

Declaration of Independence and the Constitution – Grade Five

**Ohio Standards
Connection:**

Government

Benchmark B

Give examples of documents that specify the structure of state and national governments in the United States and explain how these documents foster self-government in a democracy.

Indicator 3

Explain the significance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Lesson Summary:

This multiple-day lesson is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the significance of the Declaration of Independence. The second part focuses on the significance of the U.S. Constitution. The students will read a rewritten version of the Declaration of Independence, create a set of pictures illustrating the Preamble of the Constitution and create a version of the Declaration of Independence in the form of a song, a poem, comic strip or picture book. Students also will write a constitution for a new country modeled after the U.S. Constitution. Many graphic organizers will be used to help students understand the significance of these two documents.

Estimated Duration: Eight hours

Commentary:

One teacher commented, “The lesson really forced my students to think about what our current world would be like if we were still tied to England. They were also able to discuss the chaos which would ensue if no legal system had been established in our country.” The same teacher also stated that the attachments were particularly effective with the students because the students liked them and they helped the students stay focused and involved throughout the lesson. Another teacher stated that the color-coding activity with the U.S. Constitution worked very well with students. It was also stated that after teaching this lesson, the students had a better understanding of the U.S. Constitution: “...the Constitution did not seem as intimidating to the students.”

A third field-test participant recommended that teachers make sure students understand that many peaceful means were tried first by the colonists before the resulting war. The participant responded: “Many of the students kept getting hung up on the more forceful protests which resulted in injury and death, rather than looking at the petitions which were written or the messengers which were sent to England.” All field-test participants commented that they liked the post-assessments and found that the post-assessments motivated their students.



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Pre-Assessment:

Provide each student with a copy of Attachment A, *Pre-Assessment*. The pre-assessment questions focus on the purpose and significance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Scoring Guidelines:

The pre-assessment does not receive a grade. The purpose of the pre-assessment is to provide background knowledge for the teacher. Use the students' answers to determine prior knowledge and to guide instruction.

Answer Key

1. The purpose of the Declaration of Independence was to declare that the United States was independent of Great Britain.
2. The U.S. Constitution defines the powers of Congress, the president and the federal courts. It also establishes and limits the authority of the federal government over the states and describes the freedoms and liberties for citizens. It is the law of the land.
3. The purpose of the Preamble is to introduce the U.S. Constitution. It summarizes what the people intended to do.

Post-Assessment:

Provide the students with the following directions.

Part One – Declaration of Independence

- Rewrite the Declaration of Independence as a poem, rap, song, comic strip or picture book. The final product must include all five parts of the Declaration of Independence:
 1. Preamble or introductory section;
 2. Explanation of the right of the people to control government;
 3. Complaints against King George III;
 4. Explanation of how the colonies tried to avoid separation;
 5. The colonies declare independence.
- Include a minimum of five complaints and the significance of the Declaration of Independence.

Part Two – U.S. Constitution

- You are to write a constitution for a new country. You and your committee have decided that the form of government is a democracy. You, as the representative of the committee, are to:
 1. Write a preamble describing the purpose of government;
 2. Include a minimum of five rights;
 3. Outline the powers of government and give a brief description of those powers;
 4. Conclude with a paragraph stating why this constitution is significant to the success of this new country.
- You may want to use the color-coded copy of the Constitution and Attachment H, *Summing It Up*, as assistance.



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- Provide students with the rubrics from Attachments B and C.

Scoring Guidelines:

Part One – Declaration of Independence

See Attachment B, *Declaration of Independence Rubric*, for the scoring rubric.

Part Two – U.S. Constitution

See Attachment C, *U. S. Constitution Rubric*, for the scoring rubric.

Instructional Procedures:

Instructional Tip:

Before you begin this lesson, find a copy of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution at National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Web site.

Day One – Declaration of Independence

1. Begin the lesson by having students break into groups of three or four students. Have each group write a list of “school-related improvements” that they might like to see such as bus rules, cafeteria food and playground rules, etc.
2. Have students share their lists and record the suggestions on chart paper.
3. Tell the students that in 1776, many colonists were dissatisfied with British rule of the colonies and that the Declaration of Independence lists grievances against King George III of Great Britain.
4. Provide copies of the Declaration of Independence.
5. Use Attachment D, *Map the Five Ws and H*, as a guide to introduce the Declaration of Independence. Complete an overhead transparency of the graphic organizer as students write on their copies. Complete all boxes except the last box: Importance/impact/significance.
6. Allow five to 10 minutes for students to read the Declaration. Ask students to summarize orally what they read. Typically, fifth graders have a difficult time comprehending its meaning so you may want to go over the document in sections. Have students make a vocabulary list or diagram for problem words.
7. Provide a summary for students to read that is written at a grade-appropriate level. See Attachment E, *Summary of the Declaration of Independence*, for an example. The summary reflects the important aspects of each part of the Declaration of Independence.
8. As a class, complete Attachment F, *Alphabet Soup: Independence*. Complete an overhead transparency of the attachment as students complete the organizer at their desks.
9. Complete the last box of Attachment D, *Map The Five Ws and H*.

Day Two – The U.S. Constitution

10. Complete Attachment G, *What Existed Before the Constitution?*, together as a class. Using a transparency of Attachment G, define the purpose of the Mayflower Compact and the purpose of the Articles of Confederation and why they failed. Have students write this information on their organizers. The graphic organizers establish background information for the students to use in writing about the topic.
11. Provide a copy of the Constitution for each student.



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12. Begin examining the Constitution with the Preamble. Explain to the students that the Preamble states the purpose for the Constitution. Provide each student with three sheets of white paper. Have the students fold the pieces of paper into thirds so that they have nine spaces in which to write. Read the Preamble to the students. Ask the students to illustrate the meaning of each of the following parts in one of the folded spaces.
- We the people of the United States
 - In order to form a more perfect union
 - Establish justice
 - Insure domestic tranquility
 - Provide for the common defense
 - Promote the general welfare
 - Secure the blessings of liberty
 - To ourselves and our posterity
 - Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America
- Have each student illustrate the meaning of each statement on one-third of each piece of white paper.

Day Three

13. Have students draw a red box around Articles I through III on their copies of the Constitution. In the margin, have students use a red colored pencil and write the words “Three Branches of Government.” Explain to students that the articles describe the powers of the three branches.
14. Have students draw a blue box around Articles IV and VI. In the margin, have students use a blue colored pencil and write the words “State and Federal Relations.” Explain to students that Article IV determines the power of the states and the relationship of the states to the federal government. Article VI states that the U.S. Constitution is supreme over state law and all national and state officials must pledge to uphold the Constitution.
15. Have students draw a green box around Article V. In the margin, have students use a green colored pencil and write the word “Amendments.” Explain to the students that Article V describes the method of amending and changing the Constitution. Define amendment.
16. Have students draw a black circle around Article VII. In the margin, have students use a black colored pencil and write the word “Ratification.” Explain to students this article describes the method for ratifying the Constitution. Define ratification.
17. Have students put red stars next to amendments one through 10 (the Bill of Rights). Explain to students that the first eight of these amendments guarantee certain individual rights.
18. Have students put blue dots next to the remaining amendments. Explain that amendments were added to the Constitution as needed. Pay particular attention to amendments 13, 15, 18, 19, 21 and 26.

Day Four

19. Use the graphic organizer, Attachment H, *Summing It Up*, to conclude this lesson. Using the worksheet, have students write three to five sentences describing each part of the U.S.



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Constitution. Hold a class discussion about the significance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution or assign the topic for a journal writing/essay writing reflection.

Day Five and Six

20. Have students work on the two parts of the post-assessment.

Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Read to any student who cannot independently read the summary of the Declaration of Independence.
- For the post-assessment, provide statements of the different parts of the Declaration of Independence. Have the student draw a picture illustrating the statements. Then, have the student dictate to the teacher the significance of the Declaration of Independence.
- For Attachment H, provide the summary for the parts of the U.S. Constitution and have the student write the name of the part.
- Have students research the points of view of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. Have students identify key figures from both sides. Conduct a debate on why there should or should not be a Bill of Rights added to the U.S. Constitution.
- In place of writing a new constitution, have students explain orally the purpose of the U.S. Constitution.
- Have students create a political cartoon about the Declaration of Independence.
- Have students work in groups to complete the post-assessment.

Extensions:

- Have students write editorials on the Declaration of Independence.
- Have students write a class constitution.
- Have students read biographies of significant people of this time such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton.
- Have students write interviews with the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Homework Options and Home Connections:

If any students take a trip to Washington, D.C., or Philadelphia, have them bring in pictures or souvenirs.

Interdisciplinary Connections:

English Language Arts:

- **Reading Applications: Informational Text**
Benchmark F: Determine the extent to which a summary accurately reflects the main idea, critical details and underlying meaning of original text.



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Indicator 4: Summarize the main ideas and supporting details.

- **Writing Processes**

Benchmark C: Clarify ideas for writing assignments by using graphics or other organizers.

Indicator 5: Use organizational strategies (e.g., rough outlines, diagrams, maps, webs and Venn diagrams) to plan writing.

- **Writing Applications**

No Benchmark

Indicator 5: Produce informal writings (e.g., journals, notes and poems) for various purposes.

Materials and Resources:

The inclusion of a specific resource in any lesson formulated by the Ohio Department of Education should not be interpreted as an endorsement of that particular resource, or any of its contents, by the Ohio Department of Education. The Ohio Department of Education does not endorse any particular resource. The Web addresses listed are for a given site's main page, therefore, it may be necessary to search within that site to find the specific information required for a given lesson. Please note that information published on the Internet changes over time, therefore the links provided may no longer contain the specific information related to a given lesson. Teachers are advised to preview all sites before using them with students.

For the teacher: Chart paper, overhead transparencies of attachments, three sheets of white paper per student, copy of Declaration of Independence per student, summary of the Declaration of Independence for each student, copy of U.S. Constitution for each student.

For the students: Red, blue, green, and black colored pencils, markers or crayons.

Vocabulary:

- Declaration of Independence
- U.S. Constitution
- independence
- constitution
- amendment
- ratification
- Articles of Confederation
- Mayflower Compact
- Constitutional Convention

Technology Connections:

- Find a copy of the U.S. Constitution at the U.S. Constitution Center Web site.



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- Visit the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Web site, <http://www.archives.gov> for:
 - a copy of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution;
 - background information of the Declaration of Independence;
 - background information of the U.S. Constitution.
- Use graphic organizer software to display ideas, connections and basic concepts.

Research Connections:

Marzano, R. et al. *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001.

Nonlinguistic representations help students think about and recall knowledge. They include the following:

- Creating graphic representations (organizers);
- Making physical models;
- Generating mental pictures;
- Drawing pictures and pictographs;
- Engaging in kinesthetic activity.

Daniels, H. and M. Bizar, M. *Methods that Matter: Six Structures of Best Practice Classrooms*, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 1998.

Authentic experiences helps students develop real-world knowledge and skills and apply their learning in ways that prepare them for their careers and lives beyond school.

General Tips:

- This lesson could be used in conjunction with the following grade five indicators:
 - History, Indicator 5
 - Government, Indicators 1, 2
 - Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities, Indicator 3
- Trade books can be used to teach important information about the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Attachments:

Attachment A, *Pre-Assessment*

Attachment B, *Declaration of Independence Rubric*

Attachment C, *U.S. Constitution Rubric*

Attachment D, *Map The Five Ws and H*

Attachment E, *Summary of the Declaration of Independence*

Attachment F, *Alphabet Soup: Independence*

Attachment G, *What Existed Before the U.S. Constitution?*

Attachment H, *Summing It Up*



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Attachment A Pre-Assessment

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776. This date is celebrated every year as Independence Day. What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?

2. On September 17, 1787, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met for the last time to sign the document they had created. It was ratified by the states in 1788, which means it was adopted as the framework for the government. What does the U.S. Constitution describe or define?

3. The U.S. Constitution begins with a preamble. What was the purpose of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution?



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Attachment B Declaration of Independence Rubric

- 4 points** - The final product includes all five parts of the Declaration of Independence, five complaints and why the Declaration of Independence is significant. The student has created a product that is of excellent quality and clearly demonstrates understanding of the significance of the Declaration of Independence.
- 3 points** - The final product includes four to five parts of the Declaration of Independence, four to five complaints and why the Declaration of Independence is significant. The difference between three points and four points is that one part of the assignment is missing or the final product is good, but not excellent.
- 2 points** - The final product includes three to four parts of the Declaration of Independence, three to four complaints and partially states why the Declaration of Independence is significant. The final product indicates a lack of understanding of the parts of the Declaration of Independence.
- 1 point** - The final product includes one to two parts of the Declaration of Independence, one to three complaints and does not state clearly why the Declaration of Independence is significant. The final product clearly shows a lack of understanding.
- 0 points** - The final product includes one or no parts of the Declaration of Independence, one to zero complaint(s) and does not state clearly why the Declaration of Independence is significant. The final product clearly shows a complete lack of understanding.



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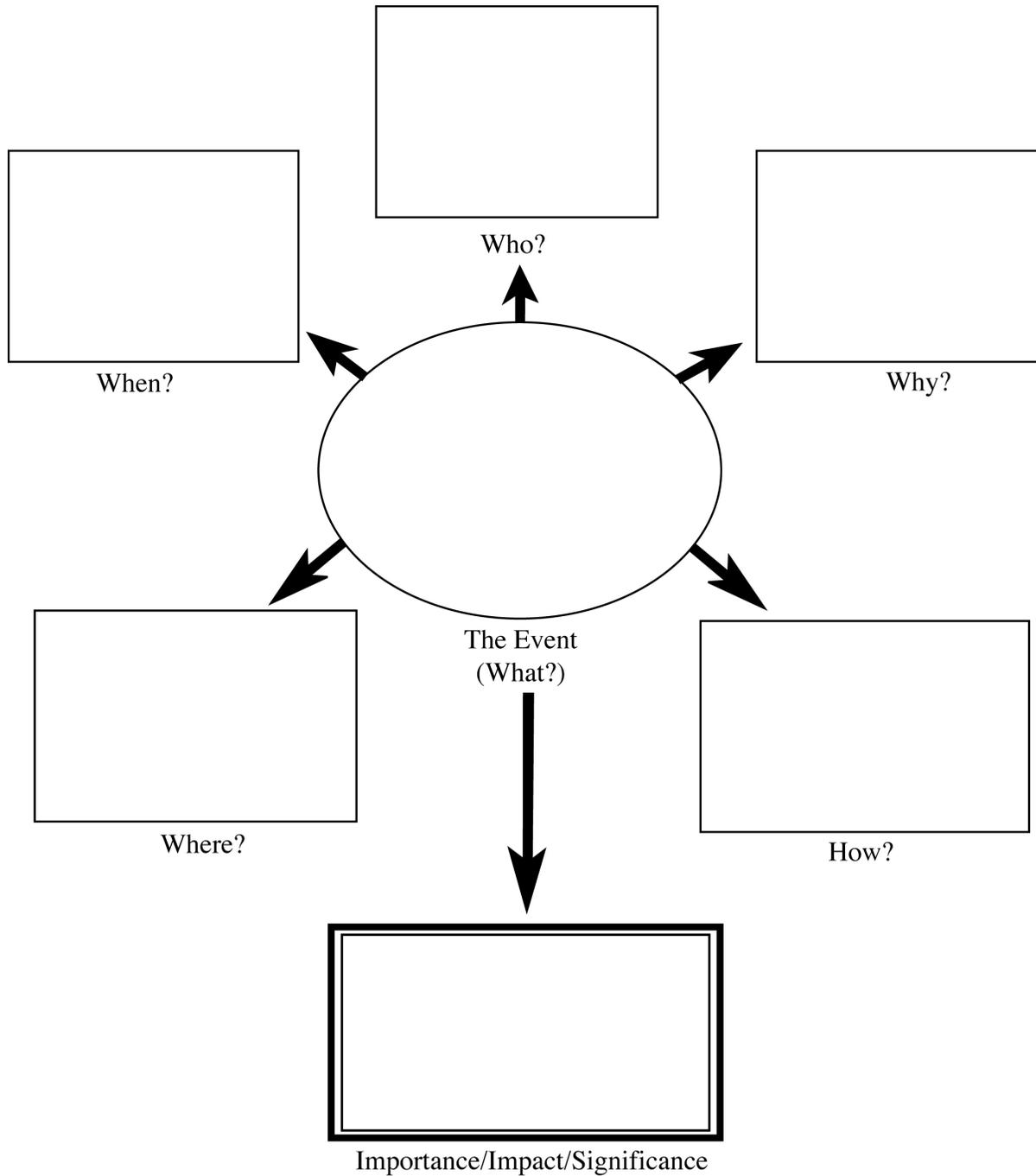
Attachment C U.S. Constitution Rubric

- 5 points** - The student meets all the requirements of the assignment. The student's preamble clearly describes the purpose and lists five or more rights. The powers of government are described reflecting the preamble. It models a democracy. The student writes an excellent concluding paragraph stating the significance of establishing a constitution for a new country.
- 4 points** - The student meets the requirements of the assignment. The student's preamble clearly describes the purpose and lists four to five rights. The powers of government are described, but do not necessarily reflect the preamble. It models a democracy. The student writes a good concluding paragraph stating the significance of establishing a constitution for a new country.
- 3 points** - The student meets some of the requirements of the assignment. Areas of weakness may be that the preamble does not clearly describe the purpose and four or fewer rights are listed. The powers of government are described, but do not reflect the preamble or reflect only parts of the preamble. The constitution models a democracy. The student's concluding paragraph does not clearly state the significance of establishing a constitution for a new country.
- 2 points** - The student meets few requirements of the assignment. Two points are awarded if two aspects of the project are adequately demonstrated.
- 1 point** - The student meets one requirement of the assignment.
- 0 points** - The student meets none of the requirements of the assignment.

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Attachment D Map The Five Ws and H

Directions: In the appropriate boxes, write who, when, where, why and how regarding the Declaration of Independence. Complete the last box at the conclusion of the lesson.





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Attachment E Summary of the Declaration of Independence

Part One – Preamble or Introductory Section

In the preamble, Thomas Jefferson begins the explanation of why the colonies want to separate from England and become a separate group of states.

Part Two - Right of People to Govern Themselves

The second part of the Declaration of Independence states that people are equal and have rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To guarantee these rights, people create governments. Governments get their power when people agree to let them rule. Whenever a government fails to protect its people, the people have the right to change the government or get rid of it and start a new government. The new government should organize its powers for the safety and happiness of its people. People should not abolish or overthrow a government for unreasonable causes. But when a government fails to protect the people over a long period of time, it is the right of citizens to overthrow that government and provide a new government for the citizens' safety. The King of England has for a long time failed to protect the people of the colonies and the Declaration points out what he has done wrong.

Part Three - Grievances

The Declaration of Independence provides a list of many grievances or complaints against the King of England. Some of the grievances were that:

- The king kept an army in the colonies in times of peace.
- The king allowed soldiers to be quartered or housed in the colonists' homes.
- The king protected soldiers who committed murder.
- The king cut off colonial trade with the rest of the world.
- The king taxed the colonists without their permission.
- The king took away colonial charters and did not let colonists make laws.
- The king burned the towns and destroyed the lives of the colonists.

Part Four - Attempts at Trying to Avoid Separation from England

The Declaration states that the colonies' repeated attempts to try to solve the problems were met with further injuries. The colonies warned the British people of attempts by the British legislature to extend their law over the colonists. The colonies kept reminding the British of the reasons the colonies were founded in the first place and asked for their help. These appeals were ignored and so the British people had to be regarded as enemies.

Part Five - Declaration of Separation

The last section of the Declaration states that having explained the reasons for their actions, the colonists' political connections to Great Britain were ended. As free and independent states, the colonies could wage war, have peace, make agreements with other countries, establish trade and do all the other things free and independent states do. In support of the Declaration of Independence, the signers pledged their lives, their fortunes and their honor.



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Attachment F Alphabet Soup: Independence

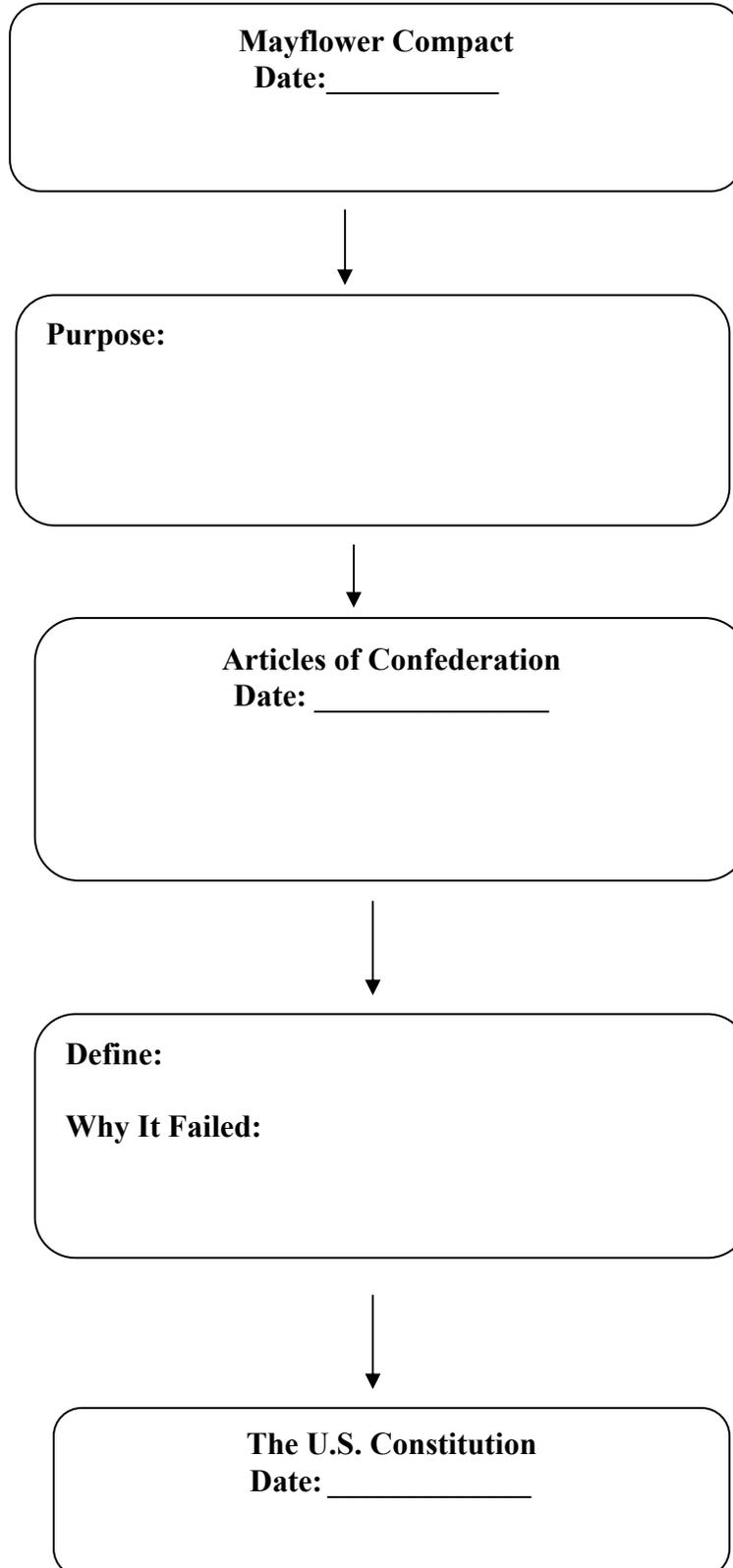
Directions:

For each letter, create a sentence that summarizes a main point about the topic. The first word of each sentence should begin with the letter in the box.

Letters	Write your sentence here.
I	
N	
D	
E	
P	
E	
N	
D	
E	
N	
C	
E	

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Attachment G What Existed Before The U.S. Constitution?





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Attachment H Summing It Up

Directions: In each box, write three to five sentences describing each part of the U.S. Constitution.

Preamble

Articles

Bill of Rights

Amendments