



Lesson 6.4 “Constitutional Compromise”

Unit 6: Establishing Government

Lesson Objectives

- Students will interpret statements about the Great Compromise and changes to the N.H. Constitution.
- Students will examine 18th-century documents and maps to understand why New Hampshire’s western towns did not feel represented by the state’s constitution.
- Students will describe how compromise is an essential part of making government work for all citizens.

Lesson Competencies

- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can analyze, use, and construct maps and other geographic representations to explain relationships between people and the environment. (Moose SS)
- I can describe how citizens can participate in the government. (Moose SS)

Essential Questions

How did New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

What is a constitution?
Why is compromise necessary for effective government?

Estimated Time

Two or three 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

Chart paper or white board
Tape and printer paper for labels
Prepared set of “Great Compromise Cards”
Mind-map template for projection
“Map of New Hampshire, 1799” for printing and projection
“Proclamation of Rebellion, 1782” for printing and projection
Class set of “Investigate a Rebellion: Town Viewpoint” worksheet
Class set of “Investigate a Rebellion: State Viewpoint” worksheet
Class set of “Matching Concerns and Compromises” worksheet



Educator Introduction & Rationale

In the 1780s, during and after the Revolutionary War, all 13 states ratified constitutions and established working democratic governments. But Americans recognized that they also required some kind of national government for issues where the states needed to act together. During the summer of 1787, 55 representatives from 12 of the 13 states (Rhode Island did not attend) drafted a new constitution for the new country. The process of writing constitutions was neither speedy nor smooth. Drafts and discussions throughout the summer resulted in compromises that found the middle ground where the needs of states and constituents met. Reference the [Educator Overview](#) for more information.

This lesson is the fourth in Unit 6: Establishing Government. Achievement of the learning objectives in Lesson 6.1: "Our Constitutions" and Lesson 6.2: "Foundational Principles" will provide students with the necessary background information about the creation of state and federal constitutions and are recommended before engaging with the activities in this lesson. The first part of this lesson focuses on compromise in the United States Constitution and the second focuses on compromises that led to the 1783 version of New Hampshire's constitution. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of this document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Why is compromise essential for a healthy democracy? How did compromise make our federal and state constitutions possible? In the first part of the lesson, students focus on the federal level. A whole-group mind map exercise organizes prior knowledge about compromise and generates ideas about compromise in government. A kinesthetic learning activity helps students experience the points of view that led to the Connecticut Compromise, also known as the Great Compromise, which determined how states would be represented in Congress. Students simulate the imbalance of a seesaw as they listen and move in response to statements about the different perspectives that led to that compromise. In the second part of the lesson, students use maps and geographical thinking to understand why, in the 1780s, towns in the western part of New Hampshire wanted to secede from the state and what changes to the state constitution encouraged them to remain. The inquiry into primary and secondary sources in this section may require more time; a recommendation for where to break this second part in half is noted in the Learning Activity.

A reinforcement activity is recommended for students who need more time with the concept of compromise. Two extension activities are recommended for students ready to think about more complicated historical compromises: the movement of New Hampshire's capital from the seacoast to Concord and the "Three-Fifths Compromise," which determined how enslaved people would be counted as part of the national population. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom.

Learning Activity

Activation

Constitution fast facts. How quickly can students come up with five things they know about the U.S. Constitution? Work as a whole group and record their ideas on a white board or chart paper. Or, challenge students to generate their own lists. Compare their ideas, game show-style, to facts revealed one-by-one on a master list. Facts could include but are not limited to:

- It is a document.
- It was handwritten on parchment, a type of paper.
- It was completed in 1787 by representatives of most of the states.
- It explains how the government of the United States is organized.
- It begins with the preamble.
- It has seven articles.
- It has amendments.
- It is a social contract between the people and the government for the rule of law.
- It supports the ideas of limited government and representative democracy.
- It is written for the common good.

Teaching tip: This warm-up activity could also center on constitutions in general.

Direct Instruction

Mind mapping compromise and the U.S. Constitution.

Prepare for this by drawing the start of a mind map on a surface the whole group can see (e.g., chart paper, white board, digital board); a template is provided.

Remind students that the writers of our Constitution had to think about all the aspects of how our government would work. Will the government have a president? When will elections be held? Who will be able to hold office? How many representatives should be in the legislature? How many from each state? There were so many details to consider. Ask students if they think drafting constitutions was difficult or easy with representatives from the states. What would make it easy? What would make it difficult?

Discuss that there were a lot of different ideas about how the government should work and that it was difficult to come up with solutions that made all the states happy. Explain that the process of coming to a solution that works for everyone is called **compromise**. It may mean that someone has to accept or give up things that they want in order for an agreement to be reached.

Write “compromise” in the center of the mind map. Add to the mind map using these guiding questions to generate student ideas:

- When have you had to make a compromise?
- What does it look like? What does it sound like to compromise?
- What does it feel like to compromise?
- Why would compromise be necessary when writing a document like a constitution?
- What would happen in government if leaders could not come to a compromise?

Create a whole group mind map about student understanding of the word. As you add ideas to the mind map, connect and create branches as necessary.

Teaching tip: If students need more help with understanding compromise, proceed with the playground equipment simulation described in Reinforcement before moving on.

Guided Practice **Great Compromise.** Tell students that writing the U.S. Constitution involved so many compromises that at times the representatives did not think they would succeed. One of the biggest and most difficult compromises was called the Great Compromise or the Connecticut Compromise. Help students understand the background by directing students to read “The Great Compromise” in the student content for Unit 6: Establishing Government. Use one of the suggested activities for reading student content to support comprehension.

Guided Practice **Great Compromise seesaw.** Tell students that they will now act out the Great Compromise to understand how our Founding Fathers came together to create the government. Prepare for this activity by drawing a line across a white board or putting tape along the ground. Label one end “Small States,” label the other end “Large States,” and label the center “All States.” Cut the “Great Compromise Cards” and organize so they can be read in order.

Read the statements from the prepared set of “Great Compromise Cards.” After reading a statement, ask the students which group it helps more: small states or large states? Depending on the group the card benefits, the students move as a group to that end of the line. The final card should bring everyone evenly back to the middle.

Teaching tip: If space does not allow for the full kinesthetic learning experience, consider preparing sets of “Great Compromise Cards” for small groups or individuals to use. Provide them with yard sticks or lengths of rope along which to place the cards according to who the statements benefit. Alternatively, use chalk on the ground outside to enable the whole class to participate together.

Discussion **What made it work?** Focus on the final card, which describes the compromise that solved the question of representation. How does that meet the needs and wants of both the big states and the small states?

Possible outcome: Students should recognize that having one house's representation based on population and one house's based on equal representation met the needs of both sides of the argument. Bills would need to be passed by both the House and Senate in order to become law.

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause if you will divide the lesson between two teaching sessions.

Direct Instruction

A New Hampshire rebellion. Project or distribute copies of "Map of New Hampshire, 1799." Explain that this map shows the mountains, waterways, towns, cities and borders as they were known in the 18th century. Allow a few minutes for students to examine the map and share their own observations about it. Challenge them to find their own town. It's possible its name was different in 1799!

As a whole group, locate the seacoast and the city of Portsmouth. Explain that in the very early days of New Hampshire being a state, the government was centered in these locations. Portsmouth had been the colonial capital. After 1776, government activity moved to the town of Exeter. Why do students think the government was located near the coast?

Note with students that the capital was located as close to the coast as possible because that was the area where English colonists lived first. Easy access to shipping made the coast a center of early industry and government. This was true of all colonial capitals.

Guide students to observe that the seacoast region, while heavily populated, was a very small section of New Hampshire. Circle what is considered to be the seacoast area, encompassing the New Hampshire seacoast until as far west as Kingston or Epping and as far north as Dover.

Draw students' attention to the New Hampshire towns that border the Connecticut River. Tell students that in 1777, the area we know as Vermont was still part of the state of New York. But in July 1777, Vermont declared itself independent of New York. Over the next five years, 38 New Hampshire towns along the Connecticut River tried many times to join this new independent area. Mark these towns included in the group that tried to leave the state on the map:

- Claremont
- Charlestown
- Hanover
- Lime (Lyme)
- Bath
- Morristown (Franconia)
- Westmoreland
- Walpole
- Plainfield
- Marlow

This was not good news to the state government back in Exeter. In fact, in 1782 the towns were declared to be in rebellion against the New Hampshire government. Remind students that at this point, the new United States was at war with Britain and trying to gain their independence. It was not a good time to have unrest within the state.

Discussion

Rebellion proclaimed! Project the document “Proclamation of Rebellion, 1782.” Give students a few moments to look at the document and share what they notice about it. Encourage observations without pressuring for meaning at first. Then, explain that this was the official statement made by New Hampshire’s government explaining why it thought the towns along the Connecticut River were in rebellion against the state government. Focus on just the first paragraph. Use the edited transcript to read it to students. Note that the original wording is also provided.

As a whole group, think about the two different sources: the map and the proclamation. How does their information help answer these questions?

- Why did the western towns want to be part of Vermont?
- Why did the state government think the western towns were rebelling?

Give students time to think about these questions in a “turn and talk” break or with a small group and then report back to the whole group.

Possible outcomes:

- Map: The western towns were geographically closer to Vermont and far from the seacoast. They likely had more contact, and more in common in terms of how they lived, with their neighbors across the Connecticut River than they did with their fellow New Hampshireites on the seacoast.
- Document: On the other hand, the state government felt the towns had agreed to be part of New Hampshire and its effort to fight for independence from the British. The towns had stopped paying taxes and so were not doing their part to contribute to the war effort.

Guided Practice

Choose a viewpoint. Explain to students that they will use one of two sources to investigate the western towns’ “rebellion.” One is an excerpt from the primary source “Proclamation of Rebellion, 1782.” The other is an excerpt from a secondary source, written by historian R. Stuart Wallace. Assign a viewpoint sheet to students or allow them to choose which viewpoint they wish to investigate. Support students as they read the text and answer the questions in small groups. As a class, review the answers and share the persuasive statements written by the students.

Independent Practice & Discussion

Compromise keeps the state whole. Tell students that, ultimately, the towns stayed part of New Hampshire because they were able to voice their concerns about how the state was governed. Their concerns led to some significant compromises that changed the state constitution in 1783.

Provide students with “Matching Concerns and Compromises.” When students have completed the activity, proceed to the whole group activities that follow.

Ranking compromise. Ask students to rank the concerns and compromises in order of what they think is most important. Generate a whole group discussion about those rankings.

Ask students if they think some of those compromises have been updated in the present-day constitution. Examples of updates are on the activity's answer key.

Reflection

Why compromise? Remind students that they have learned about two situations in our history, one at the federal level and one at the state level, when compromise was absolutely essential for our democracy to work and grow. Ask them to write a brief response to this question: Why is compromise so important for our democracy? Consider posting their responses in a classroom display.

Reinforcement

1. **Playground compromise.** Ask students to imagine they get to design some new playground equipment. The new equipment can be anything they can want but can only include three new features, such as a slide, a tunnel, and a climbing web. Divide students into groups of at least five to decide what the three new features should be. After a few minutes of discussion, ask the students to share what their groups decided upon for the three features. After the students share their choices, conduct a brief discussion about the process of coming to their list of three features. Guiding questions may include:
 - Did everyone in the group get everything they wanted?
 - Were some features not included in the final list? Why?
 - How did they decide upon the final three?
 - What influenced their own thinking about what features they wanted?

Possible outcomes:

- Students should recognize that not everyone's ideas ended up on the final list.
- They likely needed to think about a number of factors, for example:
 - the age of children who use the playground,
 - the kind of equipment already in place,
 - the kind of equipment students would be able to use the most,
 - and the kind of equipment that could be used by the most students during a recess period.
- Students should reflect on the process compromise in the process.

Extension

1. **Capital compromise.** Distribute black and white copies of "Map of New Hampshire, 1799" and give students the "Capital Compromise" worksheet to examine the compromises made about the site of the capital.
2. **Complicated compromise.** There were other major compromises that had to be made in order for the Constitution to be ratified. In 1787, slavery was still legal in the United States. The southern states wanted enslaved people to be counted toward their population so that they could have more representatives at the federal level. Northern states, which did not rely on enslaved people's labor like the southern states did, thought it was unfair to count enslaved people and not provide them with the freedoms the Constitution granted to others living in the United States. The states compromised by counting three out of every five enslaved people toward a state's population. Did this compromise work for everyone involved? Use the "Tug of War" Thinking Routine from Project Zero to explore this critical issue in our history.

Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

1. "Map of New Hampshire, 1799"
2. "Proclamation of Rebellion, 1782"

Other Resources

- *Project Zero Thinking Routines: Tug of War*
pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Tug%20of%20War_0.pdf
Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox is an excellent resource for all teachers. We highly recommend looking through all the thinking routines available at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.
- D. Miles, S. Miles, and A. Pinilla, *The Interactive Constitution* (Bushel and Peck, 2019.)
- R. Stuart Wallace, "New Hampshire History in Brief," New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources,
www.nh.gov/nhdhr/markers/brief.html
- For more on the western towns' rebellion including a complete list of towns that seceded, see *The Rebellion in Western New Hampshire and the Proposed Union with Vermont, 1776-1784* by Jere Daniell at www.flowofhistory.org/the-rebellion-in-western-new-hampshire-and-the-lt-proposed-union-with-vermont-1776-1784/

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that after the revolution, the United States of America established a federal government; colonies established state governments. They will understand that the New Hampshire State Constitution established the basic structure of government for the state and created laws to protect the people and interests of the state. (3-5.T3.2)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.2)
- ✓ Comprehensive Geographic Reasoning (3-5.S4.1)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: The Nature and Purpose of Government (SS:CV:4:1.2)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:4:2:2)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Rights and Responsibilities (SS:CV:4:4.1)
- ✓ US/NH History: Political Foundations and Development (SS:HI:4:1.1)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.3.3-5, D2.Civ.4.3-5, D2.Civ.5.3-5)
- ✓ Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements (D2.Geo.7.3-5)
- ✓ Perspectives (D2.His.4.3-5)
- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.10.3-5)
- ✓ Causation and Argument (D2.His.14.3-5)

Common Core ELA Grade 3:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.3.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.3.6)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.3.10)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.3.1, SL.3.1c, SL.3.1d)
- ✓ Conventions of Standard English (L.3.2, L.3.2a, L.3.2d)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.3.6)

Common Core ELA Grade 4:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.4.3)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.4.10)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.4.1c, SL.4.1d)

Common Core ELA Grade 5:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.5.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.5.6)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.5.10)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.5.1c, SL.5.1d)

Lesson Vocabulary

amend	(verb) To revise or change
amendment	(noun) An addition to an existing document; in the U.S. Constitution, the amendments come after the original document
bicameral	(noun) A legislature that has two parts; the U.S. Congress is bicameral because it has the House of Representatives and the Senate
bill of rights	(noun) A document that contains a list of freedoms to protect; in the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments
branch of government	(noun) A section of government with its own purpose; the U.S. government has three sections of the government with different responsibilities that support each other to create, examine, and enforce laws
compromise	(verb) The process of coming to a solution that works for everyone
constitution	(noun) A document laying out the rules for how a government will work
executive	(adjective) Describing the person or branch of government who puts plans and laws into effect
federal	(adjective) The central government of a group of states; the U.S. federal government is in Washington, D.C.
government	(noun) A group of people that have the power to make and carry out laws for a community
judicial	(adjective) Describing the people or branch of government that decides if laws are fair
legislative	(adjective) Describing the people or branch of government that makes laws
proportional representation	(noun) Representation in government based on the population; a larger population has more representation than a small population
representative democracy	(noun) When a group of people select someone to communicate their views and make laws for them
ratify	(verb) To make legal by signing or giving permission
secede	(verb) To separate from a political organization, like from a state or country