

Unit 1: Inquiry Guide Activity

Strategy: Explain

Students apply their knowledge to real-world conversations to explain and solidify thinking and new understandings with academic language in the form of a structured academic controversy, a Paideia Socratic Seminar, or other deliberation.

Description

In this lesson, students will participate in a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace, facilitated with open-ended questions. The main purpose of this seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values of ourselves and each other.

Utilize this Explain strategy activity in order to enhance students' understanding of the *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* textbook for Level 3, Unit 1, Lesson 5 or Level 2, Unit 1, Lesson 1.

Alignments

Center for Civic Education

We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution (Level 3)

- [Unit 1, Lesson 5](#): What Basic Ideas about Rights and Constitutional Government Did Colonial Americans Hold?

We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution (Level 2)

- [Unit 1, Lesson 1](#): What Were the British Colonies in America Like during the 1770s?

Civic Skills & Dispositions

- Attentiveness to political matters
- Listening
- Primary-source analysis
- Reading
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Speaking

Lesson Objectives

- Discuss the roots of democracy found in the Great Law of Peace
- Participate in a Paideia Seminar to gain a fuller understanding of the Great Law of Peace and its influence on the Founders

Lesson Assessments

- [Paideia Seminar Civil Dialogue Organizer](#)



Inquiry Compelling Question

- Did the colonists really bring democracy to the Americas?

Texts / Materials

- Unit 1 Explain: Paideia Seminar Plan
- Paideia Seminar Civil Dialogue Organizer
- Unit 1 Explain: Close Reading Guide
- Unit 1 Explain: Close Reading Discussion Questions
- Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace
- *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* textbook

Vocabulary

- **confederate** Related to a political union
- **disposition** An individual's qualities and character
- **obstinacy** Stubbornness
- **variance** Of disagreement or inconsistent with
- **manifest** Made clear
- **welfare** Well-being
- **erring** Causing the problem
- **contumacious** Disobedient
- **divest** Take away
- **deposed** Removed from office
- **sanction** Give official approval
- **contrary** Opposite
- **clans** Families
- **vested** Assigned to
- **irrespective** No matter what
- **progenitors** Family line from which the people originate



Teacher Background

The Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace is one of the oldest living constitutions. In the tradition of the Haudenosaunee people, the Great Law of Peace was shared orally, not in writing, and the exact date of its origin is unknown. Most scholars acknowledge 1451 as its inception date; this is 336 years before the drafting of the U.S. Constitution. Oral tradition tells of a Mohawk visionary named Dekanawida, who convinced the nations to unite to establish peace and protect life, liberty, and property.

Also known as the Iroquois Confederacy Constitution, this system still governs the Haudenosaunee people today. Through this constitution, all members of the Haudenosaunee have an equal voice in the nation's affairs. The Great Law of Peace also outlines a system of checks and balances, guarantees political and religious freedom, and relies on consensus for decision-making.

Prior to colonization, the Haudenosaunee called the lands from present-day Canada in the north to the present-day Ohio Valley in the west and as far south as present-day North Carolina home. After the arrival of the Europeans, a majority of the Haudenosaunee people were concentrated in present-day New York. The Haudenosaunee Grand Council is the oldest governmental institution still maintaining its original form in North America.

The Founders saw important principles in the Great Law of Peace. Many scholars believe that Benjamin Franklin favored facets of the Great Law of Peace and used his position to influence other Founders. One virtue held by the Haudenosaunee people that surprised the Founders was the political power provided to women, which was not common in early American life. Ultimately, the Haudenosaunee principles of life, liberty, and property, as well as the system of checks and balances, can also be found in the United States Constitution.

Additional resources for teacher background:

- [Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators](#)
- [How the Iroquois Great Law of Peace Shaped U.S. Democracy | Native America | PBS](#)
- ["The Great Law" - Injunuity](#)

In this lesson, students will investigate a primary source that will be the focus of their civil dialogue experience. Teachers should preview all student materials and resources prior to the lesson.



Steps to Implement

Part I

1. Welcome students to social studies.
2. Tell students that today we will investigate a constitution created by the Haudenosaunee people.
3. Using your routine strategy for setting up groups, divide the class into six collaborative groups of approximately three to four student members. Each group will be assigned one of the six sections of the text.
4. Follow the [Unit 1 Explain Close-Reading Guide](#) to facilitate the activity.

Part II

5. Thank students for their work on the close-reading activity and acknowledge that they are scholars on their assigned sections of the [Unit 1 Explain: Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace](#) text.
6. Inform students that as a class we will now participate in a conversation about the text.
7. Distribute copies of the [Seminar Organizer](#) to facilitate goal setting and reflection.
8. Follow the procedures outlined in [Unit 1 Explain: Paideia Seminar Plan](#) to facilitate the discussion.

Formative Assessment

Students will demonstrate mastery of the Great Law of Peace by participating in a Paideia seminar discussion and completing a [post-seminar reflection](#).

Alternative Lesson Seeds

- Conduct a Paideia Seminar using excerpts of the Mayflower Compact.