



Unit 2: Inquiry Guide Activity

Strategy: Elaborate

Students deepen constitutional knowledge and civic dispositions by elaborating on new understandings through democratic experiences, such as role plays, games, and conceptual simulations.

Description

In this lesson, students explore the concept of compromise in decision-making for a government by simulating a festival planning committee, making group decisions to balance community needs, reflecting on the compromise process, and drawing connections between their experience and the historical Great Compromise through a video and group discussion.

Utilize this Engage strategy activity in order to enhance students' understanding of the *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* textbook for Level 3, Unit 2, Lesson 9 or Level 2, Unit 3, Lesson 12.

Alignments

Center for Civic Education

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

- [Unit 2, Lesson 9](#): How Was the Philadelphia Convention Organized?

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

- [Unit 3, Lesson 12](#): Who Attended the Philadelphia Convention? How Was It Organized?

Civic Skills & Dispositions

- Active learning
- Compromise
- Critical thinking
- Relationship skills

Lesson Objectives

- Participate in a democratic experience on compromise for the common good
- Analyze how the Framers used compromise to write the U.S. Constitution

Lesson Assessments

- Unit 2 Elaborate [Exit Ticket](#)
- [Democratic Experience Debrief](#)



Inquiry Compelling Question

- Is compromise always fair?

Texts / Materials

- [Festival Planning Document](#)
- [The Compromise That Passed by One Vote](#) (Video)
- [Great Compromise Venn Diagram](#)
- [Great Compromise Venn Diagram Answer Key](#)
- [Democratic Experience Debrief](#)
- [Exit Ticket](#)
- *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* textbook

Vocabulary

- **bicameral** A two-house legislature.
- **common good** The good of the community as a whole.
- **compromise** A mutual agreement in which individuals or groups adjust their positions or make concessions to reach a middle ground that satisfies everyone involved.
- **Constitutional Convention** A gathering of state representatives who came together in 1787 to draft, revise, or produce a constitution for the government.
- **Great Compromise** An agreement during the Constitutional Convention that resulted in the establishment of a bicameral legislature with equal representation in the Senate and proportional representation in the House of Representatives.
- **proportional representation** Representation based on population.



Teacher Background

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 was a pivotal event in American history that brought together delegates from the 13 original states to address the flaws of the Articles of Confederation and draft a new framework for the United States government. Despite differing views on issues, such as representation and the powers of the federal government, the delegates recognized the necessity of compromise to create a workable constitution.

Compromise played a critical role in overcoming disagreements at the Constitutional Convention. The Great Compromise, proposed by Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, resolved the contentious debate over representation by establishing a bicameral legislature with proportional representation in the House of Representatives and equal representation in the Senate. Additionally, the Three-Fifths Compromise addressed the issue of counting enslaved individuals for representation purposes. These compromises were essential in bridging the gap between states with varying interests and perspectives, ensuring the creation of a Constitution that could garner broad support and lay the foundation for the enduring system of government of the United States.

The Constitutional Convention's success in fostering compromise was instrumental in achieving unity among the diverse states, ultimately leading to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. This document has since served as the bedrock of the American government for over 235 years, demonstrating the enduring significance of compromise in the formation of a stable and effective governing framework.

Additional resources for teacher background include the following:

- [Constitutional Convention](#) (Video)
- [Principles of the Constitution](#) (YouTube playlist)
- [Info Brief: Compromises of the Convention](#)
- [The Compromise That Passed by One Vote](#) (Video)
- [Original Virginia Plan document and transcript](#)
- [Summary of the Virginia Plan](#)
- [Original New Jersey Plan document and transcript](#)
- [Constitutional Compromises: Crash Course Government and Politics #5](#) (Video)

Teachers should preview all student materials and resources prior to the lesson.



Steps to Implement

Part 1

1. Welcome students to social studies, which today will be known as the party-planning committee.
2. Introduce the inquiry question: “Is compromise always fair?”
3. Allow students time to make a prediction about the inquiry question as well as offer their own supporting questions.
4. Using your normal routine for establishing groups, divide students into groups of four or five.
5. Provide students with this scenario:
 - Imagine your school is hosting a festival to raise money for the local elementary, middle, and high schools. Certain parameters have already been decided, but there are many logistics that need to be agreed upon. The community has sent many requests for the planning committee to review and consider. A survey of community requests was conducted and provided percentages to help you make your decisions. It is not possible for all of these requests to be accommodated, so it is your job as the planning committee to take these requests and come up with a compromise that makes the most sense for the whole community.
6. Distribute the [Festival Planning Document](#) to each group. It may be most effective to provide only one copy to each group so that it only reflects the final decisions of the group’s compromises.
7. Review the [Festival Planning Document](#) as a class to ensure students understand the expectations. Consider modeling one section as needed.
8. Instruct students to read the requests for each category and make final decisions by balancing the community’s needs.
9. A modified [Festival Planning Document With Options](#) can be shared with students who need more support with the decision-making process.
10. Instruct students to discuss each section and collaborate on a recommendation as a group.
11. Circulate around the room, encouraging each group, observing progress, and redirecting as needed.
12. Students will reflect on this process and their decisions using the Reflection Questions section of the [Festival Planning Document](#).



Part 2

13. Encourage students to give thought to this simulation experience. The ideal outcome is for students to realize that compromise means that not everyone will be happy with the final decisions but that the determinations were made to ensure the best result for the entire community. Emphasize to students that this activity simulated democratic experiences of compromises for the common good. Facilitate a class discussion using the following questions:
 - What is the common good?
 - What process did your group use to make your decisions?
 - What role did numbers (percentages) play in your decisions?
 - Was it hard to find a compromise? Why or why not?
 - What other decisions might a planning committee like this need to make?
 - Do you think the community would be happy about your decisions? Why or why not?

Part 3

14. Play [The Compromise That Passed by One Vote](#) video. While students watch, tell them to listen for what the states gained and gave up in the Great Compromise.
15. Play the video a second time to ensure comprehension, if needed.
16. Allow time for a brief discussion or an opportunity for students' questions.
17. Distribute copies of the [Great Compromise Venn Diagram](#).
18. Using your normal routine for establishing groups, divide students in trio teams.
19. Students will refer to the *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* textbook and the Venn diagram in order to identify which components from the New Jersey Plan and the Virginia Plan were used to craft the Great Compromise.
20. Review the [Great Compromise Venn Diagram](#) as a class to ensure students understand the expectations. Consider modeling one section if needed.
21. Instruct students to collaborate in trio teams to complete the graphic organizer.
22. Circulate around the room, encouraging each group, observing progress, and redirecting as needed.
23. Provide time to discuss which components of the New Jersey Plan and the Virginia Plan were used to craft the Great Compromise. An [answer key](#) is provided.
24. As a class, have students reflect on the Great Compromise and compare it to their festival activity. Facilitate a class discussion using the following questions:
 - Do you think the Framers successfully compromised between small states and large states? Why or why not?
 - Why might it be difficult to find compromises in government?
 - How did the Great Compromise compare to your festival compromises?
 - Do you think the Great Compromise found the best solution? Why or why not?



Formative Assessment

Students will demonstrate mastery of constitutional compromise by completing the [Exit Ticket](#) to answer the inquiry question: Is compromise always fair?

Students will also participate in self-reflection by completing the [Democratic Experience Debrief](#).

Alternative Lesson Seeds

Extension: If there is time, have the students come back together to make the same festival decisions as a class. Because each group made a different plan, compromise will be required to create a master class document. Ask students to reflect on the differences between making decisions as a small group versus a large group.