

# constitution usa episode 1 worksheet answer key

## Constitution USA Episode 1 Worksheet Answer Key

The Constitution of the United States is a foundational document that outlines the framework of the government, the rights of the citizens, and the principles that guide the nation. Understanding this document and its implications is crucial for any citizen or student of American history. The PBS documentary series "Constitution USA" enhances this understanding by exploring the Constitution's relevance in modern America. This article will provide a comprehensive overview of the first episode of the series, along with a detailed answer key for the accompanying worksheet.

## Overview of Constitution USA Episode 1

The first episode of "Constitution USA," hosted by Peter Sagal, focuses on the theme of the Constitution's origins and its evolution over time. Sagal travels across the United States, engaging with various individuals, experts, and constitutional scholars to highlight how the Constitution influences everyday life and is interpreted in contemporary society.

## Key Themes and Concepts

### 1. Historical Context:

- The episode begins by discussing the historical context in which the Constitution was drafted. It delves into the challenges faced by the Founding Fathers, including the need for a stronger federal government and the desire to protect individual liberties.

### 2. The Preamble:

- Sagal examines the Preamble to the Constitution, which outlines the goals of the document. The phrase "We the People" is emphasized, signifying that the government derives its power from the consent of the governed.

### 3. Checks and Balances:

- The concept of checks and balances is presented as a crucial element of the Constitution, ensuring that no single branch of government becomes too powerful. This principle is illustrated through various examples of how power is distributed among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

### 4. Living Document:

- The episode argues that the Constitution is a "living document," capable of adaptation to changing societal values and norms. This adaptability is showcased through landmark Supreme Court cases that have reinterpreted the Constitution in light of contemporary issues.

# Worksheet Structure

The accompanying worksheet for Episode 1 is designed to reinforce the concepts presented in the episode. It contains various sections, including multiple-choice questions, short answer prompts, and critical thinking exercises. Below is an answer key for each section of the worksheet.

## Multiple-Choice Questions

1. What year was the Constitution written?

- Answer: 1787

2. Which of the following is NOT one of the goals outlined in the Preamble?

- a) To establish justice
- b) To promote the general welfare
- c) To create a monarchy
- d) To secure the blessings of liberty

- Answer: c) To create a monarchy

3. What concept prevents one branch of government from becoming too powerful?

- a) Federalism
  - b) Separation of powers
  - c) Judicial review
  - d) Democracy
- Answer: b) Separation of powers

4. Who has the power to interpret the Constitution?

- a) The President
  - b) Congress
  - c) The Supreme Court
  - d) State legislatures
- Answer: c) The Supreme Court

## Short Answer Questions

1. Describe the significance of the phrase "We the People" in the context of the Constitution.

- Answer: The phrase "We the People" signifies that the authority of the government is derived from the consent of the governed. It emphasizes the democratic principle that the government exists to serve the interests of its citizens, ensuring that power lies with the populace rather than a monarchy or ruling elite.

2. What are the three branches of government established by the Constitution, and what is the primary function of each?

- Answer:

- Legislative Branch: Responsible for making laws (Congress).

- Executive Branch: Responsible for enforcing laws (President).
- Judicial Branch: Responsible for interpreting laws (Supreme Court and other courts).

3. Explain the concept of a "living document" as it pertains to the Constitution.

- Answer: The Constitution is referred to as a "living document" because it can be amended and interpreted in ways that reflect the current values and needs of society. This flexibility allows it to remain relevant over time and adapt to changes in social norms, technological advancements, and legal precedents.

## **Critical Thinking Exercises**

1. Reflect on a recent Supreme Court ruling. How does it illustrate the Constitution as a living document? Provide specific examples.

- Answer: A recent Supreme Court ruling, such as *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide, illustrates the Constitution as a living document. The ruling was based on the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause, demonstrating how the Constitution can adapt to contemporary societal values regarding marriage equality and civil rights.

2. Discuss the importance of checks and balances in preventing tyranny. Provide historical examples where checks and balances successfully functioned or failed.

- Answer: Checks and balances are crucial in preventing tyranny by ensuring that no single branch of government can overpower the others. A historical example of successful checks and balances is the impeachment process, where Congress holds the President accountable. In contrast, the failure of checks and balances can be seen during the Watergate scandal, where executive overreach challenged the authority of Congress and the judiciary, ultimately leading to President Nixon's resignation.

## **Conclusion**

The first episode of "Constitution USA" serves as an engaging introduction to the Constitution, highlighting its historical context, core principles, and ongoing relevance in modern America. The worksheet accompanying the episode encourages critical thinking and deepens understanding of the document's significance. As students work through the worksheet, they gain insights into the Constitution's role in shaping American democracy and the importance of active citizenship in upholding its values. Understanding the Constitution is essential for any citizen, and resources like "Constitution USA" provide valuable tools for education and engagement.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is the primary focus of Episode 1 of the**

## **Constitution USA series?**

The primary focus is on the history and principles of the U.S. Constitution, exploring its significance and how it governs American life.

## **What key concepts are introduced in the first episode regarding the Constitution?**

Key concepts include the Constitution as a living document, the separation of powers, and the importance of the Bill of Rights.

## **How does Episode 1 of Constitution USA illustrate the relevance of the Constitution today?**

It illustrates relevance through contemporary examples of constitutional debates and how the Constitution impacts current legal and social issues.

## **What historical context is provided in Episode 1 to understand the Constitution's creation?**

The episode provides context about the founding fathers, the Articles of Confederation, and the debates that led to the drafting of the Constitution.

## **Which amendments are highlighted in Episode 1 as crucial for protecting individual rights?**

The episode highlights the First Amendment, which protects freedoms of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition.

## **What approach does Episode 1 take to explain the process of constitutional amendments?**

The episode explains the amendment process as a way for the Constitution to evolve, detailing the requirements for proposing and ratifying amendments.

## **Are there any significant Supreme Court cases mentioned in Episode 1 that illustrate constitutional principles?**

Yes, the episode references landmark Supreme Court cases such as *Marbury v. Madison* to illustrate the principle of judicial review.

## **What educational resources are suggested in the**

## **worksheet for further understanding of the Constitution?**

The worksheet suggests additional readings, online resources, and discussion questions to deepen understanding of constitutional principles and their applications.

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