

AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?

AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes
Theme: American History, Biography
Grade Level: Grade 3-6
Running Time: 30 minutes

Jean Fritz gives us an inside look not only into the details of Paul Revere's famous ride into Lexington, but into the very nature of Paul Revere himself.

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce children to an important episode in American history.
- To familiarize children with the personality and efforts of a famous American, Paul Revere.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about what life was like in America in the 1700s. Have children try to imagine what life might be like without cars to travel in or machines to do much of the work that they do today. Then ask:

- What would you have enjoyed about life without many of our modern conveniences?
- What would be the hardest thing about living during this time?

Share the book *AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?* with children. Then ask:

- How would you describe Paul Revere?

- Do you think he was a good choice for the ride to Lexington? Why or why not?
- What kinds of dangers did Paul Revere face?
- What measures did Paul Revere take to protect himself?
- If you were Paul Revere, how would you have gone about warning people that the British were coming?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Have children chart Paul Revere's rides on a U.S. map. Discuss the distances Paul Revere had to travel in order to warn people about the British. Ask:

- What kinds of obstacles do you think Paul Revere was faced with during his rides?
- How do you think you would have felt riding those distances?

Show children pictures of Boston in the 1700s and pictures of the city as it looks today. Talk about the different styles of dress, modes of transportation, look of the landscape, types of homes, etc. Then ask:

- How have things changed?
- What things have remained the same?
- Would you have preferred living in the city of Boston in the 1700s or now? Why?

Open a silversmith business right in your classroom! Have children use play clay and other arts and crafts supplies to make jewelry, false teeth, teapots, silver spoons, etc. Have other classes come in to see the silversmiths at work.

Encourage children to describe the things they are making and the techniques they are using to make them to their visitors.

Other videos and films about American History available from Weston Woods include:

JUST A FEW WORDS, MR. LINCOLN THE STORY OF THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Charles Robinson
SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Tomie dePaola
GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOTHER

by Jean Fritz, ill. by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, BEN FRANKLIN?

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes
**WHO'S THAT STEPPING ON PLYMOUTH
ROCK?**

by Jean Fritz, ill. by J.B. Handelsman
THE PILGRIMS OF PLIMOTH by Marcia Sewall

**WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING,
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS?**

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

JUST A FEW WORDS, MR. LINCOLN

JUST A FEW WORDS, MR. LINCOLN

The Story of the Gettysburg Address

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Charles Robinson (Grosset & Dunlap)

Themes: American History/Presidents

Grade Level: 2 – 5

Running Time: 18 minutes

SUMMARY

This is the story of the events preceding, and the actual delivery of, President Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address.

Children will be introduced to the Civil War, the resulting battles, and President Lincoln's resolve to unify the country. The inclusion of the events surrounding Lincoln's son Tad's illness and recovery during this time help to pull young children into the story and make the emotion behind the burden of the presidency more real for them.

The actual Gettysburg Address is printed at the end of the story. Children will come to understand that few words, if carefully chosen, are all that are necessary to communicate important, powerful ideas.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will be introduced to the Civil War
- Children will learn about President Lincoln
- Children will become familiar with the Gettysburg Address

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book *JUST A FEW WORDS, MR. LINCOLN* with children. Then ask:

- What did you learn about the cause of the Civil War at the beginning of the story?
- What happened in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania?

- Why was it decided to build a special cemetery in Gettysburg?
- What did President Lincoln want to tell the people at Gettysburg?
- Why do you think the Gettysburg Address became such a famous speech?

Locate Gettysburg on a map. Then research other famous battles of the Civil War and help children find their locations on the map. As children research these sites, discuss what life may have been like if the North and South actually became two separate countries.

Share simple picture and chapter books about President Lincoln with children. Discuss Lincoln's policies, family life, and character with children. Give children an opportunity to share with their classmates those things they felt were most important about Lincoln and his presidency.

Introduce the concept of slavery to children. As you discuss this sensitive topic, have children try to imagine what life might have been like for the slaves, what they might have done to find some pleasure in life, and how they might have felt when they were finally freed.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Have children consider what kind of message they might give to their classmates that would have meaning for all of them. Children might want to write these messages in the form of a speech, or on note cards. Let children take turns delivering their "messages."

Help children compare and contrast life in the 1800s with modern day living. Share books and films and visit museums where representations of life during this time can come alive for children. Ask:

- What would you have enjoyed about life in the 1800s?

- What things would have been more difficult to do than they are today?
- How would you travel?
- What would you do for entertainment?
- What kinds of chores might you have?

Invite children to draw pictures of President Lincoln performing some of the activities he would have been engaged in as president. Encourage children to share their finished drawings with the entire class. Arrange a special "President Lincoln" display area on a classroom wall or bulletin board. Use a cutout of a large stovepipe hat as a background for the display of drawings.

Other Jean Fritz videos available from Weston Woods:

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS? By Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes

SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Tomie dePaola

WHO'S THAT STEPPING ON PLYMOUTH ROCK?

by Jean Fritz, ill. by J.B. Handelsman

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, BEN FRANKLIN?

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes

AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes

JEAN FRITZ: SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR

FIGURES by Jean Fritz

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

Six Revolutionary War Figures

SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURES

by Jean Fritz © 1993

Themes: American History, Biography

Grade Levels: 3-5

Running time: 16 minutes

SUMMARY

SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURES depicts the lively backgrounds of Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Paul Revere, Patrick Henry, and King George III and the personality traits they carried with them from early childhood into adulthood. The story outlines the events that led up to the revolution and the position each of these men took regarding the war.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about six important individuals who had important roles during the time of the Revolutionary War.
- Children will explore events leading up to the war.
- Children will investigate the personalities of important figures in American History.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the collection of books that make up the video *SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURES* with the children. (Fritz's books are biographies of Ben Franklin, Patrick Henry, Sam Adams, Paul Revere, John Hancock, and King George.)

- Which of the people described in the books was most interesting to you? Why?
- Talk with children about what America was like just prior to the Revolutionary War. Include in your discussions means of transportation, style of dress, professional occupations, schooling, etc.

Then have children draw pictures that represent how America looked at this time. Ask:

- What would you have liked most about living during this time?
- What kinds of things would be harder to do than they are now?
- What would you enjoy then that might be difficult to enjoy now?

Have children do some research on Benjamin Franklin. Then have them work in teams to share Franklin's inventions with the class. Encourage children to make models of these inventions and to use them as part of their demonstrations. Ask:

- What would life be like now if we could not benefit from Ben Franklin's discoveries?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Discuss the personality traits of each of the men described in the story. Then supply props children can use to dramatize the lives of each of these people. After the children have had an opportunity to do this, have them pretend to be the six men sitting down together to discuss the war. Before participating in this presentation, encourage children to consider the position each of the men might take and be prepared to defend their positions.

Have a special "Colonial Times" day in the classroom. Have children dress as colonists and prepare a meal that the colonists might have enjoyed. Prepare simple dances and music that may have been popular at the time. You might want to invite other classes to join you in your "Colonial Times" celebrations.

Talk with children about the Boston Tea Party.

Then have children debate whether or not this was an appropriate way to object to the tea tax. Ask:

- What would you have done to try to prevent England from taxing the colonies?
- What would your arguments to King George have been like?

Have children write their ideas as position statements and share them with the class. Be sure children sign their statement with their "John Hancocks!"

OTHER VIDEOS AND FILMS ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY AVAILABLE FROM WESTON WOODS INCLUDE:

- *And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?* by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes
- *John Henry* by Julius Lester, ill. by Jerry Pinkney
- *The Pilgrims of Plimoth* by Marcia Sewell
- *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* by Jean Fritz, ill. by Tomie dePaola
- *The Star-Spangled Banner* by Francis Scott Key, ill. by Peter Spier
- *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?* by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes
- *Where Do You Think You're Going, Christopher Columbus?* by Jean Fritz, ill. by Margot Tomes
- *Who's That Stepping on Plymouth Rock?* by Jean Fritz, ill. by J.B. Handelsman

THE PILGRIMS OF PLIMOTH

THE PILGRIMS OF PLIMOTH

by Marcia Sewell

Themes: American History, Pilgrims, Plymouth Rock

Grade Level: 3-6

Running Time: 26:00

SUMMARY

The arrival of the Pilgrims in the new world is chronicled in this dramatic re-enactment of their daily activities during the first trying years in the colony they called Plimoth. Although the journey from England to America and the process of settling in a new country was extremely difficult, the pilgrims were convinced that the peace and freedom they found made it all worthwhile.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about the reasons the pilgrims came to America.
- Children will explore the ways the first settlement in America was created.
- Children will appreciate the hardships the pilgrims experienced as they established the first community in America.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the homes they live in, the foods they enjoy, the vehicles that take them from place to place and other facets of their daily lives. Help children understand that the first settlers of America experienced life very differently. Show children pictures from books that illustrate the daily lives of the pilgrims. Then ask:

- How were the pilgrims' lives different from ours?
- How were they similar?
- What would you have liked most about being part of the first settlement in America?
- What would you have liked the least?
- What kinds of things do you think you would have been most frightened of?
- What would you look forward to?

Share the book, *The Pilgrims of Plimoth* with children. As you discuss the book and illustrations, have children pay particular attention to the details of the pilgrims' lives, including ovens and tools used for cooking, methods of punishment, ways of washing clothes, bathing routines, means of curing the sick, etc. Ask:

- How do you think the pilgrims felt about doing chores and living this way?
- What kinds of things did the pilgrims use that we still use today?
- What things are different?
- Do you think our lives are better than the pilgrims' lives? Why? Why not?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the reasons the pilgrims left England for America. Ask:

- How do you think you would feel if you and your family were not free to do as you chose, but were told what to do by a king?
- Do you think the pilgrims should have taken the risk and gone through all they had to deal with in order to go to America? Why? Why not?
- What kinds of problems do you think the pilgrims had when they went to America and there were no rules at all?
- What kinds of rules do you think it would be important for the pilgrims to make?

Talk with children about the different things the settlers did to establish a community in America. Discuss the crops the pilgrims raised, the homes they built, the preparations they made for defending themselves, etc. Then draw simple time lines on the chalkboard. Ask:

- If you were going to live somewhere that no one had ever lived before, what would you need to do first? Second? Third?

Have each child print his/her responses on the time lines in the appropriate order. Later, have children share and compare their time lines with one another, explaining why they

ordered things the way they did.

Supply children with props that can be used to dramatize the pilgrim's journey to and settlement of America. Encourage children to include in their dramatization many of the hardships that the pilgrims faced as they began their settlement. If possible have children perform their dramatizations of the pilgrims' experience for other classes. Provide time during or after the performance for questions from children in the audience. Have children ask questions of the performers such as:

- What do you do for fun at night?
- What are your beds made of?
- What happens when a storm comes along and ruins your crops?

Supply pieces of cardboard, pipe cleaners, aluminum foil, feathers and other art supplies that children can use to create their own imaginative tools that might have been useful to the pilgrims. Have the children describe their creations, and their functions, to others in the group. Display tools where classroom visitors can see and appreciate them.

OTHER VIDEOS AND FILMS ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY FROM WESTON WOODS INCLUDE:

- AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?** by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Margot Tomes
- JEAN FRITZ: SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURES** by Jean Fritz
- JOHN HENRY** by Julius Lester, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney
- SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION** by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Tomie dePaola
- THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER** by Francis Scott Key, illustrated by Peter Spier
- WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, BEN FRANKLIN?** by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Margot Tomes
- WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS?** by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Margot Tomes
- WHO'S THAT STEPPING ON PLYMOUTH ROCK?** by Jean Fritz, illustrated by J.B. Handelsman

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS?

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS?

Book by Jean Fritz, illus. by Margot Tomes.
Themes: American History/Biography
Grade Levels: 3 - 6
Running Time: 35 minutes, Iconographic

SUMMARY

Where Do You Think You're Going, Christopher Columbus? is the story of Columbus's journey from Spain to find a route to the "Indies". Determined to find a route to Japan, Columbus's voyage took him to San Salvador and on to Cuba and Haiti. Convinced that he had discovered Japan, Columbus returned to Spain to be received by Queen Isabella.

The story outlines Columbus's trip with the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria and at the close, mentions other explorers, including Balboa and Magellan, whose travels led to the discovery that a new world existed between Europe and Asia.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about Christopher Columbus.
- Children will investigate the route taken by Columbus to find Japan.
- Children will explore the routes taken by explorers to try to discover new worlds apart from Europe.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book *Where Do You Think You're Going, Christopher Columbus?* with children. Then ask:

- Why do you think Columbus was so determined to find a route to Japan?

Have children investigate what life might have been like in Italy in 1451, the year Columbus was born. Talk with children about the kinds of homes people lived in, the foods they ate, how they traveled from place to place. Then have children dramatize life during this time. Allow children to paint a backdrop to use during their dramatizations.

Have children think about what it might have been like for early explorers to venture out into the wide, open oceans not knowing what lay beyond. Then have children pretend that they are one of these voyagers and write a journal of an adventure crossing the sea. Later, have children share their journals with one another.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Have children trace the route Columbus followed from Spain to San Salvador, Cuba and Haiti on a globe. Ask:

- What route would Columbus need to take to arrive in Japan?
- What countries would he find along the way?
- What would be the most direct route back to Spain from Japan?

Have children trace the route Magellan's crew followed taking a westerly direction around the world. Ask:

- What might be the first country Magellan's crew found after crossing the Atlantic Ocean?
- What bodies of water would they need to cross to get to Japan?
- What countries would they see before returning to Spain?

Ask children to imagine what America might have looked like before it was settled. Have children create illustrations, accompanied by

short descriptions of what an explorer would discover upon setting foot in the United States. Display children's drawings and have them describe their settings to one another.

OTHER VIDEOS AND FILMS ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY AVAILABLE FROM WESTON WOODS INCLUDE:

- **AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Margot Tomes
- **JEAN FRITZ: SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURES**
by Jean Fritz
- **JOHN HENRY**
by Julius Lester, illus. by Jerry Pinkney
- **THE PILGRIMS OF PLIMOTH**
by Marcia Sewall
- **SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Tomie dePaola
- **THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER**
by Francis Scott Key, illus. by Peter Spier
- **WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, BEN FRANKLIN?**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Margot Tomes
- **WHO'S THAT STEPPING ON PLYMOUTH ROCK?**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by J.B. Handelsman

WHO'S THAT STEPPING ON PLYMOUTH ROCK?

WHO'S THAT STEPPING ON PLYMOUTH ROCK?

Book by Jean Fritz, illus. by J.B. Handelsman
Themes: Pilgrims/Plymouth Rock/American History
Grade Level: 3 - 6
Running Time: 23 minutes

SUMMARY

Plymouth Rock is the most solid piece of history the United States has. Jean Fritz explores, with wit and wisdom, whether or not the First Comers or Pilgrims stepped on it or not when they landed in Plymouth Harbor.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about the significance of Plymouth Rock
- Children will understand something about the beginnings of our country
- Children will appreciate the importance of caring for our country's landmarks

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Talk with children about the Pilgrims' journey on the Mayflower. Provide books and other reference materials children can use to make clear the bravery and courage involved in making such a journey and the delicious sense of freedom the Pilgrims discovered when they arrived here. Encourage children to think about how they might have felt, and the things they might have experienced if they were travelers on these ships.

Encourage children to describe any of our country's landmarks that they may have seen. **Ask:** Where did you see these landmarks? What did you learn about these landmarks? How did it make you feel to look at these important symbols? Give children the opportunity to draw their own symbols that

represent something important about our country. Have children share their symbols, and then describe the significance of the symbols, to others in the group.

Share the book *"Who's That Stepping On Plymouth Rock?"* with children. **Then ask:**

- How do you think you would have felt about Plymouth Rock if you were one of the first settlers in our country?
- What would you have done to protect the rock?
- What do you think life might have been like in Massachusetts when the settlers first came? What things would be similar to the way we live today? What things would have been different?
- How do you think people feel when they visit Plymouth Rock today? How do you think you would feel?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Remind children of the different things that were included in celebrations during the 1600s (eating wholeberry pudding, marching, cannon fire, etc.) Have children describe the different kinds of celebrations we enjoy today and the many and varied elements of those celebrations. Encourage children to consider our Fourth of July celebrations and **ask:** How might they be different from the celebrations of the 1600s? What parts of our celebrations might be similar?

Divide the class into two groups. Have them engage in a mock debate regarding whether or not Plymouth Rock should be valued as a landmark, as the rock the Pilgrims used as a guidepost when steering their ships to American shores, or looked upon as just another rock. Encourage children to be as convincing as they can be in

stating their positions.

Have children recall how the rock appeared not to be movable in the beginning of the story and how the people of Plymouth solved the problem by building the wharf around the rock. Then offer children other problematic situations which they can work together to solve. For example, **say:** "Imagine that a whale has been washed ashore and cannot be moved back to sea. What can be done to preserve the whale?" Encourage children to be as imaginative and thoughtful as possible in working out solutions to this problem.

OTHER VIDEOS AND FILMS ABOUT U.S.HISTORY INCLUDE:

- **AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, PAUL REVERE?**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Margot Tomes
- **JEAN FRITZ: SIX REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURES**
by Jean Fritz
- **JOHN HENRY**
by Julius Lester, illus. by Jerry Pinkney
- **THE PILGRIMS OF PLYMOUTH**
by Marcia Sewall
- **SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Tomie dePaola
- **THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER**
by Francis Scott Key, illus. by Peter Spier
- **WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, BEN FRANKLIN?**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Margot Tomes
- **WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS?**
by Jean Fritz, illus. by Margot Tomes

THE SCRAMBLED STATES OF AMERICA

THE SCRAMBLED STATES OF AMERICA

by Laurie Keller (Henry Holt)

Themes: Geography/Humor

Grade Level: 2 – 5

Running Time: 15 minutes

SUMMARY

What would happen if the entire configuration of the United States was turned upside down and inside out? *The Scrambled States of America* explores this concept with humor, unpredictability, and countless surprises throughout. Children will become acquainted with the "personalities" of individual states, learning their locations relative to other states in the process.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn to identify U.S. states
- Children will learn about the locations of the states
- Children will explore the characteristics of the various regions of the U.S.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book *The Scrambled States of America* with children. Then ask:

- Where is the state we live in on the U. S. map?
- What states surround our state?
- What might the weather in our state be like if we moved north? South?
- If you could choose another state to live in , which state would it be? Why?

Show children a large U. S. map. Point out their

home state. Encourage children to point out and talk about other states on the map that they may have visited. Have children describe the special characteristics of those states, including climate, geography, special places of interest, etc.

Supply U. S. map puzzles that children can put together to help them become acquainted with the states, their shapes, and their locations. As children work, encourage them to discuss the unique shapes and sizes of the states. As children work, share information about special features of each state.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Plan a field trip to a local travel agency with children. Encourage them to ask questions of the travel agent about states they are particularly interested in. Examine brochures of the different states, pointing out parks and landmarks that help to identify the states. While discussing the different states, compare their climates, landscapes, vegetation, etc.

Hang a large U.S. map on a classroom wall or bulletin board. Each week, allow a different child to pretend to take a trip to one of the states on the map. Share information about that particular state with children. Throughout the week, encourage children to use the school's resources (library, book area, other teachers/students) to learn more about that particular state and share the information with the class.

Play "Guess What State I Am." Have children take turns identifying special characteristics of a state of their choice. See if other children in the group can identify the state being described. If children have difficulty identifying the states, helpful clues can be given, including identifying the initial letter of the state's name, naming the region of the U.S. the state can be found in, identifying where the state is in relation to children's home state.

After learning about the special features, including unique traditions, occupations, and life styles of the people of the various states, bring props to the classroom. Have children identify where these props might be used. For example, you might bring in a cowboy hat that children can connect to a western state, a surf board that children can relate to the state of California, a souvenir from Walt Disney World that children can identify with the state of Florida.

Other videos about the United States available from Weston Woods include:

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND by Woody Guthrie, ill. by Kathy Jakobsen

THE PILGRIMS OF PLIMOTH by Marcia Sewall

SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION by Jean Fritz, ill. by Tomie dePaola

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER by Francis Scott Key, ill. by Peter Spier

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

SHHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION

Shhh! We're Writing the Constitution
by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Tomie DePaola
(Putnam)

Themes: American History

Grade Level: Grades 4-7

Running Time: 31 minutes, iconographic

Summary

Shhh! We're Writing the Constitution is the story of how our Constitution was created. In 1786 delegates were sent to Philadelphia to try and create an ordered system of government. A system was developed based on the Virginia plan's three branches of government.

The story outlines the personalities of people including George Washington, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin who were instrumental in creating this important document. The story also tells why people were opposed to the formation of a "national" government and the necessity for a "Bill of Rights" outlining the freedoms of the nation's people.

Objectives

- Children will learn the need for a Constitution
- Children will explore the creation of the Constitution
- Children will learn about important individuals whose aims were to develop an ordered system of government.

Before Viewing Activities

Share the book Shh! We're Writing the Constitution with children.

Then ask:

Why did the thirteen states need a Constitution?
Why do you think so many people were opposed to the word "national"?

Talk about the the main branches of government and the responsibilities of each. Then have children create a poster, drawing symbols for each branch and briefly outlining the workings of each branch.

Discuss what life in our country might be like without a set of rules or guidelines to follow. Ask: What problems might arise without rules? What could people do to maintain order? Suggest several hypothetical situations where the freedoms of two groups of people cause conflict. Have children divide into two teams, each representing a different side of the conflict so that each team feels satisfied.

After Viewing Activities

Have children use the school library to research the Bill of Rights. Then have children think about a classroom Bill of Rights. Ask: What kinds of freedoms do you think everyone in our classroom should have? What kind of freedoms might get in the way of learning and getting along? Provide markers and posterboard and have children work together to write a classroom Bill of Rights. As children work, emphasize the ways people work together to derive a consensus on various issues. Post the "Bill of Rights" on a classroom wall.

Have children divide into two groups. One group will pretend to be federalists, the other anti-federalists. Encourage each group to give arguments as to why they are in agreement, or opposed to the ratification of the Constitution.

Ask children to research the ten most recent Presidents of the United States. Then have children share the information they collected about the Presidents. As children discuss these men and their presidencies, include in the discussion: impeachment, one term vs. two term presidencies and political philosophies. Finally, have children decide who they find to have been the most effective president and the reasons for their choices.

Other book based films and video about American culture are available from Weston Woods. These include:

THE PILGRIMS OF PLIMOTH by Marcia Sewall
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING,
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS? written by Jean Fritz and illustrated by Margot Tomes
THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER written by Francis Scott Key and illustrated by Peter Spier
YANKEE DOODLE written by Edward Bangs and illustrated by Steven Kellogg

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

