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## Paideia Seminar Lesson Plan

**Text:** Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

**Grade/Subject:** Upper ES / Social Studies

**Ideas, Values:** Citizen, Government, History, One & Many, Progress

**Date of Origin:** 8/3/2015

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### Pre-Seminar Content

#### Launch Activity:

Write the letters in the word C-I-T-I-Z-E-N vertically on the (interactive) white board and distribute a page with the same design to students. Have students work in pairs to complete an “acrostic” based on the word by: writing other words beginning with the same letter that describe citizens in the United States. Discuss how someone *becomes* a citizen in the general sense of the word.

#### Inspectional Read:

Distribute the text and have students examine it briefly. Discuss the definition of the word *Preamble* and talk about what this text might be based on its title. Have students number the sentences (1) in the text and then count the words (52).

#### Background Information:

Share as appropriate: The Preamble to the United States Constitution is a brief introductory statement of the Constitution's fundamental purposes and guiding principles. It states in general terms, and courts have referred to it as reliable evidence of, the Founding Fathers' intentions regarding the Constitution's meaning and what they hoped the Constitution would achieve.

Note that early drafts of the Preamble listed all of the contemporary states rather than the now famous phrase: “We the people of the United States...”

## Vocabulary:

Note that one of the most significant values of this seminar cycle involves learning the key vocabulary that is included in this one sentence. Ask students to identify key words from the Preamble that are unfamiliar. List those words on the board (including: *Preamble, Constitution, Union, Justice, Tranquility, Welfare, Posterity, ordain*, etc.). Divide the class into groups to define these words for the entire class. Discuss as a whole class and produce an annotated version of the Preamble with these words defined.

## Analytical Read:

Use the (interactive) whiteboard to divide the text into eight distinct units (divide the text at each comma). Assign the eight units to eight small groups and ask them to summarize each section in modern English. Go over the whole text and create a “translation” of this 19<sup>th</sup> Century document in modern English.

## Pre-Seminar Process:

- ✓ **Define and State the purpose for the seminar.**

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.*

- ✓ **Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.**

*“I am primarily responsible for asking challenging, open-ended questions, and I will take a variety of notes to keep up with the talk turns and flow of ideas. I will help move the discussion along in a productive direction by asking follow-up questions based on my notes. “I am asking you to think, listen and speak candidly about your thoughts, reactions and ideas. You can help each other do this by using each other’s names.*

*“You do not need to raise your hands in order to speak, rather, the discussion is collaborative in that you try to stay focused on the main speaker and wait your turn to talk.*

*“You should try to both agree and disagree in a courteous, thoughtful manner. For example, you might say, ‘I disagree with Joanna because...,’ focusing on the ideas involved not the individuals.*

- ✓ **Have participants set a Personal Goal.**

*“Now, please reflect on how you normally participate in a discussion as a group. What goal can you set for yourself that will help the flow and meaning of the seminar? “Please consider the list of personal participation goals – either on the Speaking and Listening Checklist or on the board.”*

- ✓ **To speak at least three times**
- ✓ **To refer to the text**

- ✓ To ask a question
- ✓ To speak out of uncertainty
- ✓ To build on others' comments

*“Is there one that is relevant for you? Please choose one goal from the list or that you feel is best and commit to achieving it during the discussion we are about to have... write down (or circle) your personal goal.”*

- ✓ **Agree on a Group Goal.**

*For this seminar, I will suggest our group goal (select display for all to see).*

## **Seminar Questions:**

- ✓ **Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):**

- ❖ What is the single, most important word in the Preamble? (round-robin response)
  
- ❖ What makes that word so significant? (spontaneous discussion)

- ✓ **Core (Analyze textual details):**

- ❖ Why do you think the authors of the Preamble chose to capitalize the words that they did?
  
- ❖ What do you think the authors mean by “domestic Tranquility”? Why is it important?
  
- ❖ What do you think they mean by “general Welfare”? Why is that important?
  
- ❖ Of the six purposes for the Constitution given here, which do you think is most important? Why?
  
- ❖ Based on this Preamble, what do you think is the purpose for the Constitution? Do you think it has changed in the 200 plus years since?

- ✓ **Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):**

- ❖ If we were to revise the Constitution for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, what purpose would you choose to add to those that are already given? Why?

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## Post-Seminar Process:

*“Thank you for your focused and thoughtful participation in our seminar”.*

- ✓ **Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal goal.**

*“As part of the post-seminar process, I would first like to ask you to take a few minutes to reflect on your relative success in meeting the personal process goal you set prior to beginning the discussion. Please review the goal you set for yourself and reflect in writing to what extent you met the goal. In addition, note why you think you performed as you did”. (Pause for reflection.)*

- ✓ **Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of the seminar.**

*“Now I would like us to talk together about how we did in relation to the group goal we set for ourselves (insert your group goal). On a scale of one to five, five being perfect, how would you say we did? Why?” (Pause for discussion.)*

*“Now, would someone be willing to (volunteer) to share your personal self-assessment and reflection?”*

- ✓ **Note reminders for the next seminar.**

## Post Seminar Content:

- ✓ **Transition to Writing:**

Have participants take notes to brainstorm ideas that they heard, read, and thought during seminar related to the ideas under discussion (and the *Launch Activity*).

- ✓ **Writing Task:**

Of the six purposes for the U.S. Constitution given in the Preamble, which is most important? After reading and discussing the Preamble to the Constitution, write a full paragraph in which you answer the question and explain your reasons based on the text. Support your opinion with evidence from the Preamble.

- ✓ **Brainstorm:**

Working with all the materials generated so far during this seminar cycle, work with the whole class to generate a list of words that would be especially valuable in responding to the writing task. Display that list on the board and suggest that students use at least 75% of the words on the list in their writing.

✓ **Structure the Writing:**

Allow a few minutes for all to sketch an outline for their writing. Draft the outline and use it to refine their thinking.

✓ **First Draft:**

Challenge all to draft their argumentative paragraphs by listing key points in support of their thesis. Refer to the text in detail.

✓ **Collaborative Revision:**

Have participants work in pairs to read their first drafts aloud to each other with emphasis on reader as creator and editor. Listener says back one point heard clearly and asks one question for clarification. Switch roles. Give time for full revisions resulting in a second draft.

✓ **Edit:**

Once the second draft is complete, have participants work in groups of three-four and this time take turns reading each other's second drafts slowly and silently, marking any spelling or grammar errors they find. (Have dictionaries and grammar handbooks available for reference.) Take this opportunity to clarify/reteach any specific grammar strategies you have identified your students needing. Give time for full revisions resulting in a third and final draft.

✓ **Publish:**

Display in your classroom (or in the hallway outside) the Preamble broken down into its eight units, stressing the six purposes given for the Constitution. Display the final version of the student paragraphs by the appropriate purpose. Invite other upper elementary classes to a gallery walk to read and discuss your students' arguments.

**This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:**

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**\*Text is attached if open sourced.**

**\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.**

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

**Source - <http://constitutionus.com/>**