



*Quality West Wing  
Pre- Tour Information Packet  
Corona, CA*



“Inspiring the Leaders of Tomorrow”

Standards-based Lessons on the  
Government of the United States

Lessons developed for use in conjunction with a field trip  
to a replica of the Oval Office

Corona, California

c Bud Gordon, 1999  
Revised 2003

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## THE OVAL OFFICE

The Oval office is the formal workplace of the President of the United States. Here the President confers with heads of state, foreign diplomats, his staff, members of Congress, and other dignitaries. Often the President addresses the nation and the world on television or radio from the Oval Office.

For years the President's office was in the White House. To alleviate overcrowded conditions in the White House, President Theodore Roosevelt, undertook an expansion and renovation of the executive mansion. He added an office building, connected to the White House by a colonnade that had been designed by President Thomas Jefferson. The addition of the Executive Office Building, known today as the West Wing, was to have been temporary. The first President's office in the West Wing was square-shaped and opened onto the Cabinet Room.

In 1909, President William Howard Taft doubled the size of the building, because of the need for more space for an ever-growing executive department. During this renovation the President's office was completely changed and moved to another part of the building. The office was changed from a square to an oval-shaped floor plan, possibly because of a preference dating back to George Washington. With no one standing at the head or foot of the room, everyone was an equal distance from the president. The circle became a symbol of democracy. Since the renovation in 1909, the president's office has been known as the Oval Office.

For the next 20 years the space proved ample. In 1929, President Herbert Hoover ordered some changes to the building, including the enlargement of the lobby. On Christmas Eve of that year, a fire badly damaged the recently renovated building. Through the heroic efforts of President Hoover's son and secretary, some of the document filled drawers of the President's desk were rescued from the Oval Office. During the reconstruction of the West Wing, President Hoover was forced to move his office to the adjacent State, War and Navy Building (known today as the Old Executive Office Building).

In 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt needed additional space and further enlarged the West Wing. Rather than distort the proportions of the building, architects convinced the President to add a second story. The renovation gutted the building, leaving only parts of the original walls standing. During the reconstruction of the West Wing, President Roosevelt and his staff moved their offices back to the second floor of the White House. The 1934 renovation changed the floor plan of the West Wing. Although other Presidents have made changes to the West Wing, the changes since 1934 have been basically of interior design and decorative changes.

# WE THE PEOPLE

Grade 5

Standards-based Lessons

## I. Lesson Overview

The phrase, “We the People” illustrates the basic ideal of American democracy. This lesson helps students understand the important role that all Americans play in the government of our country. Students are asked to consider the historical context of the Constitution and their own roles as citizens of the United States.

During the field trip to the Oval Office, students will view the video *The Birth of the Constitution*, from the “This is America Charlie Brown” series. The story takes place in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 as the Founding Fathers work to compose a Constitution to replace the existing government established under the Articles of Confederation. Charlie Brown, Snoopy and the rest of the Peanuts gang witness the debates and tell the story of the drafting of the Constitution. The video demonstrates the importance of compromise in the drafting of the Constitution, as well as, the system of separation of powers and checks and balances that is the hallmark of the Constitution. The lesson culminates with students writing to the President.

## II. Text Correlation

“Searching for Unity,” Chapter 12 of *America Will Be* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), pages 290-311.

“The Constitution of the United States,” Chapter 14 of *A New Nation* (McGraw Hill, 2000), pages 382-406.

## III. Correlation to California History-Social Science Content Standards

**Standard 5.7** - Students relate the narrative of the people and events associated with the development of the U.S. Constitution and analyze its significance as the foundation of the American republic, in terms of:

1. the shortcomings set forth by the Articles of Confederation’s critics
2. the significance of the new Constitution of 1787, including the struggles over its ratification and the reasons for the addition of the Bill of Rights
3. the fundamental principles of American constitutional democracy including how the government derives its power from the people and primacy of individual liberty
4. how the Constitution is designed to secure our liberty by, both, empowering and limiting central government; the powers granted to the citizens,

- Congress, the President, the Supreme Court, those reserved to the states
5. the meaning of the American creed that calls on citizens to safeguard liberty of individual Americans within a unified nation, to respect the rule of law, and to preserve the Constitution

#### **IV. Pre-Field Trip Lesson Activities**

Begin the lesson by having students read their textbook account of the Articles of Confederation and the drafting of the Constitution.

Have a student read the Preamble of the Constitution to the class. Distribute copies of the preamble (Appendix 1, pg. 13) and have students, working in small groups discuss the meaning of the phrases that form the preamble.

How does the preamble reflect the events that had taken place in the United States before the drafting of the Constitution? If necessary, have students review text reading on the political economic problems facing the nation under the Articles of Confederation.

#### **V. Audio/Visual Component**

“This is America Charlie Brown,” Volume 6: *The Birth of the Constitution*, Paramount Pictures, 1998. 24 minutes.

Before students view the video you may wish to review the following vocabulary for better understanding of the video:

Articles of Confederation	House of Representatives
compromise	legislature
convention	monarchy
delegate	preside
executive	ratify
government	tyranny

Remind students that Benjamin Franklin was one of the delegates representing his state of Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention. Students should be familiar with the story of Franklin and the kite, but inform them that this occurred in Franklin’s youth and not at the time of the Constitutional Convention.

#### **VI. Follow-up Lesson Activities**

Review the major issues raised at the Constitutional Convention by recalling the Video and textbook readings. What was the issue between large states and small

states? Why do you think some delegates feared giving the people the power to choose their political leaders? In your view, how important was the delegates' ability to compromise at the convention?

Why did the authors of the Constitution divide powers among three branches of government? What are some of the powers that each branch has, according to the Constitution? In what ways can one branch of government "check" and/or "balance" the power of another branch? Have students complete a chart on checks and balances (Appendix 2, pg. 14).

Have students discuss their place in American society. What role can young people play as citizens in a democratic society? Make a transparency of "The Power of One Person" (Appendix 3, pg. 15). And lead the class in a discussion about citizenship. Have students share additional examples of active citizenship.

As a culminating activity, have students select a current event and write a letter to the President expressing their views. Or, you may wish to have students write a letter to the President sharing what they learned on their visit to the replica of the Oval Office. Students may also take a virtual tour of the White House by visiting White House for Kids at [www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids).

Students may send an e-mail to the president at [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov). If you would rather mail the letters, send them to The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500. Keep a copy of the students' letters and responses from the President for the students' portfolio.

## **VII. Extended Lesson**

You may want to arrange to view the video "This is America Charlie Brown", *The Smithsonian and the Presidency*. The video examines three presidents, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin D. Roosevelt as case studies of presidential decision-making.

Another good video series is "The Almost Painless Guide to The Branches of Government" by United Learning. There are five different videos available for this age level about the basics of government. Each is about 20 minutes.

Appendix 1

*The Constitution of the United States*  
*Preamble*

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

What did the Founding Fathers mean by:

In order to form a more perfect union?

Establish justice?

Insure domestic tranquility?

Provide for the common defense?

Promote the general welfare?

Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity?

Appendix 2

## CHECKS AND BALANCES

<b>Name of Branch</b>	How can this branch check the Executive Branch?	How can this branch check the Judicial Branch?	How can this branch check the Legislative Branch?
Executive			
Judicial			
Legislative			

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Appendix 3

## THE POWER OF ONE PERSON

How You Can Make a Difference



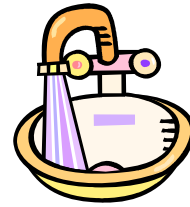
Recycle bottles, cans, and paper.



Ride your bike instead of getting a ride.



Write a letter to your representatives or to your local newspaper.



Conserve water.

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[These books and videos are available from one of the following: Barnes and Noble, Borders or Amazon.com]

## Selected Bibliography

### Grade 3 and 4

Barnes, Peter W., and Cheryl Shaw. *House Mouse, Senate Mouse*. Alexandria, VA: VSP Books, 1998. (\$15.95)

This fanciful tale of Squeaker of the House and Senate Mouse jointly debating a bill to declare a National Cheese, takes students through the legislative process, from basic research of a bill through committee hearings and signing by the President.

Barnes, Peter W., and Cheryl Shaw. *Marshall, The Courthouse Mouse*. Alexandria, VA: VSP Books, 1998. (Hardcover \$15.95)

Marshall J. Mouse, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United Mice of America, leads his fellow justices in deciding whether to uphold a law requiring all mice to eat the same cheese on certain days. The informative story tells about our nation's judicial system.

Barnes, Peter W., and Cheryl Shaw. *Woodrow, The White House Mouse*. Alexandria, VA: VSP Books, 1998. (\$5.95)

Every four years the mice of the nation select a leader. This fanciful story of the election of Woodrow G. Washingtall informs students about the executive office and the electoral process.

Brown, Marc. *Arthur Meets the President*. New York: Little, Brown, 1991. (\$5.95)

Arthur wins an essay contest and is rewarded by reading it to the President of the United States.

Davis, Kenneth C. *Don't Know Much About the Presidents*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2002. (\$15.95)

Here's your chance to learn all about the presidents in a fun-to-read format.. You'll find their important political achievements, their nicknames, hobbies and even what kind of food they ate. There's lots of presidential trivia here.

Debnam, Betty. *A Kid's Guide to the White House*. Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1997. (\$8.95)

Produced in cooperation with the White House Historical Association, this lively and readable

book on the White House chronicles its history and famous residents and takes children on an entertaining and educational tour of the president's house.

Karr, Kathleen. *It Happened in the White House: Unexpected Tales of the Most Famous House in the World*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2000. (\$5.99)

This book provides unexpected and funny information about the White House in easy English accompanied by beautiful illustrations.

Levy, Elizabeth. *If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution*. New York: Scholastic, 1986. (\$5.99)

Using a question-answer format, this good read aloud book examines reasons for calling a Constitutional Convention, issues discussed, decisions made, and ratification. The book explains the separation of powers and how laws are passed in a way easily understood by young students.

Maestro, Betsy and Giulio Maestro. *A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1987. (\$7.99)

A well-illustrated book that tells of the birth of the Constitution and the adoption of the Bill of Rights.

Maestro, Betsy and Giulio Maestro. *The Voice of the People: American Democracy in Action*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1996. (\$16.99)

The book covers the development of democratic ideals, the drafting of the Constitution, the structure of government, extension of the franchise, civil rights, and voting – all complex subjects made understandable for young students. The book is filled with color illustrations and charts to help students with the key concepts presented in the narrative.

Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *Congress: A True Book*. New York: Children's Press, 1998. (\$6.95)

This book describes the origins, functions, and duties of the United States Congress.

Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *The Constitution: A True Book*. New York: Children's Press, 1998. (\$6.95)

The book explains why a constitution was needed and describes the convention in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. The book explains the Virginia and New Jersey plans and the Great Compromise and ratification of the Constitution.

Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *The Presidency: A True Book*. New York: Children's Press, 1998. (\$6.95)

This book is a simply written book that examines various aspects of the presidency providing some historical background. It briefly describes the election, duties, and daily activities of the president.

Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *The Supreme Court: A True Book*. New York: Children's Press, 1998. (\$6.95)

It describes the role of the Supreme Court in American government and provides young students with a basic understanding of how the high court operates.

Spier, Peter. *We the People: The Constitution of the United States of America*. New York: Doubleday, 1987.

The book clearly presents the origins of the Constitution and its meaning in the daily life of Americans. It includes a picture narrative to accompany the words of the preamble.

*White House for Kids*. The White House Website [www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids).

Children join Socks the Cat and Buddy the presidential dog, for a tour of the White House, including a history of the building and interesting stories about the White House and many of its residents. Students can learn about other children who lived in the White House.

## **Grades 5 – 10**

Buckland, Gail. *The White House in Miniature*. W.W. Norton & Co. 1994 (\$40)

John Zweifel's White House Miniature is a faithful recreation of the White House in 1/12<sup>th</sup> scale based on three years worth of research. The book captures the rich history of the White House with 200 color photos of the miniature version.

Caroli, Betty Boyd. *Inside the White House: America's Most Famous Home*. Pleasantville, NY: Readers Digest, 1999. (\$29.95)

This is a well-illustrated history of the White House including floor plans and changes over time. The text includes information on the presidents and their families as well as the office of the presidency.

Crompton, Samuel Willard. *100 Americans Who Shaped American History*. San Mateo, CA: Bluewood Books, 1999. (\$7.95)

Read the one page capsule biographies to learn about these 100 people and their personal

struggles and accomplishments, and how their contributions have influenced the American way of life. The book is organized chronologically and includes a wide range of individuals.

Fritz, Jean. *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1987. (\$6.99)

This popular book describes the drafting of the Constitution in closed meetings in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787.

History Theme Pack. Peterborough, N.H. Cobblestone Publishing, a Division of Carus Publishing.

(\$5.95 each)

Here are easy-to-read books about the following topics.

African Americans (50 bks.)

California (11)

Multicultural America (16)

Civics (30)

Native Americans (24)

Civil War (27)

Revolutionary War (16)

Colonial Life (17)

Twentieth Century (23)

Communication (5)

Westward Expansion (10)

Women (22)

*The Land of Fair Play*. Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty Press. (\$8.00)

This U.S. civics text provides students with detailed information regarding how our local, state and

federal governments work. The primary emphasis of the text is designed to provide young people with

the knowledge they need to properly and intelligently exercise their citizenship responsibilities.

Morris, Juddi. *At Home with the Presidents*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999. (\$12.95)

The book describes the lives of the presidents of the United States, their families, and the various

homes, libraries and other sites associated with each.

Skarmeas, Nancy J. *Our Presidents Their Lives and Stories*. Nashville: Ideals Publications,

2000. (\$9.95)

This book includes one to two pages on each president's life and presidency including President George W. Bush. Illustrations and photos are included in each section.

Skarmeas, Nancy J. *First Ladies of the White House*. Nashville: Ideals Publications, 2000. (\$9.95)

This book gives a quick look into the lives of each of the first ladies. Illustrations and photos

help to bring the first ladies to life for the reader.

*The White House*. The Official White House website. [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

This website has a wealth of information about current events in the White House and history

of the nation's presidents, first wives and monuments in D.C. It is easy to navigate and even has

a tour of the real Oval Office conducted by President G.W. Bush.

### **Teacher Resources**

America's Story from America's Library. [www.americaslibrary.gov](http://www.americaslibrary.gov)

Discover the stories of America's past: "Meet Amazing Americans", "Jump Back in Time",

"Explore the States", "Join America at Play", "See, Hear and Sing".

*The American Presidency*. [www.grolier.com/presidents/preshome.html](http://www.grolier.com/presidents/preshome.html).

You'll find some interesting information on this site about presidents, vice presidents, first

ladies, elections, congress, the Constitution, monuments and even scandals.

*American Presidents – Life Portraits*. [www.americanpresidents.org](http://www.americanpresidents.org)

This Cspan site contains a complete video archive of all "American Presidents" program-

ming plus:

- ❖ biographical facts
- ❖ key events of each presidency
- ❖ presidential places
- ❖ Cspan classroom lesson plans

Bochan, Toby Leah. *Family Matters, Parents' Guides, Parent Primer: Democracy and Government*.

[www.scholastic.com/familymatters/parentguides/primers/democracy.htm](http://www.scholastic.com/familymatters/parentguides/primers/democracy.htm).

You'll find good, basic information about the Constitution, Bill of Rights, amendments, branches of government and different kinds of government on this site.

Grace, Catherine O'Neill. *The White House, An Illustrated History*. Scholastic, NY, 2003. (\$19.95)

This is a great book full of pictures that can be shown to a class full of students. The book is

very accurate, because the White House Historical Society participated in its writing.

*In Congress Assembled*. National Digital Library, Library of Congress.

[www.memoryloc.gov/ammem/](http://www.memoryloc.gov/ammem/)

[ndlpedu/lessons/constitu/conintro.html](http://ndlpedu/lessons/constitu/conintro.html).

This unit includes four lessons using primary sources to examine continuity and change in the

governing of the U.S. Lessons one and two are focused on a study of the Constitution and Bill

of Rights. Lesson three investigates important issues which confronted the first Congress and has

students examine current congressional debates. Lesson four features broadsides from the

Continental Congress calling for special days of thanksgiving and remembrance.

Oberlin, Loriann Hoff. *The Everything American History Book, People, Places and Events That Shaped*

*the Nation*. Adams Media: Mass., 2001.

Our country's past comes alive in this book. It starts with the first Viking explorations and ends

with the chaos of the 2000 elections. Short passages will review important events in history.

*Peterson, Susan. Fun & Educational Places to Go With Kids in Southern California. Fun Places*

Publishing, CA, 2003. (\$20.95)

This book is a **must** for teachers and parents looking for “fun and educational” fieldtrips. Susan

has personally visited every site in this book (believe it or not) and gives a concise explanation

of each.

*Teaching With Documents: Lesson Plans. National Archives and Records Administration Digital*

Classroom. [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).

This has five separate lessons to celebrate Constitution Day including a simulation of how

members of the Convention might have felt as they gathered to begin the arduous task of

writing the Constitution.

*Thomas, Helen. Front Row at the White House – My Life and Times. Simon and Schuster: New*

York, 1999. (\$14.00)

A quote from her forward says it all: “Much has been written about the presidents I’ve covered.

So I chose to take the personal route and make this an impressionistic view of what I saw, what

I heard and what I felt through eight administrations.” This autobiography of a White House

reporter is excellent!

Truman, Margaret. *First Ladies: An Intimate Group Portrait of White House Wives*. NY: Random

House, 1995. (\$14.95)

Margaret Truman (daughter of the president) does what our high school teachers never quite

accomplished. She mad the past come alive with colorful characters who changed the world.

*U.S. Constitution Thematic Unit*. Teacher Created Resources. Westminister, CA. (\$9.99)

This reproducible workbook is filled with read-to-use lessons and cross curricular activities.

Also included are management ideas and creative suggestions for the classroom for grades 5-8.

*We The People*, [www.constitutionfacts.com](http://www.constitutionfacts.com)

This site gives you everything from famous quotes, to crossword puzzles, dates to remember and

Constitution quizzes.

# MAPQUEST

Quality West Wing  
1705 W 6th St  
Corona CA 92882  
(951) 808- 1676

## Step 1:

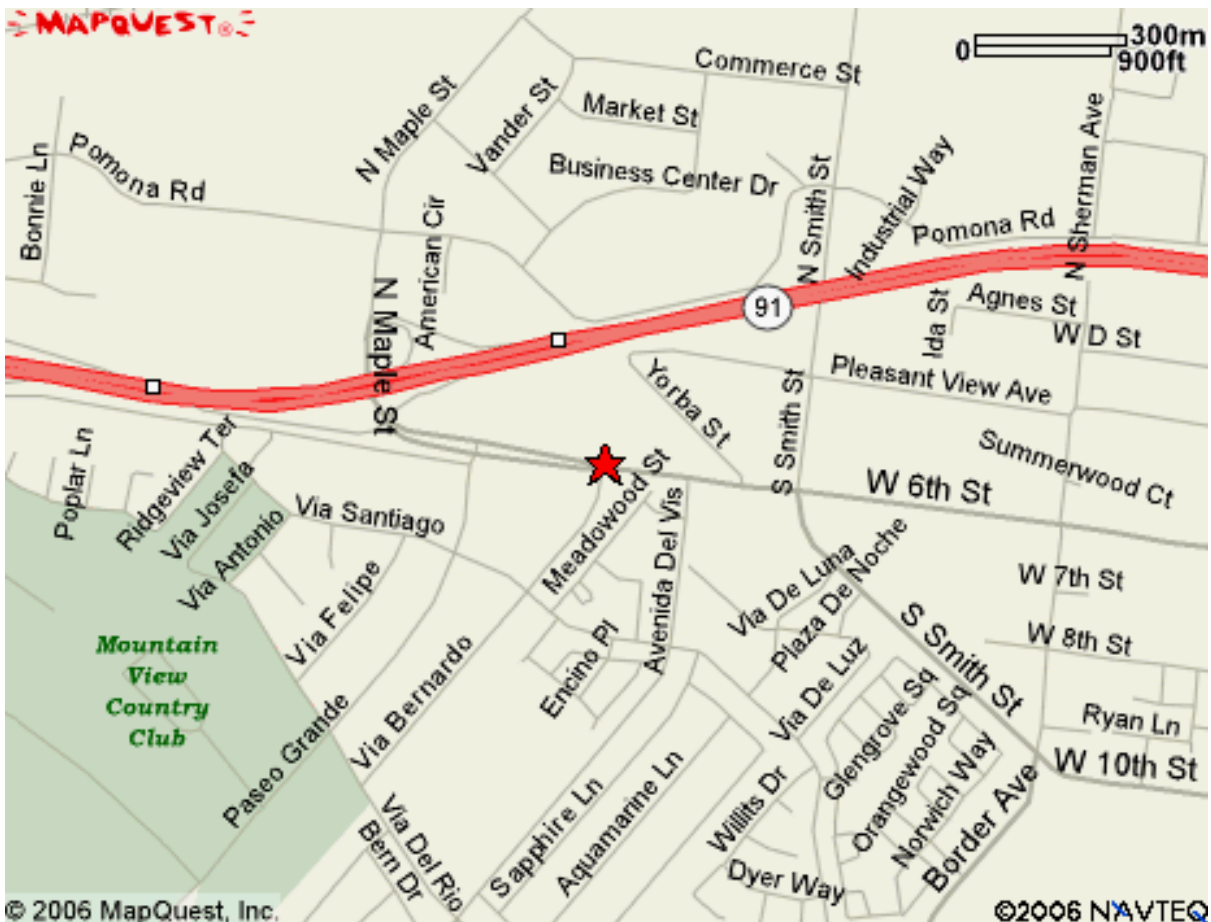
Directions taking 91 East:  
Exit Maple and West Sixth St. -  
Turn Right

Directions taking 91 West:  
Exit Maple St. - Turn Left and  
go over the freeway bridge.

## Step 2:

Pass the stoplight at Paseo Grande,  
make the first quick left into the right  
(or east) side of the Thrifty Gas  
Station and just before the Travelodge.  
Go through the chain linked fence, come  
down the little hill and park directly  
behind our building. There will be a "The  
Bus Stops Here" sign and we will be  
there to meet you.

(\* Due to limited parking, we ask that  
groups coming in separate cars try to  
car pool to minimize the number of cars  
and drivers.)





# Volunteers Needed

Quality West Wing Museum is in need of people who are interested in history, government and working with children.

Spend a few hours a week or month helping with tours of the "Oval Office"

Please visit our website to find out more about our program

[www.qualitywestwing.org](http://www.qualitywestwing.org)

For more information about volunteering please contact:

Angela Limon, Education Director

Quality West Wing

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(951) 808-1676

[Angela@qualitywestwing.org](mailto:Angela@qualitywestwing.org)