Central Themes (Big Ideas) of the Constitution

6 major themes of the Constitution:

The main definition is highlighted.

1. **Popular Sovereignty:** The principle that the people are the only source for all governmental power.<br>The government rules through leaders elected by the people to represent the people.<br>a. **Power**—the ability to do something (Mr. Becker has the power to give me a zero on my homework if I do not complete it)

2. **Limited Government:** Government may only do those things the people have given it the power to do.<br>Government must obey the law. Much of the Constitution spells out limits on the power of the government.

3. **Separation of Powers:** The Constitution divides power among the legislative, executive and judicial branches so no one branch has too much power. Congress makes the laws, the President executes and administers the laws, and the Supreme Court interprets the laws. Separation of powers keeps a strong central government from being too powerful. Too much power concentrated in any one branch could lead to abuses of that power.

4. **Checks and Balances:** The power of each branch of the federal government is designed in a way that it limits the power of the other branches.<br>The President can veto bills passed by Congress, but Congress can override a veto. The Senate can reject presidential appointees or refuse to ratify a treaty. Congress can vote to impeach a federal official. The federal courts can rule that executive and legislative acts are unconstitutional. The use of checks is fairly rare. Compromise is more common. Conflicts are more likely when Congress and the presidency are controlled by different parties.<br>a. **bill**—proposed law<br>b. **Federal**—national (our national government is in Washington DC which is the capitol of the country)<br>c. **Veto**—to cancel—the president can say no to any bills sent to him from Congress<br>d. **override**—overturn—Congress can overturn the veto of the president with 2/3rds vote of both houses<br>e. **presidential appointment**—the president can give people jobs in the government (these are called appointments)—the Senate can say "NO" and the president must pick someone else.<br>f. **ratify**—to approve<br>g. **treaty**—agreement between two countries<br>h. **impeach**—bring up someone on charges (like if someone went to court for breaking the law). Congress can bring federal workers up on charges.<br>i. **courts**—can say that things done by the government violate the Constitution, this is called judicial review (see below).<br>j. **compromise**—meeting somewhere towards the middle (i.e. Johnny and George want an apple...they argue for a while...then decide to cut the apple in half...they each get half)

5. **Judicial Review:** The Courts can decide if a government action is constitutional.<br>The power of judicial review is held by all federal courts and most state courts.<br>Judicial review was established under Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshal in the case *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803.<br>Most acts are found to be constitutional, but the Supreme Court has struck down many presidential, congressional, and state measures over the years.

6. **Federalism:** Power is divided between the national government and state governments. A compromise between an all-powerful central government and an independent state government. It corrected the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation without replacing them with a British-style monarchy. The Framers felt that too much governmental power threatened liberty. Federalism helps prevent that power from being abused, by dividing governmental power.<br>a. **compromise**—meeting somewhere towards the middle (i.e. Johnny and George want an apple...they argue for a while...then decide to cut the apple in half...they each get half)
Create Your Own Political Cartoon

Political Cartoon Lesson Plan Objectives:

1. Draw on higher-level thinking skills to construct a political cartoon that reflects at least one of the six central themes of the Constitution using artistic techniques that convey meaning.
2. Reflect in writing the power of images to convey meaning, ideas, and point of view.

Procedure for Political Cartoon Project:

Directions: You will be working with your partner on this project. Draw your cartoon. Don’t worry if you do not have a visual artist in your group. You must do at least one sketch before you begin drawing. You must turn in this sketch with your final project. The cartoon must have text voicing a political opinion. In this case, it must be relative to whichever constitutional principle you have chosen.

I. Sketch Cartoon

1. Draw a sketch of cartoon—must incorporate concept and criticism.
2. Peer Review of sketch.
   a. if you are happy with your peer review—see teacher.
   b. if you are not happy with your peer review—redo, get another peer review—if happy with your work, see teacher, if not, sketch and peer review again (and so on)
   c. Make sure you number all your sketches!!!
3. Teacher review of sketch—show teacher the peer review sheet for sketch.
   a. teacher will:
      1. Discuss and sign peer review sheet (proceed to cartoon)
         -or-
      2. Discuss and require or suggest a redo of sketch and peer review

II. Draw Cartoon

1. Draw Cartoon—must incorporate concept and criticism.
2. Peer Review Cartoon
   a. if you are happy with your peer review—see teacher.
   b. if you are not happy with your peer review—redo, get another peer review—if happy with your work, see teacher, if not, sketch and peer review again (and so on)
   c. Make sure you number all your sketches!!!!!!
3. Teacher review Cartoon—show teacher peer review sheet for cartoon.
   a. teacher will:
      1. Discuss and sign peer review sheet (proceed to reflection)
         -or-
      2. Discuss and require or suggest a redo of sketch and peer review

Remember—We sometimes do not realize our own capabilities. Do not sell yourself short! Sometimes it just takes us doing things over and over!! I am most interested in originality and innovation. Think back to little Austin’s butterfly.

(next page)
Directions—You must have your sketch and final draft of your cartoon peer reviewed and signed off by your teacher. You should turn in every sketch and draft of your cartoon (including your final product). Just like Austin, we can get better with every attempt. Even if you don't get it totally "right"—if I see renditions that improve every time, you can still earn high marks!

Peer Review—Sketch

1. Name(s) of those who made the cartoon?___________________________________________________________
2. Name(s) of the peer reviewers?___________________________________________________________
3. Which theme is presented in the cartoon?___________________________________________________
4. Is the theme represented accurately? Yes or No
   a. if no--pause the review--talk with them about their theme and the meaning of their theme. Use the "Central Themes" worksheet that was handed out earlier in the unit or grab an extra off the back table. Discuss some ideas and have them redraw/correct their sketch. When they are finished, repeat steps 3 and 4 below.
      3. Which theme is presented in the cartoon?_____________________________________________
      4. Is the theme represented accurately? Yes or No
         Repeat this as many times as necessary until the theme is accurately represented.
   b. if yes--go on to number 5.
5. Does the sketch reflect a criticism of the central theme? Yes or No
   a. if no--Pause the review--explain to them what is meant by the idea that the cartoon must reflect not only the central theme, but a criticism of the central theme. The criticism must be of the theme itself, not of people in the cartoon. Help them understand what this means. Discuss some possibilities. Grab the "Political Cartoons Practice Quiz" off the back table if you need some ideas. Have the author redraw/fix their sketch. Then answer question 5 again. Repeat this as many times as necessary.
   b. if yes--call teacher over to sign for approval. You must turn this sheet in with your project.

NOTE: IF YOU ARE WAITING FOR THE TEACHER GO AHEAD AND START DRAWING THE CARTOON. DONT JUST SIT AND DO NOTHING. YOU CAN ALWAYS RESTART THE DRAWING IF SOMETHING NEEDS SOME EXTRA WORK.

Teacher Signature____________________________

Why Peer Review?

1. Encourage you to produce the best possible materials by providing a specific and structured proof-reading and review process before the product is turned into the instructor for grading.
2. Allow peer-to-peer instruction, helping you raise the level of learning of the class by presenting new ideas and applications of concepts to their peers.
3. Provide you with additional opportunities to practice analytical and critical-thinking skills as you analyze the structures, evidence, arguments, and plans as presented by your peers.
When my partner and I are finished what will we be turning in?

1. Sketch or sketches. Turn in every attempt you made. Number each sketch. Progression (getting better) rocks!!!!!
2. Peer review sheet(s) for all sketches. With printed names and signatures.
3. Cartoon. Turn in every attempt you made. Number all attempts. Progression (getting better) rocks!!!!!
4. Peer review sheet(s) for all attempts--with printed names and signatures.

Do I have to do anything without my partner?

5. 1/2 page reflection paper on the cartoon addressing the message and intent of the cartoon (for each cartoon). Each of you must do one of these and they must be original (i.e. if you and your partner copy off each other this will be a zero) You should use complete sentences, proper spelling and grammar, be neat, etc. If you are able, typing will earn you a little extra credit.

5 Minute exploratory Sessions (Ill tell you when we are going to do this).

1. Walk around the room and see what everyone else is doing—Ask people about their cartoons, get ideas, share thoughts, etc.
2. Exit Slip (must have to leave room!)—Tell me (WRITE IT DOWN) which cartoon (besides your own) is your favorite and WHY!

What if my partner is absent?

1. Talk to me once we get going and we will figure it out.