

THE GREAT COMPROMISE

Learning Objectives: Students will:

1. Gain understanding of the problems faced by the writers of the Constitution as they created a new government
2. Analyze the dilemma of representation in the new government
3. Apply their understanding of representation and compromise to contemporary settings.

TEKS: SS 3.17C, 19B, 4.21A&B, 23B, 5.3A&B, 24B, 26B; LA 3 – Figure 19F, 4- Figure 19F, 5.11E, Figure 19F

Materials Needed: Attachment 1, The Field Trip Game, web or print resources on the Great Compromise

Vocabulary: compromise, government, representation

Teaching Strategy:

1. Introduce the lesson by playing The Field Trip Game, Attachment 1. In this game students participate in reaching a compromise through representation.
2. Ask the follow-up questions about how “representation” works.
3. Remind students that our government is based on representation and tell them who their representative is to the US Senate and House of Representatives. Inform students of how and why their representative might be contacted by the general public.
4. Ask students how they selected the representative in their group for the Field Trip Game. Tell students that in the writing of the Constitution, the founders had to compromise before an agreement could be reached regarding how our government was going to be organized and how representatives would be elected.
5. Divide the class into three groups. Each group will examine one of the suggestions for representation suggested in the Constitutional Convention.
 - a. Group 1 will research the New Jersey Plan suggested by William Paterson
 - b. Group 2 will research the Virginia Plan suggested by James Madison
 - c. Group 3 will research the Connecticut Plan suggested by Roger Sherman

6. Each group will discover
 - a. How representation was to be organized
 - b. What groups or states agreed the most with this plan and why
7. Possible sources for research include:
 - a. www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/constitution.htm
 - b. www.congressforkids.net
 - c. www.mrnussbaum.com/history/conc.htm
8. Each group will become the expert on their topic and teach about the plan they researched to the rest of the class.
9. Compare the different plans and ask the class to analyze why the Connecticut Plan is called the Great Compromise, even though it passed by only one vote.

Follow-up Activity

10. Read *The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1984) to the class. Ask students to discuss what the battle is about and what they think might happen next.
11. Discuss what possible compromises the Zooks and the Yooks might reach and vote on the best one.
12. Relate the importance of compromise by discussing other compromises students might have experienced at home or at school regarding food, clothes, or activities.
13. Students will illustrate a conflict in cartoon form showing two different outcomes. One will show solving the conflict through compromise, and the other will show a very different ending without compromise.

G/T Extension:

Students will find out more about some of the signers of the Constitution, especially the creators of the different positions on representation, James Madison, William Paterson, and Roger Sherman.

The Field Trip Game



1. Announce to the class that they need to make a decision about where to go on a field trip.
2. Organize the class into several groups, either randomly or by seating arrangements. Each group will select a representative to speak for them.
3. Each group will discuss and then make a recommendation as to where the class should go on a field trip. Possibilities might include the zoo, a museum, a playground, etc.
4. All of the representatives will meet together to discuss the various possibilities presented by the different groups. A composite list should be compiled, eliminating some, combining others.
5. Each representative will return to their original group to discuss the list and reassess the group's recommendation. Some may change with mind, while others will remain with the same suggestion.
6. Representatives will again convene to vote on a final recommendation to be made to the teacher.

Follow-up Questions:

1. How did it feel to represent someone else's feelings/wants?
2. What would happen if you did not agree with what most of your group wanted? Would you feel as if you had to defer to their suggestion or would you express your own?
3. What would happen if you did not represent your group's viewpoint?