

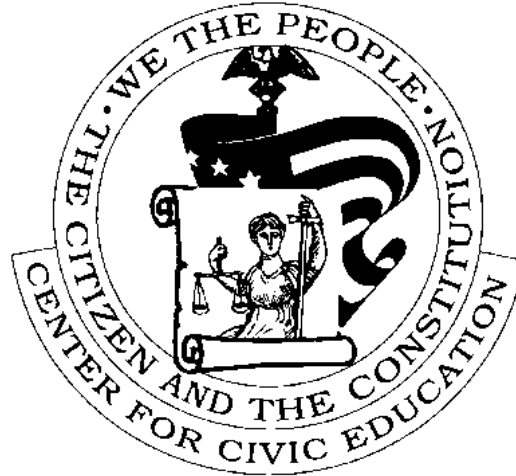


We the People
The Citizen and the Constitution

Directed by the Center for Civic Education
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Simulated Congressional Hearing



How to build a competitive or noncompetitive program in your school

Presented by:

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How to use this guide:

There are several components to this guide that will be useful to you in integrating the *We the People...* curriculum into your middle school curriculum. In this guide you will find the following:

Planning Guide: You will find directions and a planning timeframe as well as assessment suggestions for implementing the culminating activity, the **Simulated Congressional Hearing**. This guide gives you suggested steps for taking your students through the steps of preparing for and participation in the Simulated Hearings. The guide suggests timeframes for the various steps as well as assessment options along the way.

Teacher Resources: The resources you will need to get you students ready for the simulated hearing are included. These include the Simulated Hearing questions as well as various assignment you can give students before, during and after the process to guide and assess their learning.

Student Resources: Student resources include information introducing them to the program, research suggestions and other documents that will be helpful in their preparation.

Organizational Resources: These documents will help you and your teachers organize the actual hearings. They include a checklist and timeline, letter formats for inviting judges and guests, competition matrices and other resources to help you make decisions about how to best implement this exciting activity. **Note:** In addition to this resource, your district coordinator can conduct a training with you and your team of teachers to give you a more specialized plan for implementing the Simulated Congressional Hearing. All teachers participating in such a training receives a free class set of texts along with a teachers' guide. Further, when you receive your set of textbooks, you will receive a **Program Participation Guide** with other materials and suggestions that will be helpful to you in implementing the **Simulated Congressional Hearing**.

Judges' Resources: These include directions for judging and other documents judges will need to have in front of them while participating in the hearings for your students.

Our hope is that you will make use of this guide and its resources to enhance the experience of social studies for your students. It is important to note that in addition to the resources in this guide, your state and district *We the People...* coordinators are available to assist you in any way they can.

SOCIAL STUDIES GRADE 8 CULMINATING ACTIVITY

TIMEFRAME: This activity can take between two and three weeks to complete and builds on the knowledge that students have acquired by completing their study of the grade eight curriculum units.

OBJECTIVES: This activity addresses many content standards and content focus statements from all four units in the grade 8 program and every social studies content standard area. Additionally, the activity provides for authentic application of numerous social studies skills as well as MSDE reading and writing standards.

MATERIALS

Preparation for Simulated Congressional Hearings

- Student Textbooks: *We the People, Level II*
- Student copies of “Instructions for Students,” “How do we pick our teams,” and “Simulated Hearing Frequently Asked Questions.” (Student Resources 1,2, and 4)
- Five-six copies of each unit of the “Students’ Unit Questions” per class (Teacher Resource 1)
- Five-six copies of each unit of the Sample Follow-up Questions” per class (Teacher Resource 2) “
- Folders, one per student

Simulated Congressional Hearings

- One set per class of “Timekeeper Signs” (Teacher Resource 8)
- Student copies of “Scoring Rubric” (Teacher Resource 3)
- Certificates of achievement, one per student
- Optional: Student copies of SCH Evaluation (Teacher Resource 5)

Simulated Congressional Hearings—Judges’ Materials

- Folders, one per judge to contain judges’ handouts
- Copies of “Simulated Congressional Hearing Group Rubric” (Teacher Resource 3), one per judge for each student group
- Three copies of “Judges’ Unit and Follow Up Questions” (Judges’ Resource 1)
- Copies of “Judges’ Instructions” and “Judges’ Instructions in Brief” (Judges’ Resources 2&3), one per judge.
- Pencils and blank paper for judges’ notes

POSSIBLE ONLINE RESOURCES

- <http://www.civiced.org/index.php> - “The Center for Civic Education” - This is the web site of the organization that publishes *We the People* textbooks and administers nationwide simulated congressional hearings at elementary, middle, and high-school levels. It contains information for both teachers and parents to help with SCH preparations.
- <http://www.thecapitol.net/CustomPrograms/testify2agenda.html> - “Testifying Before Congressional Committees” - This web site is a resource for teachers. It offers background information about how to prepare and effectively testify at a real congressional hearing.

CONTENT BACKGROUND

A simulated congressional hearing (SCH) is the culminating activity for *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* curriculum. It is a performance-based assessment in which students demonstrate their understanding of the United States Constitution, Bill of Rights and American history. Each student group is assigned one of the six units contained in the *We the People* text. (See Teacher Resource 4 for suggestions and variations of how to divide students into groups.)

During the SCH, student groups assume the role of constitutional experts. First, the group members read a four-minute prepared speech before a simulated congressional committee, usually adults from the community or government. (See Organizational Resources 2&3 as well as below for how to contact judges and whom to invite) Following the prepared statements, students respond to six minutes of follow-up questions posed by the committee. The purpose of the follow-up questions is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate the depth of their understanding of the Constitution, Bill of Rights and American history and to allow students time to clarify issues they may have raised in their prepared speeches.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS

Divide the class into six heterogeneous groups. Assign each group one of the six units from the *We the People* text. Each student will become an expert of the content of his/her assigned unit. Consider holding the SCH as a team-wide or school-wide event.

Invite school system, community members and government officials to participate as judges for the event. Eighteen simulated congressional committee members (judges), three for each unit group of students, are ideal but not always practical. If conducting the SCH as a classroom activity, minimally, six judges are needed to listen to and evaluate the presentations from all six groups. If conducting the SCH as a team-wide event, Eighteen judges are ideal so that a different committee evaluates each student group. People who serve as judges are usually recruited from the community. The panel of judges may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Your county social studies coordinator and specialists
- Your social studies resource teacher
- Central Office administrators
- Professors from local colleges or universities
- Members of Congress or staffers from your congressional representative's local office
- Members of state legislatures or staffers
- Local government officials
- Leaders of community groups or service organizations
- PTSA members and officers
- Booster club members and officers
- Lawyers
- Middle or high school social studies teachers.
- College Students
- Parents
- BOE Members

Support for planning and preparation for a team-wide SCH is available from the Maryland Department of Education, Office of Social Studies, <http://www.msde.state.md.us/>, Maryland's We the People, <http://www.marylandciviceducation.org/>, and your Center for Civic Education District Coordinator <http://www.civiced.org>.

STEP ONE: ENGAGING THE STUDENTS

Time frame: 2-3 days

MOTIVATION

Explain the simulated congressional hearing (SCH) and the six units. Explain to students the purposes and procedures of a congressional hearing. Distribute *We the People* textbooks and direct students' attention to the Table of Contents. Point out the six units of the textbook. Have students read the title of each unit and the questions under each. Explain that each student group will become experts on one of the six units for the SCH. Tell students that each lesson they see listed in the table of contents will help them locate the information they will need for this activity. Distribute "Instructions for Students." (Student Resource 1)

PROCEDURE

- 1. Assemble students into six heterogeneous groups.** Assign each student group one of the six units. (See teacher Resource 4) for ideas on how to assign groups. The more democratic you can make the procedures from the beginning, the more of a buy-in the students will have. Review expectations for group work procedures and behaviors.
- 2. If captains are picking groups, distribute and introduce "How do we pick our teams" (Student Resource 2).** Review the group member roles. Assign roles or have group captains work with their groups to determine a role for each group member.
- 3. Review the steps of the simulated Hearing preparation to ensure students understand how groups will prepare for the hearing.**
- 4. Distribute the appropriate "Student's Unit Questions" (Teacher Resource 1) to each student group.** Give each student a copy of his/her group's assigned unit questions. Allow time for student groups to read and discuss the assigned questions. *
- 5. Have groups begin preparing for the SCH by reviewing their unit questions as a team.** Captains can lead a group discussion of what they already know (consider doing a KWL chart with each group) and direct groups to the pages in the text that correspond with their unit. Have students use their textbooks to discuss and record answers to each of the assigned unit questions. Provide additional resources as necessary.
- 6. Students write the rough draft to their speech question.** Each student will write a rough draft answer to their unit question. Since there are usually three parts to the prompt, guide students to use the *We the People...* text and write at least three paragraphs in response to the questions. Tell them the more thorough their rough drafts are, the easier it is to create their final speech.

* As you will note, there are three questions for each unit. As a team of teachers, decide which specific question the students will answer in their speech. They do not answer all three in their speech. At the high school level, students actually write three different speeches, which they present at different rounds of competition. At the middle school level, this model can be followed or as a modification, students need only prepare one speech. The remaining questions can serve to help students check their understanding of the entire unit.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS:

- Observe students' participation in their groups during the SCH preparation.
- Grade all students' rough drafts of their speeches

STEP TWO: DIVIDING UP THE WORK

Time Frame: 3-5 days

MOTIVATION

Have students read their rough drafts to each other in their groups. Captains can direct this within their groups. Students should listen for common ideas the group mentioned, misconceptions that need to be clarified, and varying writing styles the group wants to take advantage of. After they have all read their rough drafts out loud, students should mark on their drafts parts of their speech that the team liked. Now it is time to divide up roles.

PROCEDURE

- 1. Review with the students or have the captains review the various team roles with their teams.** (Use student resource 3). These are the role student will take on during this next phase of preparation. They include:
 - a. Head Writer:** Responsible for taking the rough drafts of the speech and compiling them into the next version of the speech. Refine the language, combine ideas, make sure all parts of the question are answered, and identify where some outside research is needed for speech.
 - b. Historian:** Finds historical examples including Supreme Court Cases to support the questions in the speech. Making sure the group as a whole understands the historical context of the unit and speech. Uses Student Resource 5 to organize and submit work.
 - c. Current Events Guru:** Collects news articles relevant to the speech and unit topic. Finds current event information including Supreme Court Cases, new laws, community events and other current events that will help support arguments made in the speech and in follow-up questions. Uses Student Resource 5 to organize and submit work.
 - d. Constitutional Scholar:** Finds the Constitutional applications for the speech and other parts of the unit. Needs to be able to mention different articles in the Constitution such as Article II for the powers of the president. Uses Student Resource 5 to organize and submit work.
 - e. Copy Editor:** Takes the Head Writer's draft of the speech and incorporates the research from the other team members into the speech. Edits the speech for grammar and wording.
- 2. Establish due dates and check points during this process.** Teachers will want to establish an earlier due date for the Head writer, then a later due date for the Historian, Current Events Guru and Constitutional Scholar. The Copy editor should have the last due date. Students can be expected to find at least three pieces of outside research each to put into their speech. This part of the process is very fluid with students doing different tasks at different times. Let them put the pressure on each other and you will find they will do more for their peers than they do for you. 😊
- 3. When students finish their particular task, they can help other members of the team, find more research for other parts of their unit, or begin answering follow-up questions.** Once the speech is underway, follow-up question preparation can begin. See the next step for more details. But if teachers are worried about keeping students on task, assign them the other speech questions to answer and check their knowledge of the whole unit.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS:

- ❑ Observe students' participation in their groups during the SCH preparation.
- ❑ Grade writer's drafts of the speech, research from the Constitutional Scholar, Historian, and Current Events Guru, and the editor's version of the speech.

PART THREE: PUTTING THE PRESENTATION TOGETHER

Time Frame: 3-5 Days

MOTIVATION

Ask the editor to provide enough copies of the speech for the whole group and one for you. Now the students will read their speech out loud while you time it. Signal the 4-minute mark. Most groups' speeches will be too long. This is okay, and good! For the first time, they have done more work than necessary! At this point students will start talking about what they need to take out, change, edit, add in, etc. Hand out the **Judges' score sheet**, (Teacher's Resource 3) which the students should use as their rubric to continue to improve the speech and guide their research and preparation.

PROCEDURE

- 1. Once again, students will divide up roles for the next step in the process.**

- a. Editing the speech**

- b. Researching and answering practice Follow-up questions**

Usually, the head writer may take over the next round of edits, but different groups may choose otherwise. All other students in the group will begin answering follow-up questions in order to extend their expertise of their unit.

- 2. Have students answer the practice follow-up questions by using the *We the People...* text.** After the questions are answered students assume their previous roles and find outside research to address 3-5 of the follow-up questions. This step in the process helps them come up with examples when the judges ask them questions.
- 3. Students will share their progress.** At a midpoint, the editor needs to share the next version of the speech with the team. Often the editor will then turn over the editing responsibilities to another group member and begin researching the practice follow-up questions. Likewise, all other students need to share the research and answers they generated for the follow-up questions. The process of editing the speech, timing it in their groups, sharing research and quizzing each other on practice follow-ups should continue throughout this time frame.
- 4. Establish due dates for the edited version of the speech as well as answers and research for practice follow-up questions.** While the students have taken major responsibility for their work at this point, the teacher provides valuable feedback on content, style and wording of the speech while continuing to direct students to different sources and examples they may include in their speech or follow-up responses.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS:

- Observe students' participation in their groups during the SCH preparation.
- Grade Answers to practice follow-up Questions
- Grade outside research to practice follow-up questions
- Grade editor's version of speech

PART FOUR: PRACTICING FOR THE SIMULATED HEARING

Time Frame: 2-3 days

MOTIVATION

Ask the editor to provide enough copies of the speech for the group and one for you. Give students time to divide up the speech into the parts they will read during their presentation. Review the timing of the presentations with them using the PROCEDURES FOR TIMER'S. (Organizational Resource 6)

PROCEDURES

1. **Have groups practice for the SCH.** Allow groups adequate time to practice for the hearings. Recommend that students use timers when practicing to ensure that their prepared speeches are no longer than *four minutes*. Remind students they need to be prepared to respond to *six minutes* of follow-up questions. Group practice sessions should include rehearsal of:
 - Student introductions
 - Four-minute prepared speech
 - Six minutes of follow-up questions and responses.
2. **There are a variety of ways to organize this practice time.**
 - a. Groups can practice individually. Consider recruiting adults such as parent volunteers, instructional assistants, special education teachers, and administrators to serve as coaches when student groups practice.
 - b. Pair groups with each other and have them present to one another. One group presents while the other group times and asks follow-up questions. Three groups then present concurrently.
 - c. Set aside time for two or three groups to present to the whole class each day. Have different groups in the class take turns asking follow-up questions and timing. The whole class provides oral and written feedback. (See Teacher Resource 3)
3. **As groups practice, they may realize their speech needs more editing or they need to practice their follow-up responses more.** This is okay. Let students decide for themselves how to get their last preparations done. Offer your room before and after school. Encourage email, getting together outside of class or at lunch. If possible, provide more than 1 round of practices.
4. **Prepare the students for the actual day of the hearing.**
 - a. Review with them the school schedule (if it will be different due to the hearings), where they will testify, who will be in the room with them, who some of the judges are, the awards program, etc. If you have created a program for your Simulated Congressional Hearing, you can share this with the students at this time.
 - b. Have students make name tents for themselves or their groups' members.
 - c. Discuss dress code. Formal business attire. This is a serious event. Dress to impress. No spaghetti straps, no tummies showing, no shorts, sweats, jeans or t-shirts. Students may groan, especially the boys, but they will all do it. Refer students to "Simulated Hearing "FAQ" for guidelines on how to dress.
 - d. Answer any questions students may have and reassure them that they are ready, you are proud of them, and they will be great!

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS:

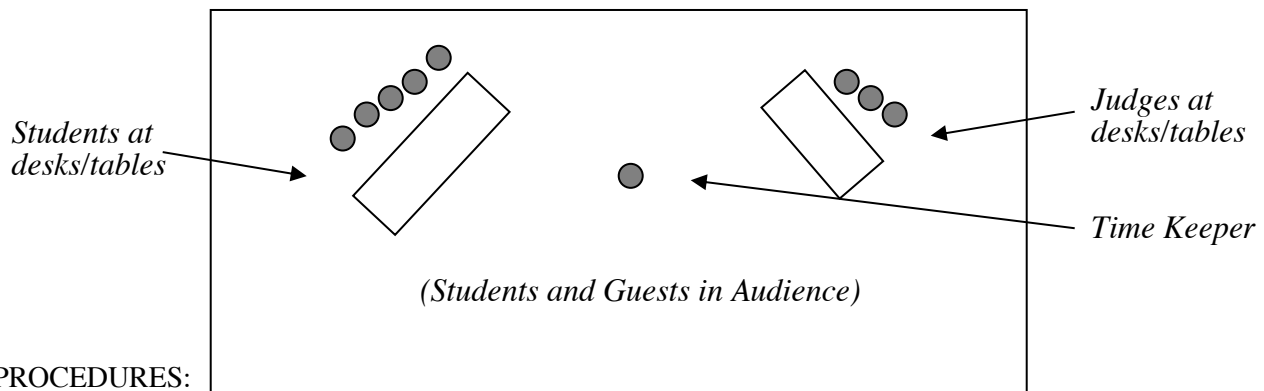
- Observe students' participation in their groups during the SCH preparation.
- Score students on a practice round using the judges' scoring rubric.

PART FIVE: HOLDING THE SIMULATED HEARING

Time Frame: 1/2-1 DAY

PREPARATION

Arrange the classroom for the SCH. Create a panel table where student groups will sit and a committee table where the simulated committee (judges) will sit. Arrange the tables and chairs in a “V” shape, if possible, at the front of the room as shown in the diagram below. Each group of students should be seated opposite the judges’ table when it is their turn to present their unit. If needed, provide microphones for both the panel of judges and the students. Set up a chair for the timekeeper (teacher or parent) in a location that can be seen by both the students and the judges. Arrange an area of the room with seating for students waiting their turn to present and guest observers. (Note: If you have invited parents to attend, you will also need to make sure you have enough seating in the audience. Consider moving unused desks and/or tables to another location to create adequate space for the audience.) Consider engaging students in the audience in each hearing by having them use the “SCH Group Rubric” (Teacher Resource 3) or other such feedback form to give feedback to student groups that are presenting.



PROCEDURES:

- 1. Train your judges.** Use the Judges’ resources included in this guide plus the Judges Training Video, which can be provided to you by your district coordinator to train your judges, timers and other volunteers including other teachers. These directions and the video will introduce the procedures of the hearings, how to score, on what criteria to judge the students, and how to provide feedback. Training the judges is integral to the success of the Congressional Hearings. Consider having coffee and light refreshments for the judges’ training first thing in the morning while students prepare in their classes. Sample schedules are available to help you decide how best to coordinate the day.
- 2. Hold the simulated congressional hearing, making it as authentic as possible.** Follow these steps to facilitate each “round” of the hearings:
 - Welcome guests and introduce any dignitaries that may be in the audience.
 - Direct everyone in the room to stand when the judges arrive by stating, “All rise.”
 - Allow judges to introduce themselves and their professions.
 - Allow students in the presenting group to deliver their prepared introductions. A name tent should be in front of each student so the judges can address students by name.
 - Allow the chairperson of the judges’ panel to read aloud the assigned unit questions.
 - Allow four minutes for the student group members to deliver their prepared oral statement in response to the assigned unit questions. Hold up the “One Minute” sign to signal students and judges that three minutes have expired. Hold up the “Times Up” sign when four minutes have expired. Students must request additional time. Judges may allow minimal additional time for a student to complete his/her statement or thought.
 - Allow six minutes for judges to pose follow up questions and listen to students responses. Hold up the “One Minute” sign to signal students and judges that five minutes have expired. Hold up the “Times Up” sign when six minutes have expired.
 - Invite the judges to offer brief oral feedback to the students on their group’s performance.
 - Direct everyone in the room to stand when the judges leave by stating, “All rise as the judges leave.”
 - At the conclusion of each “round,” direct the student panel members to return to the audience. Cue the next student group to take their places and await the next committee of judges.
 - During the time in between each round, consider allowing students in the audience to quickly exchange or turn in the positive feedback recorded on their “SCH Group Score” (Teacher Resource 3). Or, consider

having students keep their recorded feedback until the debriefing discussion after all of the hearings have taken place.

DEBRIEFING

Debrief the activity with a class discussion focused on the content and process of the SCH. Use these questions to facilitate a debriefing of the experience:

- What did you enjoy most about the SCH?
- How did the SCH help you learn more about our government and Constitution of the United States than simply reading the information in the textbook?
- How did the SCH help you learn more about yourself?
- What do you think you learned from this experience that will help you in the future?

You can also have students complete a written survey of their experiences immediately after the hearings as well. (See Teacher Resource 3.)

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS:

- ❑ Observe students' participation during the SCH.
- ❑ Have each student conduct an individual self-assessment using the SCH Reflection (Teacher Resource 7) or other such writing prompt.
- ❑ Students can turn in a portfolio with their work from the hearing preparation along with a narrative explaining their various roles and contributions, what they learned from the preparation, and what they learned from the whole experience.
- ❑ Consider the judges' formal evaluations of each group.
- ❑ Administer all or part of the 50-question "We the People..." test which comes with your teachers' guide and class set of texts. You can break the questions out by unit if desired.

FOLLOW-UP:

1. Hold a ceremony and announce the winners. Your district and state coordinators have many recommendations and options for prizes, awards, and ways to structure the actual competition. For example: Unit winners and overall class winners, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places, Levels of excellence depending on scores such as "Excellent" and "Superior." Etc. Maryland's *We the People* and the Center for Civic Education have resources available for prizes as well as certificates for the students. Use the contact information at the beginning of the guide.

2. Present all students with certificates of achievement. The Center for Civic Education has these available.

3. Thank the Judges! One way to ensure the community will continue to support this event is to have the students write thank you notes to the judges. The judges really get a kick out of hearing from the students and will remember this when they RSVP for future Congressional Hearings. Be sure to proof read the letters before sending them. See the Thank You Letter Prompt, Teacher Resource 6 for suggestions.



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SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

SPEECH QUESTIONS

Unit One - What is Government?

1. John Locke was an English philosopher who thought about why it was necessary to have a government.

- What did Locke think would happen without government?
- What did John Locke believe to be the purpose of government?
- Do you think government might have purposes that Locke did not mention? Explain your answer.

2. The Founders were concerned with how to preserve a republican form of government.

- According to the Founders, what was republican government?
- What weaknesses did the Founders think would lead to the failure of republican government?
- How did the Founders think these weaknesses could be prevented? Do you think the Founders' solutions were correct? Why or why not?

3. All nations have a constitution. However, all nations do not have constitutional governments.

- ◆ What is a constitutional government?
- ◆ What parts of our Constitution indicate whether the United States is or is not a constitutional government?
- ◆ Give an example of a nation in today's world that you think is not a constitutional government. Give reasons for your choice.



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SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

SPEECH QUESTIONS

Unit Two - What experiences shaped the Founders' thinking about government?

1. The Declaration of Independence told the world why the Americans wanted to free themselves from British rule. It stated the ideas of good government that the Founders believed.

- Using the Declaration as your source, in your own words describe what these principles of good government are.
- Where did the Founders get these ideas?
- Do you think these principles are still valid today? Why or why not?

2. Americans had been colonists- of Great Britain for over one hundred and fifty years. During that time they had considerable experience with governing themselves.

- What were some of the important characteristics of the colonial governments?
- What ideas about government did Americans use when they formed their own state governments?
- What problems existed in most state governments?

3. By the late 1780s, many Founders believed that the Articles of Confederation were not working well.

- What were some of the achievements of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation?
- What shortcomings did many Founders see in the Articles of Confederation?
- What arguments could you have made in support of the Articles?



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SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

SPEECH QUESTIONS

Unit Three - What happened at the Philadelphia Convention?

1. Because of different economic systems, Northern and Southern states had different interests. These conflicting interests led to disagreements at the Philadelphia Convention.

- Describe at least two disagreements between Northern and Southern states at the Convention.
- What parts of the Constitution are the result of compromises that settled the disagreements between the Northern and Southern states?
- Do you think the Framers should have made these compromises? Why or why not?

2. Article II of the Constitution lists the powers of the President of the United States.

- Describe some of the powers the Constitution gives to the President. Give examples of how presidents have actually used these powers.
- Some of the opponents of the Constitution feared the President would become a king and a tyrant. Why did they think this? Do you think their fears were justified?
- Are there any powers you would like to see added to the presidency? Are there any powers now granted to the presidency that you think should be omitted? Explain your answers.

3. Several Framers refused to sign the Constitution in September 1787. They, along with others who opposed the ratification of the Constitution, were called Anti-Federalists.

- What reasons did they give for their opposition to the Constitution?
- To what extent do you agree with the Anti-Federalists' views? Why?
- Do you believe that American history since 1787 has justified the Anti-Federalists' fears? Why or why not?



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SPEECH QUESTIONS

Unit Four - How was the Constitution used to establish our government?

1. One of the enduring contributions of the Framers to government was the creation of the federal system.

- ❑ What is a federal system of government? Compare it with a unitary or a confederation system of government.
- ❑ How are powers distributed between the states and the national government under our federal system? Give examples.
- ❑ What are the advantages and disadvantages of the federal system? Give some current examples.

2. Judicial review is an important part of our constitutional system of government.

- ◆ How did the Supreme Court acquire the power of judicial review?
- ◆ Do you think the Supreme Court should have the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional? Why or why not?
- ◆ How does judicial review protect the rights of the minority?

3. Political parties are an important part of our political system today. Yet they are not mentioned in the Constitution.

- ◆ Why did the Framers fear political parties?
- ◆ Why and how did political parties develop?
- ◆ Do political parties play a useful role today? Why or why not?



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SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

SPEECH QUESTIONS

Unit Five - How does the Constitution protect our basic rights?

1. The very first amendment added to the Constitution in 1791 contains guarantees of freedom of religion.

- ◆ Why did the Founders think freedom of religion was so important?
- ◆ Explain the difference between the establishment and free exercise clauses.
- ◆ Do you think limitations should ever be imposed on the free exercise of one's religious beliefs? Explain your answers.

2. There has been controversy as to whether young people should have all the rights to due process that adults have.

- ◆ What is the right to due process? Give examples of due process rights protected by the Constitution.
- ◆ Do you think persons under the age of 18 who are accused of crimes should have the same due process rights as adults? Why or why not?
- ◆ Should school officials have the right to open a student's locker without a search warrant? Why or why not?

3. The First Amendment states that laws shall not be passed which abridge freedom of speech.

- ◆ Why did the Founders think freedom of speech was so important?
- ◆ Do you believe there are times when freedom of expression should be limited? Explain your response.
- ◆ Should a public speaker who calls for violent action be protected by the First Amendment while an audience member who takes such an action is sent to prison? Why or why not?



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SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

SPEECH QUESTIONS

Unit Six - What are the responsibilities of citizens?

1. The United States has one of the lowest percentages of eligible voters who actually vote of any democratic country.

- Would you like to see more eligible people vote? Why or why not?
- Why do you think so many people in the United States fail to vote?
- Some countries fine a citizen who fails to vote. Would you favor such a law in the United States? Why or why not?

2. Many people believe: that an- informed citizenry is essential if democracy is to work.

- Should people be required to pass periodic citizenship tests in order to maintain their citizenship? Why or why not?
- Would you favor requiring literacy tests, fairly administered, before allowing citizens to vote? Why or why not?

3. Voting is only one of the ways a citizen may participate in politics. Many other activities are available.

- What activities besides voting are available to citizens?
- Which of these activities, if any, do you think is most useful? Explain your answer.
- How should a citizen decide which of these various activities to participate in?

Simulated Congressional Hearing

Research Websites

<http://www.civiced.org/>

Center for Civic Education's web-site that offers helpful hints, calendar information, links, and more.

<http://www.findlaw.com/>

Ability to search by topic or case; offers outstanding annotations of the Constitution; sign up for daily email updates.

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/>

Cornell site can be searched by cases, both current and historic, and topic; includes federal and state case law.

<http://www.oyez.org/oyez/frontpage>

Excellent site to search by title or topic; gives one page summary of case that presents facts of case, question presented, and conclusion.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

Great source for international and national news. OnPolitics page offers superb federal page in which you can view current Supreme Court docket and happenings within federal government.

<http://www.latimes.com/>

Offers national and international news; politics page has good political sites link.

<http://www.nytimes.com/>

Politics page also offers coverage of campaigns and polls, sign up for free daily email news.

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nfront.htm>

News page has coverage of world, states and Washington DC; with links to local and state newspapers.

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Library of Congress site offers legislative information including current legislation and committees.

<http://www.aclu.org/>

American Civil Liberties Union site for constitutional issues and current events.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/>

Conservative site for current issues.

<http://www.freedomforum.org/first/>

First Amendment web-site offers news, articles, and commentary.

<http://W3.trib.com/FACT/>

First Amendment Cyber Tribune intended as resource for anyone concerned with First Amendment issues.

<http://www.closeup.org/resource.htm>

Close Up Foundations link to documents and civic sites.

<http://www.constitution.org/>

Constitution Society site for research of constitutional principles.

<http://www.crf-usa.org/links.html>

Constitutional Rights Foundation links page for current events and constitutional issues.

<http://www.usconstitution.net/>

Covers current as well as historical events and documents, including the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and Philadelphia Convention.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/election/partysys.html>

Great information on political parties now and throughout history.

<http://www.usconstitution.com/>

Simulated Congressional Hearing

Unit Team Roles.

Now that you have formed your teams and everyone in your group has answered the speech question in a rough draft format, it is now time to specialize. Read the descriptions of the roles below. As a team, decide who will assume each role for the next step of your preparation. Later, you may change roles or keep the same one. Your teacher/captain will give you specific requirements and due dates for your work.

- a. **Head Writer:** Responsible for taking the rough drafts of the speech and compiling them into the next version of the speech. Refine the language, combine ideas, make sure all parts of the question are answered, and identify where some outside research is needed for speech.
- b. **Historian:** Finding historical examples including Supreme Court Cases to support the questions in the speech. Making sure the group as a whole understands the historical context of the unit and speech. Uses Student Resource X to organize and submit work.
- c. **Current Events Guru:** Collects news articles relevant to the speech and unit topic. Finds current event information including Supreme Court Cases, new laws, community events and other current events that will help support arguments made in the speech and in follow-up questions. Uses Student Resource X to organize and submit work.
- d. **Constitutional Scholar:** Finds the Constitutional applications for the speech and other parts of the unit. Needs to be able to mention different articles in the Constitution such as Article II for the powers of the president. Uses Student Resource X to organize and submit work.
- e. **Copy Editor:** Takes the Head Writer's draft of the speech and incorporates the research from the other team members into the speech. Edits the speech for grammar and wording.

What do I need to know before the Simulated Congressional Hearing?

Will I be graded?

You will not be graded on your performance during the actual competition. You will however, present your speech and answer follow-up questions in class the week before the competition. You **will** be graded on this. This will help you practice as well as show me what you have learned about your topic. You will also receive grades for various steps in the process of preparing for the Simulated Congressional Hearing.

What do we present during the competition?

The judges will ask you the question you prepared. You and your team will take out the notes for your speech and present it to the judges. After you finish, the judges will ask you follow-up questions. These questions will be related to the speech you just gave and/or to the general topic for your unit.

How much time do we have and what if we go over?

Your speech should be 4 minutes long. At minimum the speech must be 2:30 and at maximum 4 minutes. The entire competition is 10 minutes. You will have the remainder of 10 minutes time, after your speech ends, for the follow-up questions.

Does everyone have to answer every follow-up question?

No. **As many team members as possible should speak**, both in the prepared speech and in the follow-up portion. Not every person has to speak on every question. Resist the temptation to restate what your teammate has already said. Instead, seek to clarify their point, add another argument or provide an example or cite the Constitution. As a team, you need to be aware of who is speaking and be sure to allow less vocal team members a chance to speak if they so desire. Develop a signal system if necessary to ensure that all team members can speak.

What if we don't understand a follow-up question?

If you do not understand a question or need the judge to repeat it, you may ask him/her to repeat it or to clarify it. They will not take points away for this.

What can we have with us during the competition?

You will have your speech in front of you. This should be organized in your folder. Once your speech ends, you replace the speech in your folder and answer questions without notes.

What should I wear?

You and your team should be "dressed to impress." No tank tops, jeans or shorts, t-shirts or sweats for anyone.

- Boys should wear suits if you have one that fits or at minimum slacks with a button down shirt and a tie with dress shoes.
- Girls should wear "Sunday" dress clothes or a suit, pants or skirts are fine. If you wear a skirt, you should wear nylons and dress shoes. Make sure your skirt is long enough for you to feel comfortable sitting. As a team you may want to pick a color theme (i.e. black, gray, navy, etc.) No gum!



We the People *The Citizen and the Constitution*

Directed by the Center for Civic Education
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Culminating Activity

The Simulated Congressional Hearing

As you know from studying social studies this year, members of Congress make laws. These laws should protect our rights and promote our welfare. In order to address our nation's problems and pass good laws, members of Congress need to gather information.

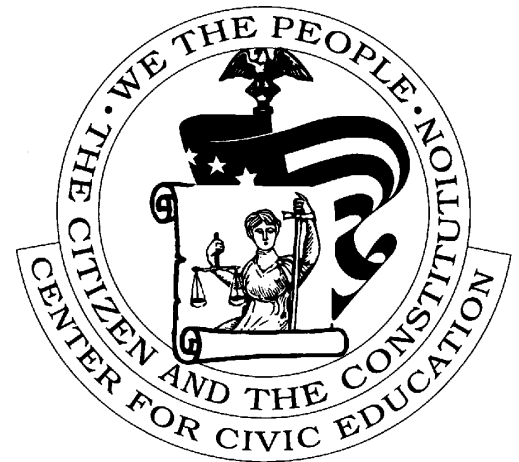
One way that members of Congress get the information they need is by holding congressional hearings. At these hearings, they ask experts to answer questions about important issues related to proposed laws.

For this activity, you will role-play an expert who has been asked to speak in front of a congressional committee at a congressional hearing. Each group of students will act as a team of experts on one of the five units in the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* textbook.

Your group will work to prepare for the simulated congressional hearing. You will work to write a prepared oral statement, practice answering follow-up questions without using notes, and act and look professionally. Most of the information you need to write your prepared oral statement is in the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* textbook. You will also look for appropriate information by examining current events. In some cases, you might want to talk to parents, teachers, and friends for their ideas about government in the United States today. Each member of your group should contribute to the presentation and speak at the hearing.

Each simulated congressional hearing follows this format.

1. The congressional committee (judges) enters the room and everyone in the room stands.
2. The committee members introduce themselves and invite the students to do the same.
3. The committee reads aloud the assigned unit questions.
4. The students have **four minutes** to read their prepared oral statement.
5. The committee asks follow-up questions and students respond to the questions for **six minutes** without using notes.
6. The committee gives the students feedback on their group's performance.
7. Everyone in the room stands as the committee exits.



SAMPLE

History, Current Events Guru, and Constitutional Scholar Researcher's Guide

Focus Question: (May be a unit question, speech questions or a question from your teacher or group members that will guide your research.)

How does the first amendment protect freedom of religion?

2. Type of Source: (Find a Supreme Court case, Constitutional application, work from an historical figure, historical event, quote from a founding father or politician, Current event, etc.)

Constitutional Application

3. Citation: (Write the full reference citation below. ** You may want to attach a printed copy that includes highlighting and margin notes for future use.)

From: <http://www4.law.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/htm>

4. Summary: (What does this case, article, quote, etc. mean? What is the gist?)

Two clauses in the First Amendment guarantee freedom of religion. The establishment clause prohibits the government from passing legislation to establish an official religion or preferring one religion over another. It enforces the "separation of church and state." Some governmental activity related to religion has been declared constitutional by the Supreme Court. For example, providing bus transportation for parochial school students and the enforcement of "blue laws" is not prohibited. The free exercise clause prohibits the government, in most instances, from interfering with a person's practice of their religion.

5. Application to Unit: (Explain how your research can be used in your team's speech or follow-up questions.)

This source is a good example of how the government does play a role in religion. Cities can provide bus transportation for religious school students and "Blue Laws" which prohibit drinking on Sundays are not unconstitutional. This is a secondary source that explains the two parts of the freedom of Religion in the first amendment. I think we can use this to help differentiate between the two parts in our speech and for examples of different limits of freedom of religion. (e.g. "Blue Laws" and busses for parochial school kids.)

**Historian, Current Events Guru, and Constitutional Scholar
Researcher's Guide**

1. Focus Question: *(May be a unit question, speech questions or a question from your teacher or group members that will guide your research.)*

2. Type of Source: *(Find a Supreme Court case, Constitutional application, work from an historical figure, historical event, quote from a founding father or politician, Current event, etc.)*

3. Citation: *(Write the full reference citation below. ** You may want to attach a printed copy that includes highlighting and margin notes for future use.)*

4. Summary: *(What does this case, article, quote, etc. mean? What is the gist?)*

5. Application to Unit: *(Explain how your research can be used in your team's speech or follow-up questions.)*

UNIT 1 PRACTICE Follow-up Questions for Congressional Hearing

- What is the purpose of government according to the natural rights philosophers?
- Where does government get its right to govern, according to the natural rights philosophers?
- What is a social compact? Do you think this is the best way to create a government? Why or why not?
- What beliefs about rights were important to the American colonists?
- What rights do you think people should have?

- ❑ What is republican government?
- ❑ Why did Montesquieu believe that the powers of republican government should be separated among different branches or groups in the government?
- ❑ What was the purpose of balancing the powers among different groups in the government?
- ❑ Why should each group be given ways to check the power of the other groups?
- ❑ Why was Cincinnatus considered a model of civic virtue?
- ❑ Why do you think many people thought that republican government was not possible if the citizens did not have civic virtue?
- ❑ How was civic virtue promoted among the Founders?
- ❑ What is a constitution? What can you learn about a nation's government by studying its constitution?
- ❑ Explain the differences between constitutional governments and autocratic or dictatorial governments.
- ❑ What are the characteristics of the "higher law" of a constitutional government?
- ❑ Describe two areas of citizen's lives with which you think the government should not interfere. Explain why you think the government should not intrude in these areas. What term describes these areas?
- ❑ What branches do many modern constitutional governments have? What are the functions of each branch?
- ❑ Why are powers divided among separate groups?
- ❑ In constitutional governments, one branch is often checked by the other branches. Why? Give examples of some checks.
- ❑ The separation and sharing of powers means that decisions are not made quickly. Explain at least one way that this could be an advantage. Then, explain at least one way it could be a disadvantage.
- ❑ What did the Founders think might happen if there were no government?
- ❑ What are some examples of how our government protects people's rights?
- ❑ Why did the Founders choose a republican form of government?
- ❑ What are some examples of how our government today serves the common welfare?
- ❑ Is the U.S. government a constitutional government? Give examples to explain your answer.
- ❑ How well has the U.S. been able to maintain a republican form of government?
- ❑ Should the U.S. intervene in countries that do not have constitutional governments to protect the rights of the people?

UNIT 2 PRACTICE Follow-up Questions for Congressional Hearing

- ❑ How and why did the feudal kings in England share their power?
- ❑ What were some of the basic ideas included in the Magna Carta?
- ❑ Parliament won a struggle with the king in 1689, when the English Bill of Rights was adopted. Which parts of the English Bill of Rights do you think the Framers might have included in our Constitution? Explain.
- ❑ Four ideas that were very important to the Framers were limited government, representative government, the balance of power, and separation of powers. Give examples of these ideas from English government.
- ❑ Colonial governments illustrated English ideas of good government. Describe the similarities between the colonial governments and the English government?
- ❑ For most of the colonial period, the colonists considered themselves to be loyal subjects of Great Britain. Why do you think they felt this way? What happened to change the feelings of many colonists?
- ❑ What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?
- ❑ What is the purpose of government as described in the Declaration of Independence? How is this purpose similar to or different from the purpose of government described by the natural rights philosophers?
- ❑ What does the Declaration say people have a right to do if a government is destructive of their rights? Is this true today? Why or why not?
- ❑ What do you think was meant by the phrase "all men are created equal"? In 1776, who was included? Who was not?
- ❑ Why did most of the state constitutions give most of the power to the legislature?
- ❑ The Massachusetts constitution differed in important ways from those of the other states. Describe these differences.
- ❑ Explain what you think might be the advantages and disadvantages of the Massachusetts constitution compared with the constitutions of the other states.
- ❑ Do you think the property requirements for voting were in conflict with the principles of democracy? Explain your answer.
- ❑ What was the most common occupation in America in 1787? What kind of standard of living did it provide? What attitudes did it create?
- ❑ What differences of race and wealth were there in American society? How do these difference compare with America today?
- ❑ Do you think the diversity of Americans increased their acceptance of people with different beliefs and lifestyles? Why or why not?
- ❑ Why might people from states with smaller populations have been satisfied with the government set up by the Articles of Confederation?
- ❑ Why do you think some people today still oppose a strong national government? Name some issues that states might prefer to decide for themselves.
- ❑ What were some of the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence?
- ❑ How did the framers of the Constitution rectify the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence?
- ❑ What was the biggest strength of the Articles of Confederation?
- ❑ What would life be like today in American if we still had the Articles of Confederation?
- ❑ How did the framers of the Constitution attempt to rectify (fix) the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation?
- ❑ Did everyone agree?
- ❑ What are some examples of the how the principles (life, liberty, etc.) in the Declaration of Independence are still relevant today?

UNIT 3 PRACTICE Follow-up Questions for Congressional Hearing

- ❑ What was the original purpose for calling a meeting in Philadelphia in 1787? Why was the purpose changed? By whose authority was it changed?
- ❑ In what ways were the delegates representative of the American people? IN what ways were they not representative?
- ❑ Should the topics being debated at the Philadelphia Convention have been reported to the public? Why or why not?
- ❑ Explain the difference between equal representation and proportional representation. Which plan did the states with large populations support? Why?
- ❑ What position would you take on the issue of equal and proportional representation if it were raised today? Why?
- ❑ What important differences of opinion existed between the northern and southern states? Which of these do you think was the most controversial? Why?
- ❑ What fundamental ideas about constitutional government were violated by the compromise reached between the northern and southern delegates?
- ❑ Are there other ways that the issue of slavery would have been resolved at the convention? Explain your position.
- ❑ What experiences of the Framers might have influenced their decision on how much power they should give the national government? Give examples of some of these experiences.
- ❑ Why do you think the Framers devoted so much of the Constitution to the legislative branch?
- ❑ What do you think the purpose of the limitations listed in Article I, section 9 is?
- ❑ How was the Framers' view of the executive branch affected by their knowledge of history and their own experience?
- ❑ According to the Constitution, what is the supreme law of the land? Whose responsibility is it to enforce, or carry out, the laws of the land?
- ❑ Why did the Framers make the executive branch share some of its powers with Congress?
- ❑ Why do you think the Framers wanted to protect to judicial branch from political influence? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?
- ❑ Describe Benjamin Franklin's attitude toward the Constitution. In your opinion, which of his reasons for signing the Constitution do you think might have been most persuasive to the other delegates?
- ❑ Who were the Federalists? Who were the Anti-Federalists?
- ❑ Why didn't the Federalists answer the criticism that the Constitution gave the federal government too much power?
- ❑ Why didn't the Federalists want the Constitution submitted to the existing Congress or state governments for ratification?
- ❑ The Anti-Federalists lost their battle to prevent the adoption of the Constitution. However, their struggle left a permanent impact on the Constitution. How was this accomplished?
- ❑ Explain what you think were the best reasons for ratification. Then, explain what you think were the best reasons against ratification.
- ❑ Would you have voted to ratify the Constitution as written in 1787? Explain your answer.
- ❑ How were the disagreements over slavery solved at the Convention?
- ❑ Do you think there were any other ways to resolve these disagreements about slavery?
- ❑ What kinds of people were represented at the Philadelphia Convention? What people were not represented?
- ❑ Why were the meetings of the Philadelphia Convention kept secret from the American people? Do you agree with this decision?
- ❑ What basic ideas about our government are included in the Preamble to the Constitution?
- ❑ Why were the framers so hesitant to give the president and the executive branch any powers?

UNIT 4 PRACTICE Follow-up Questions for Congressional Hearing

- ❑ Explain what a federal system is.
- ❑ Explain some of the advantages and disadvantages of a federal system of government. Which responsibilities would you give to the federal government? Which responsibilities would you give to the states?
- ❑ Why did the Framers create a federal system instead of continuing their confederation or creating a unitary system?
- ❑ Define "sovereignty". Who had sovereignty in the United States? Give evidence.
- ❑ How did Congress organize the executive and judicial branches of the government?
- ❑ Do you think it is a good idea to have only one person head the executive branch when today, we have 240 million people in the US, compared to 4 million in the 1780's?
- ❑ What was the purpose of the Bill of Rights? Why was it included in our Constitution?
- ❑ Why might political parties be a special problem to a new government? Are political parties seen as such a problem today?
- ❑ Explain why Jefferson distrusted the necessary and proper clause of the Constitution. Do you agree with Jefferson's position? Why or why not?
- ❑ Which political party today is most like the Federalists? Which party is most like the Republicans? Explain your position.
- ❑ Do political parties today argue about the same issues that followers of Hamilton and Jefferson argued about? Explain.
- ❑ What is judicial review?
- ❑ If judicial review had not been established, how could disagreements over the meaning of the Constitution have been decided?
- ❑ How does judicial review protect the rights of the minority?
- ❑ Do you think that judicial review allows the courts to overrule the will of the people as expressed through their legislatures? Why or why not?
- ❑ If there were no power of judicial review, how could the people be sure members of government obeyed the limitations set upon their powers by the Constitution?
- ❑ How can the Supreme Court decide cases involving subjects, such as wiretapping, which did not exist when the Constitution was written?
- ❑ Why did the Framers think it was necessary to divide the powers of government among three different branches?
- ❑ Do you agree with how the powers are divided between the Federal government and the states?
- ❑ Should the state's powers be listed in the Constitution?
- ❑ Do you think the Supreme Court should have the power to declare a law passed by Congress unconstitutional? Why or why not?
- ❑ Do you think the President has too much power today? Why or why not?
- ❑ Do you think Congress should have the power to pass a bill over the President's veto? Why or why not?
- ❑ How does our federal system limit the powers of the national government?
- ❑ How could we protect the rights of the people if we did not have Judicial Review?

UNIT 5 PRACTICE Follow-up Questions for Congressional Hearing

- ❑ In your own words, restate the sections of the First Amendment that deal with freedom of expression.
- ❑ Under what conditions do you think public school principals should have the right to censor school-sponsored newspapers? Explain your answer.
- ❑ Some religious groups have suggested adding an amendment to the Constitution permitting voluntary prayer in public schools. Would you support such an amendment? Why or why not?
- ❑ Should public schools be permitted to close for Christmas? Why or why not?
- ❑ How would the United States be different today if we had an official national religion? What changes would be good ones? What changes would be bad ones? Explain.
- ❑ List the restrictions on voting rights that have kept various groups from voting.
- ❑ List the ways in which various groups have won the right to vote.
- ❑ Why do you think it took so long for women to win suffrage?
- ❑ Why do you think that action by the federal government was necessary to gain voting rights for some groups of people?
- ❑ What restrictions, if any, do you think states should be able to place on voting rights? Explain your position.
- ❑ When was the 14th Amendment ratified, and what was its purpose?
- ❑ How might the 14th Amendment be used to support the rights of women, the disabled, and others who believe they are not receiving equal treatment?
- ❑ Are there times when your right to equal protection of the law might conflict with another person's right to privacy or property? For example, is it fair for a state to require private men's clubs to admit women as members? Explain both sides of this issue.
- ❑ Why do you think the guarantee of due process is so important?
- ❑ Why are the courts given the responsibility to protect due process?
- ❑ Should adults and juveniles be treated alike when they break laws? Explain your answer.
- ❑ How is freedom of religion protected in the Constitution?
- ❑ When is it acceptable for the government to limit people's practice of their religious beliefs? Give examples.
- ❑ How has the idea of "equal protection of the laws" been used to protect people's rights? Give examples.
- ❑ Are there any groups of people in our nation who are deprived of any basic rights? Explain your answer.
- ❑ Which of the basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution seem the most important to you personally today? Do you think your opinion will change when you are an adult?
- ❑ Does reciting the Pledge of Allegiance violate freedom of religion? If so, what part? Explain both sides.

UNIT 6 PRACTICE Follow-up Questions for Congressional Hearing

- ❑ How is citizen participation related to the purposes of our government? Explain why participating in government is in our own self-interest.
- ❑ List 3 ways of participating in government. For each, tell why it would be an effective way of protecting your basic rights.
- ❑ Suppose you do not choose to vote or participate in any way in government. Should you still be required to obey its laws? Explain your answer.
- ❑ Does a good citizen have a responsibility to work to improve his or her society? Why or why not?
- ❑ Should a good citizen be concerned with improving the lives of those less fortunate? Why or why not?
- ❑ How would you define the common welfare? Explain why you think your decision is the best. Give examples of how it could be used in making decisions about actual political problems, such as keeping the streets safe or the air and water clean.
- ❑ What are some ways a citizen can participate in government?
- ❑ What is civic virtue?
- ❑ How can citizens show civic virtue?
- ❑ Should all citizens be required to pass a citizenship test to vote? Explain.
- ❑ What can the government do to get more young voters to the polls?
- ❑ More minority groups?

We the People... Simulated Congressional Hearing

What middle school students found helpful:

- **Assign roles.** We chose team captains in each class who then, with some guidance from the teacher, chose teams. It was stressed to the team captains the different skills each group needed and also that as a class they were a team. Captains, in private, took the class list and through discussion and taking turns chose teams. They also loosely assigned roles such as co-captain, risk-taker, etc. and communicated to their teammates why they had chosen them. They assigned each other specific roles as well such as editor, researcher, writer etc once the work began.
- **Color-Code Everything!** Each unit was its own color and when possible, handouts, resources and score sheets were copied in that color paper. Use the rainbow: ROYGBV Red: Unit 1, Yellow: Unit 2, Green: Unit 3, Blue: Unit 4, Purple: Unit 5, White: Unit 6 (That just happened to be the color paper our school stocks). Color-code the judges' materials as well. During the actual competition it is easier to figure out to whom the score sheets belong in case the judge forgets to write their name or unit on them. The colors also made it easier for students to identify the appropriate resources.
- **Communication is key.** Emailing speech to each other and getting edits from each other and teacher gave the whole endeavor a strong sense of community. We spent 3 weeks actually preparing for the competition and every minute was vital. Every night, I checked my email and students sent paragraphs, ideas and whole speeches which I edited for content, style and time. This was above and beyond what I assigned them to do in class and for graded homework.
- **Bookmark Websites.** Use the list of recommended sites and bookmark them on the computers at the school or on the school webpage. At least, give them to students in print form. Students used these a lot at home in addition to the computer lab time they had during school.
- **Score sheets can be used as a rubric.** Give these out and explain them to students as early as possible. Remind students to go back to the score sheets as they write and revise their speeches. Then go over the criteria again before you start the in class practices. Students need to be reminded that participation and responsiveness count as well as Constitutional application etc.
- **Competitive aspect.** Students developed such intrinsic motivation during the competition that teachers had to grade very little. We gave feedback on speeches and performances and gave grades for completion of tasks. 90% of the students went well above and beyond the work we assigned as they took true ownership of their group's performance. After each group started presenting to the class in practice rounds, students were motivated to help each other as a class team. There was some anxiety and teachers need to reinforce the learning aspect as opposed to the competitive aspect if it seems that they are getting overly anxious. Also, since their performance at competition was not tied to a grade, students' anxiety was relieved a little more.
- **Getting follow-up questions ahead of time to practice.** The single best way to prepare them was to type up the questions from the "Using and Review the Lesson" questions for each Unit. Students used these to grill each other and them selves on their knowledge of the unit. These are provided for you in the Teacher Resources. Stress that judges may ask ANY question and these questions are only for practicing answering on the spot.
- **Answering follow-up Q's in class as practice.** Students in other groups were in charge of asking questions for follow-up. This way, students listened to each other's speeches, saw what different groups did effectively, and gave each other meaningful feedback.

- **Where do judges get follow-up questions?** Students practiced with follow-up questions as indicated earlier but were still surprised when judges asked other questions. Teacher must emphasize that judges are allowed to ask anything they want within the scope of the unit.
- **More than one student can answer a question.** Students saw this first hand as they began practicing. Some teams had a signal system using body language to take turns answering questions.
- **Students can disagree with each other.** Some students were surprised to hear the other teams do this but emphasize to them that it is great to show both sides of an issue.
- **Build excitement!**
 - Lunch time pep rally to draw team names
 - Announce judges as they RSVP
 - Post the team names and a countdown calendar around the school
 - P.A. announcements
 - Enlist support of other team members and Administration.
 - 8th grade mini-assembly to go over dress code and expectations.

Captain's Simulated Congressional Hearing Convention (A.K.A. How do we pick our teams?)

1. **Choose your units!** Work it out with your fellow captains.
2. **Choose a co-captain.** Pick someone reliable with whom you get along well. This person should compliment your strengths and weaknesses.
3. **Choose your teams** using the class lists, teacher recommendations, and the units your classmates signed up for.
4. Try to pick students who have signed up for your unit. But **team dynamics** are **very important** and in certain cases students may not get their top choice of unit.
5. Be sure **all teams** have **at least one** of the following **types** of students:
 - a. **Speaker/ Risk-taker.** Someone who is good at answering questions and can help the team by answering on the spot while others get their ideas ready.
 - b. **Writer.** This student needs strong writing skills, creative and clever use of language. They need to know how to incorporate multiple sources of information into the speech. Teacher recommendations will help with this.
 - c. **Researchers.** These students are good at finding current events, court cases, quotes and other background information for the speech and the team's general knowledge.
 - d. **Cheerleader.** Someone who has a positive attitude, gets along well with the other team members and can help the team through any disagreements or stressful times.

Keep in mind that you, as a captain, may fulfill one or more of these roles. You all have many of these qualities already. That is why your classmates thought so highly of you to choose you as a captain. Your goal is to pick teams that are balanced.

It is conceivable that your friend(s) may be on your team. But remember the ultimate goal is for the **class** to have **6 strong teams**.

This is a starting point. As you all prepare and present, all students will research, write, edit, speak and answer questions. But you want a team where different students can use their strengths to help the team.

*It is important to remember that **your teacher's comments** to you as well as **your discussions** with each other as you choose your teams are **confidential**. This is your first test as a captain. Please maintain the integrity of the job you were elected to do as well as the integrity of the Simulated Congressional Hearing.*

SAVE THE DATE!!!

Your Middle School

In conjunction with the Center for Civic Education

Proudly presents the X Annual

Simulated Congressional Hearing

When: _____

(Approximate times 8 am-12 pm)

Where: Your Middle School, City, MD

Who: 8th grade American History students

Why: The following statement by Thomas Jefferson expresses the Center for Civic Education's rationale and goals.

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion."

What this means is that for our democracy to work, the people need to be well informed of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. If they are not informed, then instead of taking away their rights, it is our job to educate them so that they can participate fully in the democratic process.

This year at (your middle school), History students in (Your Teacher's History classes)'s classes have been doing just that. Throughout the year, as we have learned about American History, from the early colonial settlers to the Revolutionary War and Declaration of Independence to Thomas Jefferson's Purchase of Louisiana and beyond, we have been studying our history in regard to Democratic values and principles. By using the resources provided by the Center for Civic Education, in addition to other primary and secondary sources, not only do we understand the history of our country better, we also have examined, discussed and debated important issues such as natural rights, limited authority and protection of rights. All of these experiences serve to make us better informed citizens in the future.

Come watch our students show what they know as they testify as experts on topics ranging from political philosophy to democratic ideals in the Declaration of Independence, to how citizens can demonstrate civic virtue.

Don't miss this exciting event. More information to follow.

Timeline and Checklist

Simulated Congressional Hearing

Task	When	Who
Reserve hearing rooms; parking and security arrangements, Building Use Form	3 months prior	
Send invitation to judges, speakers, and guests with RSVP form	2 months prior	
Recruit volunteers (timers, facilitators, scorekeepers, supervisors)	6 weeks prior	
Create class teams	1 month prior	
Send letter to member of Congress inviting him/ her to speak, judge, observe and sign the certificates	1 month prior	
Develop school-wide schedule for event/ Coverage with administrator	1 month prior	
Arrange sub coverage for Social studies teachers as necessary	1 month prior	
Arrange for food at competition	3 weeks prior	
Folders for Proctors and other staff	3 weeks prior	
Train Staff Members serving as proctors and facilitators	3 Weeks prior	
Send confirmation packets to judges and alternate judges	3 weeks prior	
Create hearing program	2 weeks prior	
Submit order for awards and prizes	1 month prior	
Arrange for High School Student/ 7 th graders to help	1 month prior	
Distribute initial press release announcing hearing	1-2 weeks prior	
Call Judges to reconfirm	1-2 weeks prior	
Pick up awards/prizes	1 week prior	
Type students', judges', and other volunteers' names on certificates	1 week prior	
Xerox hearing program	1 week prior	
Prepare judges' packets	4-5 days prior	
Print name badges for judges and volunteers	4-5 days prior	
Contact timers to confirm	4-5 days prior	
Set up Hearing rooms	Day before	
Set up Room for judges/timers/guests (e.g. Media Center, Cafeteria)	Day before	
Video coverage	Day of	
Meeting with volunteers (Timers, proctors)	Day of	
Judges' orientation and training	Day of	
Greet Judges and guests	Day of	
Coordinate food	Day of	
Coordinate Volunteers (PTSA, parents etc.)	Day of	
Bring supplies (masking tape, pencils/pens, extra books, gifts for judges and volunteers) camera	Day of	
Results to state coordinator	Day of	
Distribute press release announcing results (School news letter, Post, Gazette, Times, etc.)	Day of to 2 days after	
Send thank you letters to teachers, judges, speakers, volunteers, congressional offices,	1 week after	



Your Middle School

Letterhead

Date

Address

Dear Community Leader,

We are writing to cordially invite you to the X Annual Your Middle School Simulated Congressional Hearing on DATE, from 8:00 A.M. to 1:30 p.m.

Since September 200X, eighth grade history students at Your Middle School have been exploring American history from a constitutional perspective. As a culminating activity, the students will testify as expert scholars on issues relating to the Constitution, Bill of Rights, government processes and citizenship. They will present this testimony to a simulated Congressional Committee comprised of attorneys, judges, members of Congress, Constitutional scholars, and other community leaders such as you.

We would be honored if you would serve as a judge for our competition. Please read over the attached information sheet about the fantastic work the Center for Civic Education is doing, as well as the schedule for the day's events. Also included are the different topics about which students will be testifying. If you can judge at the hearing, please indicate which topic you would like to judge. Once we have confirmed who will judge, we will send you a follow letter with more information about the topic you have chosen as well as information about your role as a judge.

We hope to see you on June 2nd and thank you in advance for contributing to this rewarding experience for our students. If you are unable to attend, please consider passing this invitation on to someone in your office whom you think would be able to add to this experience for our students.

Sincerely,

8th grade social studies teachers' names

8th Grade Social Studies Team; Your Middle School

Your Middle School
In conjunction with Maryland's *We the People*
Proudly presents the X Annual
Simulated Congressional Hearing

Date

Preliminary Agenda

8:00	Judges arrive
8:00 - 9:00	Judges' Training Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome and Introductions - judges and spectators
9:15	Spectators and Judges report to presentation rooms
9:20- 12:00	Congressional Hearing Competition
12:00- 1:30	Lunch
1:30 - 2:30	Awards Ceremony

(Directions to School)

Please call SS Teacher at XXX-XXX-XXXX with any questions, or email at (email address)

Please RSVP by (2 weeks before event), by sending the attached form via Fax to: xxx-xxx-xxxx, ATTENTION: SS Teacher; Congressional Hearing

Name of Guest/Judge

Phone Number

Address

Email

_____ I will be attending and will be glad to judge the Hearing.
I prefer to judge Unit _____
My Second choice is Unit _____

_____ I will not be able to attend.

I will be attending, but will not be able to judge.



Center for Civic Education

5146 Douglas Fir Road • Calabasas, CA 91302 • (818) 591-9321

CENTER HISTORY AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The Center for Civic Education

The Center for Civic Education has its roots in the interdisciplinary Committee on Civic Education formed at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1964. Charles Quigley became the Committee's executive director in 1965. In 1969, the State Bar of California asked the Committee on Civic Education to develop a statewide civic education program. This curricular effort, called the Law in a Free Society Project, focused on basic concepts of constitutional government such as justice, authority, privacy, and responsibility. The project was designed to serve grades K-12 and was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1981, the Center For Civic Education became an independent nonprofit organization, although it remains affiliated with the State Bar. The Center's mission is to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry that is committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries.

The Center develops and implements programs in civic education for public and private schools at elementary and secondary levels, cooperating with educators and scholars in the social sciences, humanities, and the law. The Center offers curricular materials, leadership training, teacher education, and research and evaluation in civic education. The principal goals of the Center's programs are to help students develop (1) an increased understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded, (2) the skills necessary to participate as effective and responsible citizens, and (3) the willingness to use democratic procedures for making decisions and managing conflict.

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, a program funded by the United States Department of Education by act of Congress, teaches elementary, middle and high school students the history and principles behind the American constitutional democracy. The program is based on curricular materials developed by the Center and acclaimed by leading educators. The curriculum not only enhances students' understanding of the institutions of American democracy, it also helps them to identify the contemporary relevance of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The program's culminating activity is a simulated congressional hearing, wherein students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge while they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues.

The results of nationwide research affirm that students who use the **We the People** curriculum "significantly outperformed comparison students" in civics, history, social studies and government courses. Program participants can maintain contact with the Center and with one another through the **We the People** Alumni Network.

Below are the topics on which students will be giving expert testimony. Please read them and choose which ones you would prefer to judge. Indicate your choices on the attached response form. If you have no preference, you may indicate that as well. We will send you more information about your unit once you have indicated your preference.

- Unit 1;** What is Government? (Philosophical foundations of government)
- Unit 2;** What experiences shaped the founders thinking about government? (History)
- Unit 3;** What happened at the Philadelphia Convention? (History)
- Unit 4;** How was the Constitution used to establish our government? (Politics)
- Unit 5;** How does the Constitution protect our basic rights? (Rights)
- Unit 6;** What are the responsibilities of citizens? (Voting/ Citizenship)

Simulated Congressional Hearing Competition Matrices

One Class

3 Judges evaluating all six units

6 judges evaluating 3 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I, III, V
Judges Panel 2 = Units II, IV, VI

9 judges evaluating 2 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I, IV
Judges Panel 2 = Units II, V
Judges Panel 3 = Units III, VI

18 judges evaluating 2 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I
Judges Panel 1 = Units II
Judges Panel 2 Units III
Judges Panel 2= Unit IV
Judges Panel 3= Unit V
Judges Panel 3= Unit VI

Two Classes

6 judges evaluating 3 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I, III, V
Judges Panel 2 = Units II, IV, VI

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony	
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II
10:20-10:40	Unit II	Unit I
10:40-11:00	Unit III	Unit IV
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit III
11:20-11:40	Unit V	Unit VI
11:40-12:00	Unit VI	Unit V
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony	

9 judges evaluating 2 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I, IV
Judges Panel 2 = Units II, V
Judges Panel 3 = Units III, VI

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Judges BYE
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony		
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
10:20-10:40	Unit III	Unit I	Unit II
10:40-11:00	Unit II	Unit III	Unit I
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
11:20-11:40	Unit VI	Unit IV	Unit V
11:40-12:00	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit IV
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony		

18 judges evaluating 2 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I
Judges Panel 2 = Units II
Judges Panel 3 = Units III
Judges Panel 4 = Unit IV
Judges Panel 5 = Unit V
Judges Panel 6 = Unit VI

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony	
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II
10:20-10:40	Unit II	Unit I
10:40-11:00	Unit III	Unit IV
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit III
11:20-11:40	Unit V	Unit VI
11:40-12:00	Unit VI	Unit V
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony	

Three Classes

9 judges evaluating 2 units each

Judges Panel 1 = Units I, IV
 Judges Panel 2 = Units II, V
 Judges Panel 3 = Units III, VI

18 judges evaluating 1 unit each

Judges Panel 1 = Unit I
 Judges Panel 2 = Unit II
 Judges Panel 3 = Unit III
 Judges Panel 4 = Unit IV
 Judges Panel 5 = Unit V
 Judges Panel 6 = Unit VI

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony		
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
10:20-10:40	Unit III	Unit I	Unit II
10:40-11:00	Unit II	Unit III	Unit I
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
11:20-11:40	Unit VI	Unit IV	Unit V
11:40-12:00	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit IV
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony		

Four - Ten Classes

18 judges evaluating 1 unit each

Judges Panel 1 = Unit I
 Judges Panel 2 = Unit II
 Judges Panel 3 = Unit III
 Judges Panel 4 = Unit IV
 Judges Panel 5 = Unit V
 Judges Panel 6 = Unit VI

Four Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Judges BYE	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Judges BYE
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony					
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
10:20-10:40	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V
10:40-11:00	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III

11:20-11:40	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II
11:40-12:00	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony					

Five Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Class E Room 500	Judges BYE
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony					
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
10:20-10:40	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V
10:40-11:00	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
11:20-11:40	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II
11:40-12:00	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony					

Six Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Class E Room 500	Class F Room 600
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony					
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
10:20-10:40	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V
10:40-11:00	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV
11:00-11:20	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
11:20-11:40	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I	Unit II
11:40-12:00	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	Unit I
12:00-12:30	Closing Ceremony					

Seven Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Class E Room 500	Class F Room 600	Class G Room 700
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony						
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE
10:20-10:40	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
10:40-11:00	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V
11:00-11:20	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV
11:20-11:40	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
11:40-12:00	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II
12:00-12:20	Unit II	Unit III	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I
12:20-12:50	Closing Ceremony						

Eight Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Class E Room 500	Class F Room 600	Class G Room 700	Class H Room 800
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony							
10:00-10:20	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE
10:20-10:40	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI
10:40-11:00	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V
11:00-11:20	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV
11:20-11:40	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III	BYE
11:40-12:00	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
12:00-12:20	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	Unit II
12:20-12:40	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I
12:40-1:10	Closing Ceremony							

Nine Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Class E Room 500	Class F Room 600	Class G Room 700	Class H Room 800	Class I Room 900
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony								
10:00-10:20	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI
10:20-10:40	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE
10:40-11:00	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V
11:00-11:20	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV
11:20-11:40	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE
11:40-12:00	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III
12:00-12:20	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE	Unit II
12:20-12:40	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I	BYE
12:40-1:00	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	Unit I
1:00-1:30	Closing Ceremony								

Ten Classes

	Class A Room 100	Class B Room 200	Class C Room 300	Class D Room 400	Class E Room 500	Class F Room 600	Class G Room 700	Class H Room 800	Class I Room 900	Class J Room 1000
9:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony									
10:00-10:20	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE
10:20-10:40	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI
10:40-11:00	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE
11:00-11:20	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V
11:20-11:40	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV
11:40-12:00	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE
12:00-12:20	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II	Unit III
12:20-12:40	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE	Unit II
12:40-1:00	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I	BYE
1:00-1:20	BYE	Unit II	Unit III	BYE	Unit IV	Unit V	BYE	Unit VI	BYE	Unit I
1:20-1:50	Closing Ceremony									

Thank You Letter for the Judges

The Xth annual Simulated Congressional Hearing was a huge success thanks to all of your hard work. We would not have been able to hold the hearing, however, without the judges. They gave up their time, conducted research and prepared in advance to provide you students with a challenging and fulfilling experience. Now it is your turn to show your appreciation of them by writing them a letter of gratitude.

First, think about the effort the judges made on your behalf and how it is a true example of **civic virtue**. Think about some of the **questions the judges asked** you and why they were good questions. Think about **what you learned** overall from the experience of the Simulated Congressional Hearing and what it meant to you. Finally, think about **why the judge should come back** and judge at future Simulated Congressional Hearings.

Now, write a friendly "Thank You" letter to **one or more** of the judges who judged you at the competition. (If you type the letter you can just change the name of the judge each time.) Be sure to remember the proper letter format and to sign it at the end. Check for spelling, grammar and syntax. **The letter may be typed or hand written on stationary (no notebook paper).**

These letters are due no later than **to your social studies teacher.**

Simulated Congressional Hearing Reflection

Wow! What an amazing experiences! These last weeks have undoubtedly been an experience unlike any other in your educational career. As a final assignment in this process, you will write a letter to your social studies teacher reflecting on what you have learned. Use the following prompts below to guide your writing being sure to address **thoroughly** each aspect of the Simulated Congressional Hearing experience mentioned.

1. First, think about your role within your unit team. What was it like to work with your classmates in this way? What did you learn about yourself and each other during this process? Be specific and discuss your various roles.
2. Next, think about what you learned about your topic as a result of this experience. Reflect on any new understandings or knowledge you acquired about your unit topic and/or America history and government in general. How was this type of learning different from other types of learning in social studies?
3. Next, describe a specific part of the Simulated Hearing (either the preparation or the event itself) that taught you something you did not know. What made this aspect of the experience so significant for you? Why will you remember it?
4. Next, describe what made this experience different from other social studies projects. How have you changed as a result? What about this experience will you take with you into high school and into society?
5. Finally, give your self a grade for your work during the Simulated Congressional Hearing. This grade should include your preparation and your actual performance. Justify your grade with evidence such as contributions you made to the group speech, research, follow-ups, morale as well as questions you answered during the hearing.

Requirements:

Be sure to reflect fully and elaborately on the questions asked. Be honest.

Type your final letter and submit it to

This assignment is worth **points**.

"We the People..." Mock Congressional Hearing Student Evaluation

Please think about the Mock Congressional Hearing you just completed, and use the scale to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below.

4=Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree

- _____ I have a deeper understanding of the history and principles of the U.S. Constitution and bill of Rights after having participated in the program.
- _____ The program stimulated my interest in the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and important constitutional issues.
- _____ The program has made me more aware of current issues that relate to the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- _____ Participating in this program gave me a greater understanding of my responsibilities as a citizen.
- _____ Participating in this program increased my ability to express my opinions on important issues.
- _____ As a result of participating in this program, I have increased my understanding of how to influence public policy decisions.
- _____ I would recommend participating in this program to other students
- What was your favorite part of the whole program? Why?

- What was your least favorite part? Why?

- On a scale of 1-10, (1-least, 10-most) what would you rank this experience with regard to:
 - _____ Educational Value
 - _____ Enjoyment
 - _____ Challenge
- What was your overall impression of the program (Text, preparation, competition, schedule etc.)?
- What recommendations would you make to improve the experience for next year's students?

JUDGES' INSTRUCTIONS IN BRIEF



Identify which member of your simulated congressional committee will be the “chairperson” (lead judge). The lead judge’s responsibilities are in **boldfaced** print.

OPENING

- Enter room when timekeeper announces, “All rise.” Smile to reassure student panel.
- **Greet the student panel (e.g., “Good morning team _____”)**
- **Invite all to sit.**
- **Introduce your unit number and topic (e.g., “We are the Congressional Committee on Unit 6, *What are the responsibilities of citizens?*”).**
- **Initiate judges’ introductions.** Each judge states his/her name and title.
- **Ask the student panel members to introduce themselves.**

PREPARED PRESENTATION

- **Read the speech questions for your unit.**
- **Say, “You may begin.” (Timer will start watch for four minutes)**
- Use blank paper to take notes. Focus on the *content* of the presentations.
- Use the “Simulated Congressional Hearing Group Rubric” in evaluating each group’s testimony. Students will see this sheet, so write only brief, constructive notes on this document.
- Note when timekeeper holds up the “One Minute” card and the “Time” card, notifying students that four minutes have expired.
- If four minutes have not been used, any remaining time may be added to the follow-up portion.
- **Thank the students and say, “We now have some follow-up questions to ask.” (six minutes)**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONING PERIOD

- **Be ready with the first question.**
- Phrase questions in a concise manner.
- Tailor probing questions in response to the students’ prepared presentations.
- Address questions to the entire group, *not* individual students.
- Use the suggested follow-up questions as necessary, but feel free to create your own relevant questions.
- If students do not understand the question, rephrase it.
- Observe when the timekeeper holds up the “One Minute” card and the “Time” card, notifying students that six minutes have expired.
- Use the “Simulated Congressional Hearing Group Rubric” in evaluating each group’s testimony. Students will see this sheet, so write only brief, constructive notes on this document.
- **Thank the student panel. Request a round of applause.**

FEEDBACK

- **Recognize the efforts of the teacher. Ask students to point out their teacher. Request a round of applause in honor of the teacher’s efforts.**
- **Say, “Now we have some feedback for the team.”**
- Each judge gives brief feedback.
- Identify the group’s strengths, especially regarding the substance of their testimony.
- Refer to students by name when complimenting specific aspects of the testimony.
- Focus on students’ reasons and supporting evidence for opinions expressed.
- Offer suggestions for improvement if appropriate.
- **Cue the timekeeper that you are ready to leave.** The timekeeper will say, “All rise.” Exit the room.

**ONE
MINUTE**

TIME