

Liberty Day's  
***Celebration America***  
**Constitution Celebrations**  
*Celebrating American Liberty from Sea to Shining Sea*  
March 16<sup>th</sup> • Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>

*Student Teachers Guide*

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# Liberty Day's *Celebration America* Student Teachers Guide

Welcome to the Celebration!

Welcome aboard! **Liberty Day's Celebration America** is the organization's premier program for youth educating youth, and as far as we know, there is no other in the entire nation like it! **Celebration America** has a two-pronged approach: one is our high school Constitution Celebration, for which Colorado high school students gather in Denver for a unique conference on the Constitution, and the other is our **Student-Teacher program**, where college and high school students educate 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes on the United States Constitution.

In December of 2004, Congress passed a provision that all schools that receive federal funds shall hold an educational program about the U.S. Constitution on Constitution Day (September 17th), the day the Constitution was signed by the Founding Fathers in Philadelphia in 1787.

On March 16, 1751, James Madison, known as the Father of Our Constitution, was born. The U.S. Constitution was very much his brainchild, and his birthday has since become known as Liberty Day, a day in celebration of the work of our nation's fourth President.

**Celebration America** is Liberty Day's way of helping schools to fulfill the Constitution Day requirement and to celebrate Madison's birthday by educating youth about the Constitution in a fun, exciting, and interactive way different from the normal classroom setting. Instead of the average teaching methods and lessons taught by teachers, we're giving high school and college students the opportunity to teach younger kids themselves.

Through **Liberty Day's Celebration America Student-Teacher program**, you will get the chance to truly make a difference in the lives of the kids you teach. The mere fact that a teenager or young adult, as opposed to simply their teacher, is coming in to take the time to talk to them about their system of government and rights and freedoms as Americans will truly have an impact like nothing else. The program will help you to become more skilled at presenting ideas and improve your ability to interact with children, all while having a lasting impact.

Our goal with the **Celebration America** Student Teachers Guide is to cut through the fog and help you dive right in to preparing for your teaching experience. It is designed as an explanation of how this program will operate and the standard method of approach for all student teachers to take, and to present you with some teaching recommendations and tips for the road.

We wish you the clearest horizons and hope this guide helps!

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## Going into the Classroom

Going into the classroom, the first thing you have to keep in mind is that you're teaching 5<sup>th</sup> graders, not high school students or even middle schoolers. At the same time, you're not teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. The key to a successful lesson is to bring the Constitution down to a level that they can understand while at the same time not patronizing them or making them feel like little kids. Kids are smarter than most adults give them credit for, so do your best to strike that balance!

**Liberty Day will provide you with all the essential materials you will need to get the job done, including the following things:**

- Liberty Day Constitution booklets (one per student)
- Liberty Day Q&A cards (one set per student)
- The Student-Teacher guide
- Liberty Day Kids stickers (30)
- Copy of the Liberty Day Kids Questions and Answers sheet for volunteers
- Liberty Day American flag pins (upon request, to toss out as a prize)
- Liberty Day Q&A open-book quiz for Pizza Hut prize

Before you go into the classroom, you will want to meet with your assigned 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher to go over what it is that you will be teaching and how you plan on doing so (see "Developing a Lesson Plan"), which will ensure that you and the teacher will be on the same page. It will also mean that you will have bounced off your ideas for your lesson and the kinds of strategies you would like to implement with the teacher who works with the students every day; that way, you can be sure that you'll have success with your visit. It works to your advantage to form a cooperative relationship with the teacher so you both feel comfortable and confident during your instruction.

## Developing a Lesson Plan

Since this is a Liberty Day program and you will most likely be constrained to one hour, we have already determined the subjects and questions that you will be focusing on as a Liberty Day Student-Teacher. How you approach the students and teach the material, however, is a different story, and that's really where you come in.

The goal is to fit as much into the hour as possible, while at the same time not overwhelming the kids. If you have time to go over the amendments we identify in our 24 Q&A's, feel free to select from them and craft your lesson accordingly. The questions you will cover will be questions 1 through 15, plus a few other matters key to the lesson.

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While Liberty Day has outlined the basics that we would like you to cover, you still have some leeway in how you will teach the material. The first 14 questions deal with the very basics, namely how the government is structured. The next 5 that you will go over deal with 5 of the first 10 amendments. Just be sure it **fits with the Q&A** cards and that you've confirmed your lesson with the teacher whose class you're working with!

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Be careful when you explain issues like "We the People," which simply establishes the basic premise of the Constitution, that of protecting the rights of the individual. This lesson must not be used as a political opportunity to argue for liberal or conservative ideas, for instance.

Before you get started, take a look at the "**Liberty Day Kids Questions and Answers**" packet attached to this guide, which have the exact same questions as the Q&A cards, and study up on them! Before you go into the classroom, you want to make sure you've got the material down well enough to teach it.

Visual aids are a great way to help ensure students' understanding of the material. Here are two items for you to create and use in your lesson.

1. **Posters.** Attached is a diagram of the three branches of government and arrows pointing to each one as they relate to one another, based on the Q&A cards. It includes facts about each of the three branches. You could also use the white/blackboard for this.
2. **Handouts.** Consider, along with the books and question cards, what handouts you think would be good to pass out, such as an outline of the Constitution of the United States (attached with examples). Is there something else you think would be good to include? Preamble handouts? Bill of Rights handout? One of the best methods of teaching isn't just visual, but letting kids have something *in their hands*. Think about what would be good to distribute.

One of the key things you'll need to figure out is how you will approach the students through your presentation. Will you ask more questions, or lecture more? Will you be excited, or more laid-back? Will you be funny and add humor to it, or not so much? Think about what the best teaching style for 5<sup>th</sup> graders is and how you'll approach that and explain the material. **Be sure to make it fun and engaging!**

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## **Beginning the Lesson: The first 5-10 minutes**

For the first 5-10 minutes or so, tops, you will begin your lesson with an introductory discussion on the Constitution.

The best way to get kids interested and engaged in any topic is to start by asking them questions. Here are some start-up questions. Give them the chance to answer, but if, after a few tries, they don't get a question right, you can then present them with the appropriate answer.

1. **Do you know how we got our freedom?** – In the Revolutionary War
2. **Do you know who we got our freedom from?** – The British Empire
3. **Do you know what year we declared our freedom?** – 1776
4. **Do you know who led the fight for our freedom?** – George Washington, our first President
5. **Do you know what document declared our freedom from Great Britain?** – The Declaration of Independence
6. **Does anyone know what the Constitution is?** – Like in football or baseball, the Constitution is the rulebook for our government (the people who run the country)—it tells us the rules for the government, what it can and can't do, and what freedoms we have as Americans.

Explain how, after we separated from Great Britain, we had to come up with how the country would be run. And so the Founding Fathers, like George Washington and James Madison, came up with the Constitution, and on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1787, the Constitution was signed and subsequently ratified (approved) by all 13 states.

Ask the students if they know what the first three words of the Constitution are and give them a chance to respond. After they know the answer, ask them why they think the Founding Fathers started out that way (why it doesn't start out with the words "We the Government" or "We the States" but instead "We the People"), and let a few students give their thoughts.

After they've given their answers, discuss that under British rule individual rights were violated, such as taxation without representation, and share with them how the Founding Fathers believed that the rights of the individual were important and should be protected, and that the power of the government doesn't lie in the Crown, like it was in England, but in the people. That's what we fought the Revolutionary War over.

## **Introducing the Three Branches: The next 5 minutes**

The next step of your lesson is to talk about the three branches of government.

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1. **Use your three branches diagram to help explain the three branches of government.** Begin by showing how the framers of the Constitution didn't like how power in England was mostly held by one person, the King (Crown). Because of this, they divided the government into three different branches, each with different powers, so that one person or branch could not become all-powerful.

Continue by explaining how the legislative branch creates laws (and what that means), how the executive branch assures the laws are enforced (what that means), and how the judicial branch adjudicates cases regarding violation of the law and interprets the Constitution (determines whether or not a law is Constitutional). Have the students open their books to pages 1, 9, and 13 as you teach and have them underline the section that talks about the roles of the (3) branches. Keep referring to the diagram throughout the rest of your lesson on the three branches.

## **The Legislative Branch: The next 10 minutes**

The legislative branch is the most important branch of the government—that's why it's the first article of the Constitution. Spend the next 10 minutes discussing this key branch.

2. **Explain how the legislative branch is divided into two sections, the Senate and the House of Representatives.** Have them open books to page 1 and underline where it says those names. Then tell why this is so: Because the Founding Fathers wanted to do what they could to help ensure that the laws Congress passes are fair laws, meaning that both houses of Congress have to agree on a law in the *exact same writing* before it is passed. Explain how big states wanted there to be one house based on population, so that states with more people could have more power, while smaller states wanted there to be one house where each state had the same number of representatives. Because of that and the wish to have checks and balances, two branches were created, including both ways for setting up Congress, in what has been called the "Great Compromise."
3. **Then proceed to tell the students that each state has two senators.** Have them open up to page 2 and underline where it says that. Skip questions 5 and 6 for now and explain how page 2 also says that senators serve terms lasting 6 years. Have the students underline the relevant passage, and then talk about how each senator must meet three qualifications in order to serve in office. They must be 30 years old (refer to page 3), a citizen of the U.S. for 9 years (refer to page 3), and live in the state their elected in (refer to page 3). List the qualifications underneath "Senate."
4. **Repeat the above process for the House of Representatives.** Explain how members of the House serve for terms of two years (underline, page 1) and must be 25 years old, a citizen of the U.S. for 7 years, and an inhabitant of the state from which elected (underline, all on page 1).

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5. Then talk about how every time the government spends and allocates money, it is spending the people's money. Therefore, the people's representatives are accountable for how much revenue is obtained from the people. Because the House of Representatives is the closest to the people (they only serve two-year terms and are directly voted in by the people), **all bills to raise revenue for the U.S. government have to start in the House.** Explain how the word "revenue" means taxes.
6. Ask the kids if they have any questions so far.

**The Executive and Judicial Branches: 5 minutes**

7. **Move on to the executive branch.** Explain how the President can serve a maximum of two 4-year terms, and have students find and highlight on page 9 where the length of a presidential term can be found.
8. **Then talk about the three qualifications to be President:** 35 years old (page 11), a natural-born citizen (page 10), and a resident of the U.S. for 14 years (page 11). Point out how former actor Arnold Schwarzeneger, current governor of California, is not qualified to become President of the U.S. because he is not a natural-born citizen.
9. **Talk about how the President is Commander-in-Chief** of the military (Army and Navy in the Constitution) and have the students identify and underline where that is stated on page 11. Explain what that means.
10. **Talk a little about the judicial branch.** This isn't expressed in the Q&A cards, but it's important to note for the students that the judicial branch, specifically the Supreme Court, is not elected by the people. Instead, the President appoints (nominates) a judge and the Senate either confirms (approves) the appointment or rejects it. Here he is soliciting the "advice and consent of the Senate," making sure to get their okay before they can serve on the court.

**Questions and Review: The next 5 minutes**

11. Ask them if they have any questions so far on what you just talked about. If not, take down the chart and ask them questions for review, such as: What are the three branches of government? What does the legislative branch do? What are the two houses/sections of Congress?

**Activity of Your Choice: 10 minutes**

Spending an hour lecturing isn't going to be all that effective for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, so now's the perfect time to spice things up a bit with an activity of your choice. Here are a few ideas for activities to do that shouldn't take any longer than 10 minutes.

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- a) **"Where's the line?"** The answer to each question you'll go over (remember, the questions are the basis for your lesson!) can be found directly in the Constitution. You can turn this into a game or just have them find the answers in their books, but ask the students to find and highlight each answer in the Constitution. This not only reinforces their answers in the student's mind, but the student can easily help the people they quiz find the answers for themselves when they are having trouble.
- b) **Quiz time!** If you have time at the end, break the students into teams of four or five. Have each team line up one behind the other. In the interest of time, come up with your own constitution-related names for each one. Alternate between teams asking each student at the front of the line a question. If the student gets the question right, s/he gets to sit down and the person in front of the next team's line gets to go. If the student gets it wrong, it goes to the next team. Keep going until one team has all of their kids sitting down. If you run out of questions that you went over before the game is over, have a set of questions based on other things you might have mentioned to ask them. The reward is a flag pin for each of the winning teams' team members.
- c) **Poster board activity.** Have five or six pieces of poster board. Divide the students into groups and have them draw and/or write something on the posters, taking 5 minutes or so to talk to their fellow group members about it. You can come up with what they should include on the posters, but here are a few ideas.
  - a. Have them draw their own diagram of the three branches of government, just like you did, with arrows to each of them and write down how they relate to each other. For instance, when Congress passes a law, who does it go to? When the President vetoes a law, who does it go back to? After the President signs a bill into law, where can it go that will determine whether or not the law is constitutional?
  - b. Have them talk in their groups about what they imagine the government being like. For instance, share with them that the House of Representatives has 435 members and the Senate has 100 members. They can draw their vision of the House and Senate, the President, the Supreme Court, etc. Then have the kids share their posters with the class real briefly.
  - c. Go over the Preamble of the Constitution and distribute a few copies of the text to each group. Ask each group to discuss what they just learned and to decide upon and write down two reasons why the Constitution was written. Ask each group to hold up their poster and, when called upon, give one of the two reasons they came up with. Lead them in a brief discussion on if these are good reasons to form a government.

## **How a Bill Becomes a Law: The next 10 minutes**

12. **Now's the point where you explain in a bit more detail on how the system works.** Start by walking through the diagram, explaining how if both the House and Senate agree on the *exact same wording* of a bill and pass it, the President can either

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sign it into law, which means it becomes the law of the land, or he can veto it. Explain how the veto is part of the “checks and balances” system created by the Founding Fathers to keep any one branch of government from becoming too powerful. They were concerned that men were easily corruptible, especially when given power over others. Elaborate on how a veto means that the bill does not become a law, but that Congress can override it with 2/3 vote of both houses, meaning that it will become law even without the President supporting it.

13. Explain once again how the judicial branch has the power to declare a law unconstitutional. If a case is brought to the courts challenging a certain law, it will look at the law and determine whether or not it is allowed under the Constitution. If the court decides that it is not, the bill will no longer be a law. Congress has the option to come up with a new one that fits within the Constitution, and the whole process starts over again.
14. Ask if the students have any questions.

## **The Amendments: Time-Depending**

Everything up until this point should take around an hour to complete. However, if you have made arrangements with the teacher to teach the class for longer than an hour, or if you do have enough time following your Constitution lesson, now is the time to go over as many of the amendments as possible, starting with the Bill of Rights.

15. Explain how the first 10 amendments (changes) to the Constitution were passed in 1794 and are known as the “Bill of Rights.” Go over the five rights in the First Amendment (all on page 22; freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances). Discuss how other countries, like China and Iran, impose strict limits on these freedoms and the fact that the King of England had tried to limit them in the colonies. Also go over how the right to “petition the government for a redress of grievances” means that citizens have the right to request that the government change something.
16. Discuss the two rights guaranteed in the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution. These are no unreasonable searches and seizures and no warrants without probable cause. Explain what warrants are and what “unreasonable searches and seizures” means. If you are unclear, see the attached document.
17. Discuss the five rights guaranteed in the Fifth Amendment (all on pg. 23). These are indictment by a Grand Jury, no double jeopardy (can't be tried more than once for the same crime), that you don't have to be a witness against yourself, due process of law, and just compensation for taking private property. Explain what “indictment,”

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“double jeopardy,” and “due process of law” mean, as well as what it means to not have to be a witness against yourself (see attachments if you are unsure about this). Give an example to describe “just compensation for taking private property,” such as if the government wants to expand Colorado’s light rail to go to DIA, as is being proposed, and it has to acquire your house to do it, they have to pay you the fair and equitable amount of money that your house is actually worth.

18. Discuss the Sixth Amendment right (on pg. 23) to a “speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury.” Explain what a jury is, what it means to be impartial, and what the implications are of a trial that is not public or speedy (begun in short order).
19. Finally, discuss the three rights in the Eight Amendment, all on pg. 23. They are no excessive bail, no excessive fines, and no cruel and unusual punishment. Explain what bail is and how excessive bail and fines could be unfair or abusive, especially for the innocent and poor. Explain the importance of cruel and unusual punishment and compare it to something like a kid not getting to eat lunch for a week because he said something really mean to a girl. Is that fair, or is that cruel and unusual?
20. **Activity: Simulated arrest.** My sister and I planned this ahead of time, so you’d want to ask for a volunteer for this, but to help teach Amendments 4-8, on due process, I pretended to be the police arresting my sister for stealing a Wii. The kids thought it was funny and really had fun with it. It’s just a great, fun way to teach those rights.
21. Ask the students if they have any questions. Then spend any remaining time asking them questions, quizzing them on what they just learned.

## **The End: Ending the Lesson**

22. Whether you got through the amendments or not, wrap up your lesson in part by explaining how the Q&A cards cover 10 of the most important amendments to the Constitution that you didn’t go over and how, while their teacher may or may not go over them, the Liberty Day Pizza Hut quiz (discussed later) asks questions about them.

## **The Liberty Day Quiz, Student Letters**

You will be provided with a 24-question quiz (the questions being identical to those in the cards) for the teacher to make copies of to distribute to her/his students. Following your lesson the students will complete this quiz, and those who answer 20 out of 24 questions correct will be awarded with a gift certificate for a free personal pan pizza, provided by Pizza Hut. You may have the option of, instead of providing Pizza Hut certificates as

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rewards, rewarding the kids with \$5 Wal-Mart gift cards or McDonalds Happy Meal certificates. Contact us if you would prefer one of these certificates to the Pizza Hut one.

This quiz can either be an open-book quiz taken in class, a partner quiz, a take-home quiz for them to take with their parents, family and friends, or a regular quiz, all depending upon *what you and the teacher decide ahead of time*. Ask the teacher to grade the quizzes and to contact you once that has been completed with the number of students who answered 20 out of 24 correctly. Once you know that, contact Liberty Day and we will get you the number of gift certificates you need. Once you've received them, stop by and hand off the certificates to the teacher.

You'll also need to ask the teacher to have the students take a little time to write out letters to you showing what they learned. The key thing to making your lessons a success is the learning. Therefore, we need to take measurement of the learning. One way to do that is through letters from the students stating three things that they learned about the Constitution and what they thought of the experience. These can be fun, decorated letters. For instance, my sister's fifth grade class gave me decorated letters of all sorts of designs and colors, but at the same time they revealed things that the students learned. The one thing that we ask is that either you or the teacher correct the letters for spelling, grammar, and punctuation and be sure to send us letters that have been edited for those things.

## Quiz Your Parents!

In the twelve years Liberty Day has been around, we have had tremendous success with having kids take their books and question cards home and quiz their parents. Be sure to tell them to do just that to see how much their parents know.

Encourage them to discuss the Q&As with their neighbors, brother, sisters, friends, etc. This can be a fun exercise for the kids—it's so empowering and enjoyable for them when they feel like they know more than their parents. It's the whole concept behind *Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?* And it's worked well for Liberty Day for years.

## Conclusion

As you go into the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes, you will undoubtedly have a wonderful experience. The key is to come up with a good, interactive lesson plan. Be sure to form a cordial partnership with the teacher, and make it something that the kids can enjoy while learning something at the same time. Feel free to contact Liberty Day if you have any questions. Good luck, and have a great time!