbered to make them easy to print as a handout. You can print them as 3 slides per page with notes or as 6 to a page to save copy paper. Make sure that each image is clearly discernible on the handout. Have students write which article or amendment in the Constitution supports the activity being depicted underneath each slide or in the notes section next to the slide. The slides can also be uploaded to a shared folder for students to access directly. A teacher answer key is provided in the attachments.

Explain

Case Study, The Rise and Fall of the Weimar Republic of Germany: (Day 2) Display **slide 5** as a review from the previous day and share the quote by Eric Weitz. Discuss the question on slide five that asks students, "What type of society is expressed through the U.S. Constitution?" Ask students to recall the photo match and how the US Constitution drives aspects of our society.--An example might be the right to protest or free speech that is not freely expressed in countries with dictatorships or authoritarian rule.

Tell students that today they will examine the rise and fall of another democratic society, the Weimar Republic of Germany, through a video clip from historian Dr. Eric Weitz. Dr. Weitz was a guest lecturer at the University of OK and this video recording was made at that time.

Display **slide 6** and ask students to look for evidence that democracy was flourishing in the Weimar Republic of Germany. As they watch the video clip, students should take notes or jot down ideas of how the democracy of the Weimar Republic was expressed throughout this society.

The video should begin with the beginning of his lecture titled, Eric Weitz: The Promise and Tragedy of a Constitution: Weimar Germany, 1918-1933. This video is 51 minutes in length and Dr. Weitz shows photos from the Weimar Republic that illustrate a free and open society. For purposes of this lesson, start the video where Dr. Weitz begins his lecture (14:32 minutes in) and end the video at approximately 26:16 when Eric Weitz says... “the way it percolates through society that makes it so important.” This clip from the video is approximately 15 minutes in length using the start and stop times listed.

Display **slide 7**. Place students in groups of three. Once the video clip is completed, ask students to share their notes and ideas with their group of how democracy was expressed in Germany during the era of the Weimar Republic 1918-1933.

Pass out the guided research handout to all students. Keep students in their working groups of three. They will share the responsibility for finding out these questions in their research and come to a group consensus about the conclusion. Students will also need a device and internet access to the websites provided in the guided research. Allow a full class period for this research. Tell students that taking quality notes and sharing research information within the group, will assist them with the next parts of this lesson.

You might also want to conduct a class discussion of the guided questions on the handout to solidify the information related to the rise and fall of the Weimar Republic.

After notes are completed, display slide seven and pose the essential questions for a general class discussion: Are societies reflective of their system of government? Can a system of government be destroyed?

Extend

Putting it All together: Show **slide 8** that introduces Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) Statements. **Slide 9** gives an example set of CER statements.

There are three statements on **slide 10**, and students will choose ONE of these statements as a claim. You can also allow students to create their own claims. Students will provide evidence for their claim from their notes of the research on the Weimar Republic and the the video by Eric Weitz. Students will also create reasoning statements that tie their claim and evidence together.

Evaluate

The photo match activity, the notes created from guided research, and the CER statements are all possible assessments. You can also have students complete the optional assessment below to further demonstrate their understanding of the lesson.

Optional: Through the research of the Weimar Republic, students also learned more about the Nazis and their rise to power. The Nazis brought an authoritarian militaristic style of government that replaced the Weimar Republic. Continuing with the statement that "A Constitution is expressed throughout its society," have students find five photos that demonstrate how the Nazi government was expressed throughout German society during WWII. They should label each photo with how they perceive it to be an expression of the Nazi government.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5064b49
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506fc09
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