

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution **Upper Elementary Grades**

Teacher's Guide

Lesson Overview

Many of the ideas that influenced the Founders originated in the government of the Roman Republic. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to explore the meaning of republicanism, common welfare, and civic virtue as they were said to have been practiced in ancient Rome, and to consider how these ideas influenced the thinking and behavior of the Founders.

The lesson opens with a brief description of republican government in Rome and a discussion of what the Founders thought were the principal characteristics and advantages of republican government. Students engage in problem-solving activity examining some of the considerations involved in determining the common welfare. Students then read about the Founders' belief in the importance of civic virtue in creating a republican government.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson:

1. Students should be able to explain why the Founders thought republican government was the best type of government.
2. Students should be able to discuss the importance of the concepts of the common welfare and civic virtue in a republican government.

Materials Needed

Student text

Teaching Procedures

A. Reading and Discussion

Understanding the Influence of the Roman Republic

Have students read the "Purpose of Lesson," "The Founders Studied History," and "What is a Republican Government?" Make sure that students understand the three elements of a republic that the Founders believed were important.

B. Reading and Discussion

Understanding the Influence of the Roman Empire

Have students read the next two sections, "What Are the Advantages of Republican Government?" and "What is the Common Welfare?" Review with the students what the Founders believed were the advantages of a republican form of government.

Write the words "common welfare" on the board and discuss the meaning of each word and the entire phrase.

Ask students to examine the picture on page 23 of the student text and answer the question "Is this government serving the common welfare?" Explain that deciding what is the common welfare and who should have the power to make that decision is not always easy. The next problem-solving activity should help them understand this difficulty.

C. Problem Solving

Determining the Common Welfare

Read the problem-solving activity "Your Interests and the Common Welfare" with the class. Then divide the class into groups of 3 - 5 students. Ask each group to develop responses to the four situations given. You may wish to have one student act as chairperson of the group and assign each of the other students one of the situations listed. The chairperson should write down and report the group's response to the class.

In addition, you may wish to assign each group one of the situations and have them create a skit to depict their responses. Culminate the activity by having the groups share their opinions and their skits.

D. Reading and Discussion

Understanding the Importance of Civic Virtue

Have the students read the section "What is Civic Virtue?" Discuss the meaning and importance of civic virtue. Ask students why they think civic virtue is necessary in a republican form of government. You might ask students to provide examples of civic virtue from their own lives.

E. Concluding Activity

Conclude the lesson by discussing the questions contained in "Reviewing and Using the Lesson." Groups should continue work on their unit projects and their vocabulary-building activity.

Optional Activities

For Reinforcement, Extended Learning, and Enrichment

1. Have students analyze nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and Aesop's Fables to determine if they promote civic virtue.
 2. Ask students to write a report on a television show which encourages young people to develop civic virtue.
 3. Invite a representative of local, state, or national government to speak to the class. Ask the person to provide examples of government actions that serve the common welfare.
-

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to freely use this information for nonprofit educational purposes only. Copyright must be acknowledged on all copies. The development of this text was originally funded and cosponsored by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. The US Department of Education disclaims the responsibility for any opinion or conclusions contained herein. The Federal Government reserves a nonexclusive license to use and reproduce for governmental purposes, without payment, this material where the government deems it in its interest to do so.

ISBN 0-89818-170-4

Free classroom sets of the **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution** materials are available on a limited basis in each congressional district in the nation. Information is available on the [We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program page](#).

Additional sets may be purchased from the Center at a nominal cost through our [Online Catalog](#).