



PRE-PROGRAM CURRICULUM: LESSON 1

FOUNDATIONS OF CIVIC LIFE: THE PREAMBLE

GOAL: Students will explore the concept of “We the People,” how the definition of “we” has developed over time, and how their individual concept of “We the People” compares to that of their classmates. Students will discuss the ways they feel that the U.S. government is/is not responsive to the needs of all people and consider how government might better serve citizens in our democracy.

TIME: 50 minutes

MATERIALS: [“The Original People”](#) video; [“Who Wrote We the People?”](#) video; Attachments 1-2

PROCEDURES:

Warm-Up (8-10 minutes)

1. Display the phrase “We the People.” Ask if any students can identify where this phrase originates. (As needed, be sure to explain that this phrase is the beginning of the Preamble to the Constitution, first ratified in 1788. Briefly explain what a Preamble is.) Ask students to engage in a think-pair-share with a classmate near them to discuss the following:
 - a. What ideas, events, or individuals come to mind when you see/hear this phrase?
 - b. How might your answer to this question differ if you were living in the United States 230 years ago instead of today?
2. Ask a few volunteers to share their responses aloud, identifying themes that emerge.

Direct Instruction (15-20 minutes)

1. Explain that students will view two videos exploring the history and philosophy behind the concept of “We the People.” As they view the videos, they will respond in writing to the questions listed in ATTACHMENT 1A.
2. Introduce the first video, “The Original People,” as presenting a Native American perspective on “We the People.” Show “The Original People” and give students time as needed to complete all of the worksheet questions.
3. Ask students to share out some of their answers. Discuss similarities and differences in their responses as they emerge.
4. Introduce the second video, “Who Wrote We the People?” This video is a history of the direct origins of the phrase “We the People” in the Constitution and the context that informed its inclusion in the document. As students watch the video, they should respond to the remaining worksheet questions.
5. Have some students share out answers as a check for understanding before continuing on.

Small-Group/Whole-Class Discussion (15-20 minutes)

1. Explain that a critical concept behind “We the People” is that we, as members of our communities and nation, bear responsibility for the health of our democracy.
2. Place students in small groups (4-5 members per group) and ask them to discuss and record responses to the questions in ATTACHMENT 1B.
3. Ask members of each group to share their responses to the questions and conduct a whole-group discussion.

Wrap-Up (5-8 minutes)

1. Distribute ATTACHMENT 2 as an exit ticket.
2. Explain to students that they will return to their responses in the exit ticket at the start of the next lesson in this series, and that the discussion they had today asking them to reflect on and share their perspectives of key concepts in American democracy will be similar to the kinds of discussions they will have on their Close Up program.

ATTACHMENT 1A: THE EVOLUTION OF “WE THE PEOPLE”

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1 – Video: “The Original People”

Directions: Review the following questions and write your responses as you view the video.

1. What main argument(s) is this video making about the meaning of “We the People?”

2. Why is this perspective of the meaning of “We the People” important?

Part 2 – Video: “Who Wrote We the People?”

Directions: Review the following questions and write your responses as you view the video.

1. What main argument(s) is this video making about the meaning of “We the People?”

2. Why is this perspective of the meaning of “We the People” important?

ATTACHMENT 1B

Part 3 – The Responsibilities of Government and We the People

1. When you think about participating in democracy, what are some of the responsibilities you feel that individuals have?

2. What are some of the ways that government serves the people and responds to their needs?

3. What are some historical examples you can think of when the government has failed to serve all of its people?

4. Are there any examples you can think of today when, in your view, the government has responded or failed to respond to the needs of the people?

ATTACHMENT 2: FOUNDATIONS OF CIVIC LIFE EXIT TICKET

Name: _____ Date: _____

What do you believe to be the most important responsibility the government has toward the people it governs?

..... *cut*

Name: _____ Date: _____

What do you believe to be the most important responsibility the government has toward the people it governs?

..... *cut*

Name: _____ Date: _____

What do you believe to be the most important responsibility the government has toward the people it governs?