

SOCIAL STUDIES
Building Our Country

Chapter 6
SAMPLER

myWorld
A C T I V I T Y G U I D E

5

Objectives

- Describe the system of government set up by the U.S. Constitution.
- Understand the Preamble.
- Identify the Constitution's key supporters and opponents and describe their arguments.
- Explain why the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution and summarize the rights it protects.

Quest Project-Based Learning: Present the Constitution

	Description	Duration	Materials	Participants
STEP 1 Set the Stage	Read a blackline master as an introduction to the project.	15 minutes	Blackline Master: Quest Kick Off	Whole Class
STEP 2 Launch the Activities			Leveled Readers: Writing the U.S. Constitution; We the People: The History of the Constitution; Checks and Balances: Creating the United States Government	
Activity 1 Rewrite the Preamble	Express the meaning of the Preamble.	20 minutes	Primary Source: The Preamble to the United States Constitution Blackline Master: In Your Own Words: The Preamble	Small Groups
Activity 2 Branches of Government Tree	Make a tree showing the branches of government.	30 minutes	Blackline Master: Branches of Government Tree Student Activity Mat: 3A Graphic Organizer Video: Capitol Visitor Center: At the Nation's Legislature Construction paper, scissors, tape or glue, markers	Small Groups
Activity 3 Checks and Balances Cartoon	Draw a political cartoon to illustrate checks and balances.	20 minutes	Blackline Master: Checks and Balances Cartoon	Small Groups
Activity 4 Advertise Freedom	Make a video ad to promote one of the amendments in the Bill of Rights.	30 minutes	Leveled Readers	Small Groups
STEP 3 ELL Complete the Quest Prepare Your Presentation	Prepare a presentation about the Constitution.	45 minutes	Blackline Master: Prepare your Presentation Presentation software; or large poster board, glue, and markers	Small Groups

Deliver a Presentation	Deliver a presentation to an audience.	45 minutes		Small Groups
Answer the Compelling Question	Discuss the compelling question.	15 minutes		Whole Class

Quick Activities

	Description	Duration	Materials	Participants
Moving West: Making a Decision	Use a map to help role play moving to the Northwest Territories in 1787.	20 minutes	Blackline Master: Moving West: Making a Decision	Small Groups
Write a Song About the Bill of Rights	Write lyrics to a song about the Bill of Rights and then perform it.	20 minutes	Classroom or Library Media Center resources	Small Groups
Create a Social Media Profile for Framers	Write a social media profile for one of the framers of the Constitution.	35 minutes	Classroom or Library Media Center resources	Small Groups
Constitution Matching Game	Create a vocabulary matching game.	10 minutes	Index cards	Partners
Debating: Federalists and Anti-Federalists	Research and prepare for a debate.	45 minutes	Leveled Readers, classroom or Library Media Center resources	Small Groups
Readers Theater: Philadelphia 1787 	Perform a brief skit about the Constitutional Convention.	45 minutes	Script; Props, such as hats or clothing (optional)	Small Groups

Project-Based Learning: Present the Constitution



What makes a government work?

Welcome to Quest 6, Present the Constitution. In this Quest, your students are asked to help the people of the imaginary country of Questopolis choose a new form of government and learn about democracy. The students will work in groups to create a presentation that tells the citizens about the U.S. Constitution and explain our form of government. The outcome is for groups to write and deliver a presentation about the Constitution. By completing the steps in the Quest, students will be able to discuss the compelling question at the end of this inquiry.

Objectives

- Describe the system of government set up by the U.S. Constitution.
- Understand the Preamble.
- Identify the Constitution’s key supporters and opponents and describe their arguments.
- Explain why the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution and summarize the rights it protects.

STEP 1 Set the Stage minutes

Begin the Quest by distributing the blackline master **Quest Kick Off**. It will bring the world of the Quest to life, introducing a story to interest students and a mission to motivate them.

Story

There has been a revolution in the fictional country of Questopolis. Queen Questia has been overthrown. Now the country must set up a new government.

Mission

Students have been chosen by the president of the United States to go to Questopolis. Their mission is to present the U.S. Constitution to the revolution’s leaders as a model for a democratic system of government.

STEP 2 Launch the Activities

The following four activities will help students prepare for their presentations by researching the subject matter and creating visual aids. Note that all activities can be done independently of the larger Quest.

You may assign the appropriate Leveled Reader for this chapter. Divide students into small groups that will remain consistent for all the activities.

Activity 1 Rewrite the Preamble 20 minutes

Materials: Primary Source: The Preamble to the United States Constitution, Blackline Master: In Your Own Words: The Preamble

Explain to students that they will read the Preamble to the United States Constitution. Remind them of what a constitution does, and review how our Constitution was written. Define primary and secondary sources for students, and ask them to determine which category the Preamble falls into.

Distribute the blackline masters **Primary Source: The Preamble to the United States Constitution** and **In Your Own Words: The Preamble**, which show the text of the Preamble and present the activity. Have students read the Preamble aloud to one another and fill in the chart.

Finally, have students rewrite the Preamble in their own words on a separate piece of paper. For example, they may rewrite the phrase “ensure domestic tranquility” to read “make sure the country is peaceful.”

Activity 2 Branches of Government Tree 30 minutes

Materials: Blackline Master: Branches of Government Tree, **Student Activity Mat:** 3A Graphic Organizer, Video: Capitol Visitor Center: At the Nation’s Legislature, construction paper, scissors, tape or glue, and markers

Provide students with construction paper, scissors, markers, and tape or glue. Explain that students will be making a tree showing the branches of government.

Distribute the blackline master **Branches of Government Tree**, which lists the branches of the U.S. government and the roles they play in governing the United States, and **Student Activity Mat:** 3A Graphic Organizer. Suggest students use the Student Activity Mat to take notes as they learn about the branches of government.

Before they begin, you may want to assign the video **Capitol Visitor Center: At the Nation’s Legislature**. Then, review the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Remind students that each has its own role and powers.

Have students study the chart on the handout to prepare for the activity. Then, have them create a tree with three branches out of construction paper and glue. Label the branches with the names of each branch of government. Then have students make two leaves for each branch. On each leaf, instruct students to write down one way that branch is important.

Activity 3 Checks and Balances Cartoon 20 minutes

Materials: Blackline Master: Checks and Balances Cartoon

Distribute the blackline master **Checks and Balances Cartoon**, which has an example of a political cartoon as well as questions designed to help the student identify the features of a political cartoon.

The handout asks students to identify three key features of the cartoon: the image, the small explanatory labels, and the main tag line. Note that the abbreviations do not match those we use today.

Circulate to help groups interpret the cartoon and identify these features, or complete this part of the activity as a class.

Then, review the concept of checks and balances in our Federal government with students. Explain that each of the three branches of government has the power to check, or stop, other branches from abusing their powers. Give examples, such as the President's power to veto a law or the Supreme Court's power to rule that a law is unconstitutional.

Explain that checks and balances are an important part of our system of government. As a class, have students generate a list of benefits they provide.

Finally, have students work in their groups to create their own cartoon illustrating the concept of checks and balances. Encourage groups to divide the task into parts such as sketching, coloring, and writing, and assign one role to each member.

Activity 4 Advertise Freedom 30 minutes

Materials: Leveled Readers

Assign the appropriate Leveled Reader for this chapter.

As a class, ask students to describe video advertisements they have seen on television or online. Write down on the board elements they have in common, such as the use of music or humor. Explain that students will be making their own TV ad to promote one of the amendments in the Bill of Rights. Review the Bill of Rights with students. Remind them that it was added to persuade opponents to ratify the Constitution.

List the important rights it protects, and discuss as a class how life in the United States might be different if these rights were not protected.

Have students work in their groups to write and stage their ad. If possible, have them record their ad to play as part of their presentation. Or alternatively, they may act out their ad as part of their presentation.

STEP 3 Complete the *Quest*

Part 1 Prepare Your Presentation 45 minutes

Materials: Blackline Master: Prepare Your Presentation; presentation software or large poster board, glue, and markers

After students have completed the Quest activities have them prepare for and deliver their presentations. Distribute the blackline master **Prepare Your Presentation**, which guides students through this process.

You may wish to have each group create a digital presentation with slides for each of their points. They can include photos of their illustrations and their rewritten Preamble, as well as a video recording of their ad.

Alternately, you may have students post their illustrations on large poster board, act out their ad as part of the presentation, and read aloud their Preamble.

Remind students about the Quest mission. Students should recall that they are talking to the leaders of Questopolis. How can they best explain our Constitution? What are the most important points to get across?

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ELL Support for English Language Learners

Speaking and Listening: Review some elements that distinguish formal and informal language. Explain that sentence fragments and words with English roots are less formal than full words, complete sentences, and words with Greek and Latin roots.

Entering: Explain to students that sometimes we use more formal language in class or when making a presentation. Help two to three students role-play talking about what they want to do after school today. Then have them role-play asking the principal for extra recess time. Discuss the different types of language they might use.

Emerging: Divide students into pairs. Have students role-play as two friends making a plan for the weekend. Then have them role-play a teacher asking a student a question in class and the student responding. Remind students to use more formal language in the second scenario. Have students write down three formal words they might use in their presentation.

Developing: Ask one student to tell about something fun they did recently. Then ask another student in the group to retell the story using more formal language. Then have other students repeat the activity. Discuss the different types of language that were used and how they change the way the story sounds.

Expanding: Divide students into pairs. Encourage one partner to tell a story about a recent funny or interesting event. Have the other partner retell it in formal language. Then have the partners switch roles. Have students write down five formal words they might use in their presentation.

Bridging: Tell a story to students using everyday, informal language. Then read aloud a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine article in a formal tone. Have students point out the differences in language between the story and the article. Have students write down seven to ten formal words they might use in their presentation.

Part 2 Deliver a Presentation 45 minutes

If possible, set up a real-life audience of classmates, parents, or community members. Consider distributing the blackline master **Quest Kick Off** to the audience before the presentations so they are familiar with the story and mission of this Quest.

Part 3 Compelling Question 15 minutes

After students deliver their presentation, encourage them to reflect on what they learned. As a class, discuss the compelling question for this Quest: “What makes a government work?”

Students have learned about different aspects of the Constitution, including the branches of government and checks and balances. Encourage students to think about how these help our government function. They should use what they learned to discuss the compelling question.

Capital City Times

BREAKING

POLITICS

ENTERTAINMENT

BUSINESS

SPORTS

MENU

REVOLUTION!

CAPITAL CITY, QUESTOPOLIS – Last night, Queen Questia fled from her palace and left the country. This follows weeks of protests. Thousands of citizens had taken to the streets of Capital City. They demanded that Questopolis become a democracy.

But what kind of government will the protesters build? The revolution's leaders have asked the president of the United States for help. The president has sent experts to teach them about the U.S. Constitution. Will their presentation convince the people of Questopolis to choose democracy? Or will a dictator take power?

Your Mission

The president of the United States has picked you and your team to go to Questopolis. You will teach its people about the U.S. Constitution by giving them a presentation.

To prepare and deliver your presentation, work with your team to do the following:

Activity 1 Rewrite the Preamble: Read the Preamble. Then, analyze it and put it into your own words.

Activity 2 Branches of Government Tree: Use art supplies to make a tree made up of the three branches of government.

Activity 3 Checks and Balances Cartoon: Draw a political cartoon about checks and balances.

Activity 4 Advertise Freedom: Create a TV ad for one of the amendments that makes up the Bill of Rights.

Complete Your Quest

Write and deliver your presentation, explaining what you have learned about the Constitution.





The Preamble to the United States Constitution

Introduction

A preamble is the introduction to a document. It explains the document's purpose. Below is the Preamble to the United States Constitution. As you read it, use the vocabulary and definitions to help with difficult words.

Vocabulary

domestic, *adj.*, at home, inside the country

tranquility, *n.*, peace

defence/defense, *n.*, protection, especially from war

welfare, *n.*, well being

liberty, *n.*, freedom

posterity, *n.*, future

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure **domestic Tranquility**, provide for the common **defence** [defense], 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.”

Fun Fact

The United States Constitution

has **4,543** words.

India has the world's longest constitution,

with **146,385** words.

Activity 1

Name _____ Date _____

In Your Own Words: The Preamble

Read the Preamble to the United States Constitution. It states six goals for what the Constitution is meant to do. Fill in the missing goals below in the first column. Then use the second column to restate the goal in your own words.

Goal	Meaning
form a more perfect union	
ensure domestic tranquility	keep peace in the country
secure the blessings of liberty	

Now, take the meanings you wrote in the chart and use them to help you rewrite the whole Preamble in your own words. Use plain language that is easy to understand. Try to emphasize the full meaning of the Preamble.

Activity 2

Name _____ Date _____

Branches of Government Tree

You know that trees have many branches. When we talk about our government, we say that it has three branches. What do we mean?

The branches of government are its parts. Like the branches of a tree, they are separate from one another. But also like tree branches, they all form part of a whole.

Each branch of government has its own role and its own set of powers. This helps make sure that no one part of the government can misuse its power.

Study this chart, which shows the three branches of our federal government.

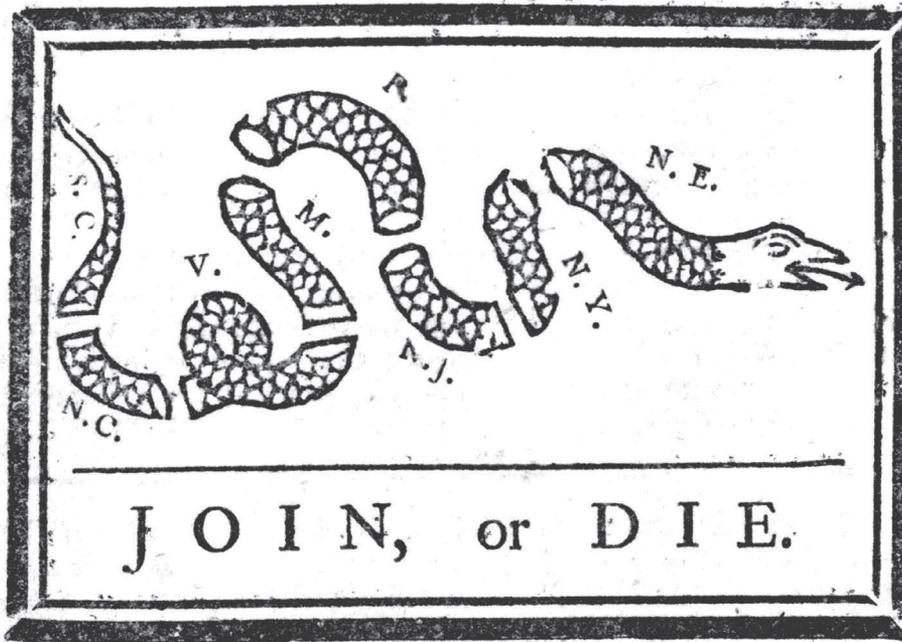
Branch	Who is it?	What does it do?
Legislative	Congress	Makes laws
Executive	The president and those who work for him or her, such as members of the military	Enforces laws to make sure people follow them
Judicial	The Supreme Court and other courts	Interprets laws and decides if they follow the Constitution

Now follow your teacher's instructions to create a Branches of Government Tree. Include and label all three branches on your tree. Then, add two leaves to each branch to list details about what makes each branch important.



Checks and Balances Cartoon

This political cartoon was created by Benjamin Franklin before the American Revolution. It urged people in the British colonies in America to join together to fight a common enemy: the French. Later, the colonies would join together to fight the British. The abbreviations in the cartoon represent the colonies.



Benjamin Franklin. "Join, or Die." Cartoon

Many political cartoons use similar features to get their points across. Find the following in this cartoon:

- Circle the main image in the cartoon.
- Put a star next to one of the small labels that helps to explain the image.
- Draw a rectangle around the main tag line, or a clever line of text that sums up the point of the cartoon.

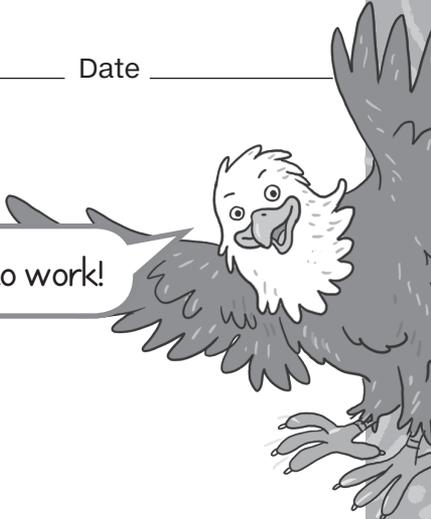
What does the snake represent in this cartoon?

Who should join or die?

On a separate piece of paper, draw your own political cartoon to promote the idea of checks and balances. Remember that this is a principle of the government set up by the Constitution. It means that each of the three branches of government can check, or limit, the power of the other branches.

Prepare Your Presentation

You have studied the U.S. Constitution. Now, it is time to show what you have learned. Remember that your mission is to give a presentation about the Constitution to the leaders of the revolution in Questopolis so that they can see a model for how a democracy can work.



Time to get to work!

1. To prepare your presentation, think about its purpose and audience.
Who is the audience for your presentation?

What is the main goal of your presentation?

2. Write down a list of the main points you plan to make in your presentation.

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Quick Activities

Moving West: Making a Decision

Small Groups  20 minutes

Materials: Blackline Master: Moving West: Making a Decision

Tell students that the Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution. According to its terms, the United States gained territory west to the Mississippi River. After the war, the U.S. government had to organize this land. The first land that Congress organized was the Northwest Territory.

1. Divide the class into groups each containing two to four students.
2. Distribute the blackline master **Moving West: Making a Decision** which shows a map of the Northwest Territory in 1787 and contains short-answer questions for the students.
3. Have students pretend they are farmers moving to the Northwest Territory from one of the thirteen states.
4. As they study the map, have them answer the questions on the handout, decide where in the territory they want to move, and mark their destination with an X.
5. Have students use the scale of miles/km to measure the distance from their state to their destination.
6. Finally, have each group explain its choice to the class.

Write a Song About the Bill of Rights

Small Groups  20 minutes

Materials: Classroom or Library Media Center resources

Organize students into small groups. Have them research a list of key ideas and terms associated with the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Ask each group to think of a popular song they like and have them write new words to that song that reflect what they have learned about the Bill of Rights. The song should aim at educating younger children about the Bill of Rights. Then, have the groups perform their songs for a younger grade class and ask the younger students to vote on the most creative song.

Create a Social Media Profile for the Constitution's Framers

Small Groups  35 minutes

Materials: Classroom or Library Media Center resources

Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution:

George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, Patrick Henry, Edmund Randolph, William Paterson, Roger Sherman

Provide students with resources about the framers and their role in the creation of the U.S. Constitution. Then have students create social media posts that include some or all of the following: name, state represented, spouse and children, early career or job, personal wealth, and slave ownership status. Then write two "posts" that have to do with the person's role in the Constitution, and include one or two images of the person (these can be drawn or from the Internet).

When students have completed their social media pages, you may wish to display them in the classroom or in the hallway.

Constitution Matching Game

Partners  10 minutes

Materials: Index cards

Have each student work with a partner to write the following words and definitions on one side of the index cards. Each card should have either one word or one definition, not both.

delegate	a representative
veto	to refuse to approve something
amendment	a change or improvement
compromise	a situation when groups on each side of an issue each give in a little to reach an agreement
Preamble	the introduction to the Constitution of the United States

constitution a written plan for government

separation of powers the idea that the powers and duties of government are divided among separate branches

Mix all the cards and lay them in rows face down. One student turns over any two cards. If the term and definition match, the student keeps the cards. If they don't match, he or she turns them back over and the other student tries to find a match. The game continues until all cards have been matched. The player with the most matches wins the game.

Debating: Federalists and Anti-Federalists

Small Groups  45 minutes

Materials: Leveled Readers, classroom or Library Media Center resources

Tell students that in the spring and summer of 1787, delegates from each state met in Philadelphia for a Constitutional Convention. They drafted a new constitution, creating a form of government that satisfied many but not all the delegates. Discuss the differences between the opinions of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists and how this affected ratification. Assign the appropriate Leveled Reader for this chapter.

Federalists	Anti-Federalists
Supported the Constitution; supported a strong federal government	Opposed the Constitution; feared a strong federal government; wanted a Bill of Rights

Disagreements between Federalists and Anti-Federalists became heated. Assign students into two groups: Federalists or Anti-Federalists, and explain that the sides will participate in a mock debate.

If you have a large class, you may want to further divide the class and hold several debates. Give students time to research their positions. Appoint students, yourself, or other teachers as moderator(s) for the debate.

Set up and share rules for the debate. Rules may include the amount of time permitted to speak and refute, and time for closing arguments. You may wish to invite another class or members of the faculty to watch the debates.

Readers Theater: Philadelphia, 1787

Small Groups  45 minutes

Materials: Script, props (such as hats or clothing; optional)

The students will be performing a short skit on the Constitutional Convention. This skit has a total of seven speaking roles. Divide the class into small groups, and assign or have students select the roles that they will play.

Distribute the blackline master **Readers Theater: Philadelphia 1787**, which are the pages of dialogue for a brief skit about the Constitutional Convention.

If desired, give the students time to look over the script, research the characters, and make or obtain any props that they would like to use. Remind students to speak clearly and at an understandable pace during the skit. Have the students perform the skit in their small groups.

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Support for English Language Learners

Speaking and Listening: Remind students that active listening will help them to recognize and reinforce vocabulary, sentence structure, and idioms. Remind students to listen carefully to the dialogue in the skit, and encourage them to ask questions if there are words or expressions that they do not understand.

Entering: Write the following words on the board: *big, huge, massive, enormous*. Say each word for students and discuss the meaning of the words. Help students understand the subtle differences between the words. Repeat with the words: *small, little, tiny, minuscule*.

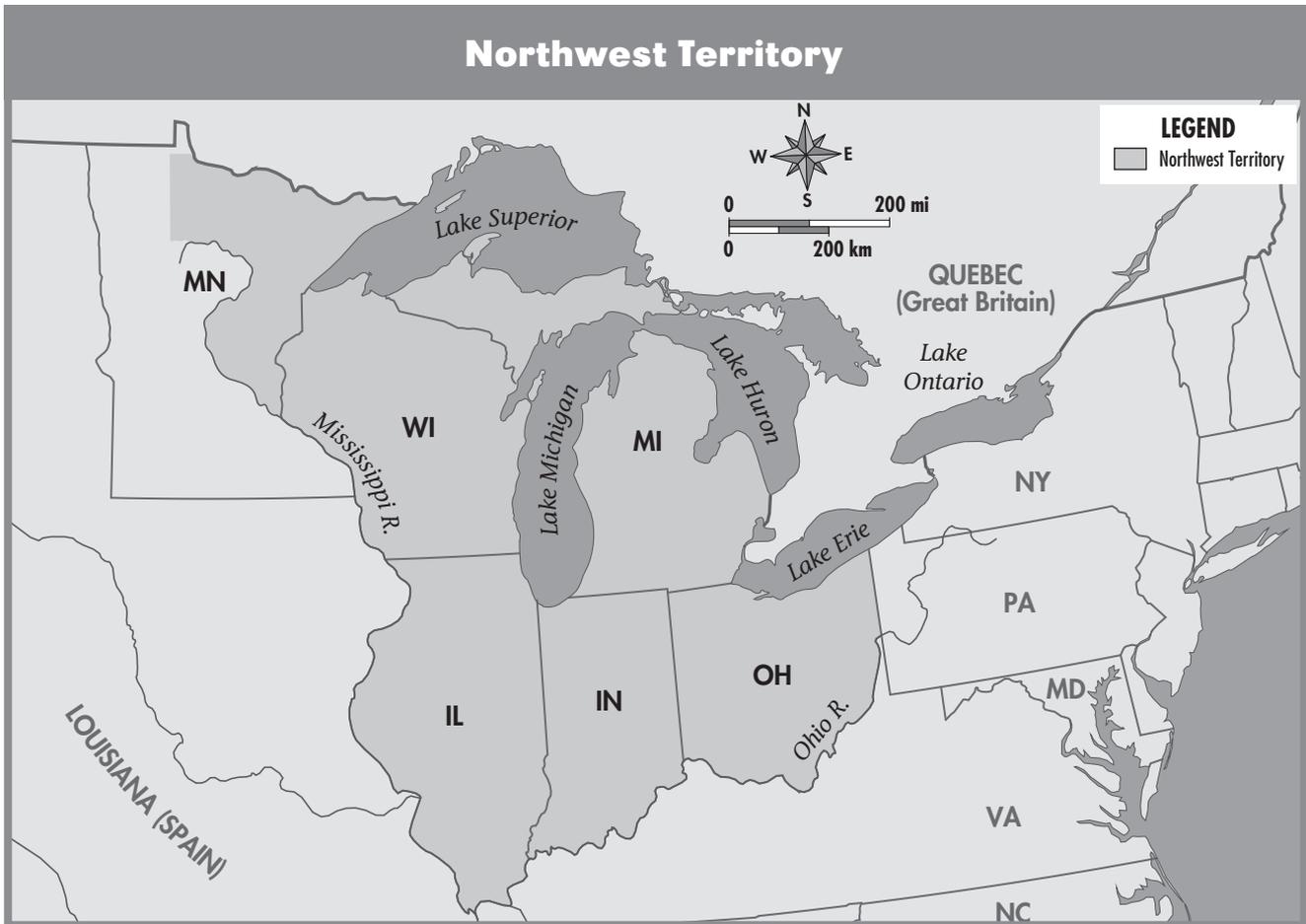
Emerging: Have one student say aloud the sentence *That rock was so massive that I could not pick it up*. Have the students guess the meaning of the word *massive* based on the context of the sentence. Ask students to use a thesaurus or dictionary to find two more words that also mean *big*, and have each student repeat the sentence using one of those words in place of *massive*.

Developing: Work with a small group and write this pair of sentences on the board: *Ava told a funny joke. Ava told a hilarious joke*. Discuss the sentences and review what *hilarious* means. Then ask each student to write two sentences that mean basically the same thing.

Expanding: Divide students into pairs. Say: *My fiery temper gets me in trouble, because when I am angry I say things that I do not mean*. Ask students to note the use of the adjective *fiery* in this context. Explain that it is figurative language, referring to the intensity of feeling as symbolized by the intense heat of fire. Ask students to each write three sentences describing strong emotions using adjectives, then have students share their sentences.

Bridging: Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one of the following idiomatic phrases: *spill the beans, bent out of shape, chip on one's shoulder, beat around the bush, and bite the bullet*. Have each group look up the meaning of the phrase, and then use the phrase in a sentence. Have each group share their sentence.

Moving West: Making a Decision



In September 1783, the United States and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, ending the American Revolution. According to the treaty, Great Britain agreed to grant some land it controlled to the United States. This land stretched from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. Of these vast lands, the first portion that Congress organized was the Northwest Territory. This land is located in the northern part of the territory and is shown by the gray shaded area. The borders and abbreviations in this region are present-day borders and names of states.

Where in the new territory will you move? Study the map and answer the questions on the next page. Then make your decision.

Imagine that it is the year 1787, and you are a U.S. farmer living in one of the eastern states. You want to move your family to the Northwest Territory where there is a great deal of land. The land is not empty. There are American Indian nations living on the land. Remember that there are no trains, trucks, or highways in 1787.

1. What rivers and lakes are located near the Northwest Territory?

2. Will you ship the products from your farm by water or by land?

3. Which nations control land near the Territory?

4. Where in the Northwest Territory would you move to and why? Put an **X** on the map to mark the place you chose.

5. Choose one of the eastern U.S. states shown on the map (this will be your starting location). Use the map's scale to measure the distance between a location in the state and the location you chose in the Northwest Territory.

Write the state you measured from _____ and the approximate location of the area where you measured to _____.

Write your measurement here _____.



A story about how citizens in Philadelphia may have debated the issues in 1787.

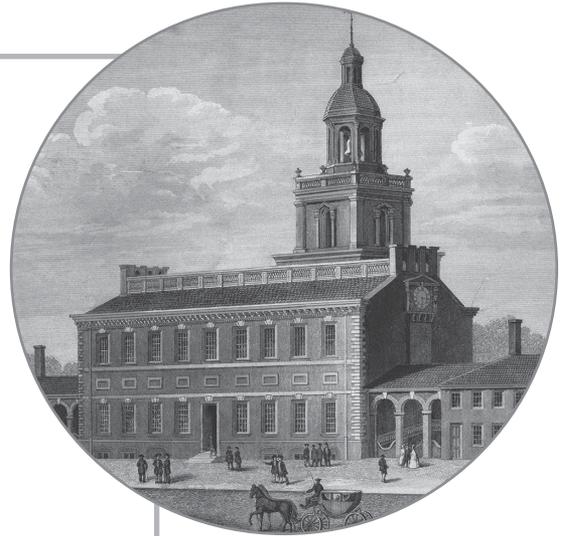
The Parts

5 players:

- **Narrator**
- **Barnabus Dawkins**, former Continental soldier, wounded in war
- **Abigail Dawkins**, Barnabus's wife
- **Elijah Johnson**, printer at the *Pennsylvania Gazette*
- **Henrietta Johnson**, Elijah's wife

2 additional players—during the improvisation:

- **Benjamin Franklin**, Delegate to the Constitutional Convention
- **George Washington**, President of the Constitutional Convention



Director's Notes:

The play is scripted during a day of the Constitutional Convention, which is taking place in the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia in June 1787. Outside the convention, a small group of friends is discussing what might be happening inside. After the session ends, two of the convention members, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, leave the building and slowly pass by the group. Eager to hear news about the convention, the group hopes to engage America's founders in a lively conversation. This is the time when the actors can improvise their parts. (You may wish to conduct additional research beforehand.)

Narrator:

It is a hot and humid summer day in late June 1787. State delegates are meeting inside Philadelphia's Pennsylvania State House to discuss how they can make the national, or federal, government stronger and more effective. Barnabus Dawkins and his wife Abigail are standing outside the State House, eagerly awaiting the outcome of the meeting. They are with their friends, Elijah and Henrietta Johnson.

Abigail

*fanning herself
to stay cool*

I cannot believe that the State House windows are shuttered in this terrible heat! How can the delegates think, let alone debate the issues?

Barnabus:

leaning on a cane to support his leg

It most certainly will get hotter in the meeting room because tempers are aflame! Delegates are divided over who should be more powerful—the federal government or the individual states.

Henrietta:

I wish we could find out what is going on. It is not fair that the delegates are in a secret meeting. We have a right to know what they are deciding about our future.

Elijah:

wiping the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief

I agree, my dear. I do hope that we can keep the Articles of Confederation. It has mostly worked for the past six years. It just needs to be strengthened a bit. We must make sure that each state keeps its power.

Barnabus:

I'm afraid I disagree with you, my friend. We need a new constitution and a new plan for our nation's government. Our country has been in debt since the war—we owe far too much money. I, and many of the soldiers who fought in it, never received the pay that was due us.

Abigail:

Our currency, the “continentals,” is almost worthless. And our federal government has limited powers and cannot collect taxes. It is at the mercy of each state to give it money.

Henrietta:

That may be true. But if we have a stronger federal government, are you not afraid that the president could become like the king of England and have too much power?

Barnabus:

vehemently tapping his cane on the ground to emphasize his point

No, no, no. That would never happen! First of all, the president of the convention, George Washington, fought for our country's independence. He is not one who is hungry for power. Secondly, he understands that we need a strong federal government, one that has an army to prevent what happened last year.

Abigail:

looking perplexed

What are you referring to, Barnabus?

Barnabus:

eyebrows raised

Do you recall when Massachusetts raised its taxes?

Elijah:

nodding his head vigorously

Of course! Many farmers lost their land and some even went to prison.

Henrietta:

also nodding

Yes, I remember now. Daniel Shays, a farmer and former soldier in the Continental army, led a group of men to shut down the highest court in the state.

Abigail:

fanning herself

He and his men tried to steal weapons from our nation's weapons depot. Luckily, they failed.

Barnabus:

raising his index finger to make a point

That is a fact! This rebellion never would have happened if we had a strong federal government, and a federal army to boot!

Elijah:

wiping his brow again

I must disagree with you—and agree with the brilliant Virginia speaker and Revolutionary War hero, Patrick Henry. Unfortunately, he is not at the convention to state his case. He refused to attend because he will not even consider a new constitution.

Henrietta:

sighing

You are right, Elijah. He—like you and me—believes that the states should keep their power.

Barnabus:

lowering his voice

There are rumblings that delegates want an entirely new form of government with three separate branches.

Elijah:

whispering

What do you mean?

Barnabus:

I am talking about a government that has one group make laws, another group carry out the laws, and a third group to decide what each law means.

Abigail:

That is an interesting idea, indeed!

Henrietta:

Rather than giving the federal government all of the power, or the states having too much power, do you think there could be some sort of a compromise?

Elijah:

rubbing his chin in thought

Hmmm. A compromise might work, if the states could keep some of their power. I am sure our leaders are debating that issue as we speak.

Barnabus:

holding up his cane and pointing it toward the State House

Look! The meeting has adjourned.

Abigail:

excitedly pointing

I see George Washington!

Henrietta:

smiling

He is walking this way... with Benjamin Franklin! Do you think they would stop to talk with us?

Elijah:

waving his handkerchief to get the attention of the Founding Fathers

I have met Mr. Franklin because of my newspaper work at the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Let me see if they will come over to talk with us. Sir...Mr. Franklin? How are you?

Benjamin Franklin:

Hello, my good man! I cannot discuss the details of our meetings, but exciting changes are coming to our United States.

George Washington nods in agreement.

(Washington and Franklin continue on their way, conversing quietly until offstage and the four citizens continue in an opposite direction continuing an improvisational conversation until offstage. Only the Narrator is left.)

Narrator:

The Constitutional Convention created a new U.S. Constitution with a new form of national government with three branches. It had checks and balances so that no branch gained more power than the other. The Constitution also divided power between the national government and the state governments. It is the same form of government in use today.

(Narrator leaves the stage.)

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ACTIVITY GUIDE

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SAM: 9780134942087
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