

Primary Source Lesson Plan

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Schools: Rockwood Summit & Marquette
High Schools

Introduction: A Breakout Box is a sequence of puzzles students must decode to open a series of locks. In this case, the locks are digital. Students must find the codes to open a one-word lock, a two-word lock, a three-word lock, a four-digit lock, and a five-digit lock. The activity addresses content goals while requiring students to work together (in pairs or small groups), think creatively, and persevere. Although this particular activity was designed for Constitution Day, it can be used at any point during the school year. Students must complete puzzles, analyze primary source documents from the Library of Congress, and apply their knowledge of U.S. government and history to successfully complete the activity.

Lesson Overview: Students will review the Constitution through a Breakout Box activity.

Lesson Title: Constitution Day Breakout Box

Objectives:

- Students will understand how theory, conflict and compromise influenced the US Constitutional system.
- Students will evaluate the relationship between separation of powers and checks and balances.
- Students will be able to explain how constitutional provisions have supported and motivated social movements and policy responses.

Time Required: 1-2 class periods (depends on how in depth teacher wants to go with follow-up questions)

Recommended Grade Level(s): high school students (11-12)

Topic: Constitution; Foundations of US Government

Lesson Preparation: Review web site:

<https://sites.google.com/rsdmo.org/constitutiondaybreakoutbox>

Primary Sources: www.loc.gov

Other Materials: Chromebooks

Lesson Procedure:

1. Assign students to work in pairs or small groups.
2. Each pair/group of students will need a computer or chromebook *and a paper copy of the crossword puzzle and crossword clues.*
3. Instruct students to go to the following URL:
<<http://sites.google.com/rsdmo.org/constitutiondaybreakoutbox>>.
4. Go over the scenario (found near the top of the web page) with students and explain each group will be racing against the clock to successfully complete all five challenges and open all five locks in order to stop the Autocratic Party from taking over the government. Explain that students may open additional tabs on their computers or chromebooks to search to do research as they try to decode the clues. (Some students may choose to use their personal devices, such as cell phones, too.)
5. Circulate around the room as pairs/groups of students work on the activity. The clues and locks are not meant to be easy, so students will likely struggle. You may choose to give students hints if they seem to be stuck, but remember that trial and error is part of the process. (Some teachers like to have small prizes for the first team that “breaks out” or for all the teams that successfully “break out” in time.)
6. When time is up or when all pairs/groups successfully “break out,” conduct follow-up discussion. (See follow-up questions below.)

Lesson Evaluation: The teacher will determine whether student were able to “break out” within the class period. The teacher will re-teach the content that was confusing or unclear during the next class period.

Follow Up Discussion Questions:

1. What was the original purpose of the Constitutional Convention?
2. What were some of the major compromises that occurred at the Constitutional Convention?
3. How many states were need to ratify the new Constitution?
4. Explain and provide an example each of these principles of the Constitution:

separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review.

5. Describe the amendment process.

6. What are the five freedoms granted by the First Amendment to the Constitution?

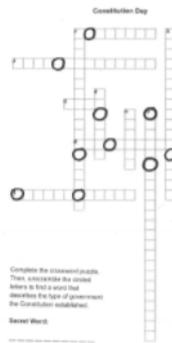
Name a social movement or policy associated with each aspect of the First Amendment.

Answers:

One-word lock: REPUBLICAN

REPUBLICAN is the “secret word” students will unscramble from the crossword puzzle.

A crossword puzzle key is attached.



Two-word lock: FIRST AMENDMENT

Students should figure this out from the Photo Challenge. Each photo illustrates one of the five freedoms/rights guaranteed in the First Amendment: freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, right to assemble, and right to petition the government.



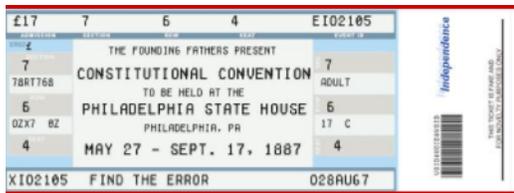
Three-word lock: CHECKS AND BALANCES

The chart/graphic organizer provides the clue to this lock. It shows the three branches of government and how they “check” each other and “balance” each other out. Students may argue the chart/graphic organizer shows separation of powers; the two concepts are closely related.



Four-digit lock: 1787

The students should figure this code out by looking at the ticket to the Constitutional Convention, which shows a date of 1887. (The bottom of the ticket says “FIND THE ERROR.”)



Five-digit lock: 22957

22957 is the zip code in which James Madison’s home, Montpelier, is located. The jigsaw puzzle should lead students to the combination to open this lock. The person pictured on the puzzle is Madison. The two buildings are the Vermont State Capitol (located in Montpelier, VT) and Madison’s Montpelier. The five numbers that appear under the picture of the Vermont State Capitol are the zip code in which the building is located. That’s the clue that students need to find the zip code of the other Montpelier.

A red rectangular graphic with a white border. In the top left corner, there is an icon of three interlocking puzzle pieces in red, yellow, and green. To the right of this icon, the text "Jigsaw Puzzle Challenge" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text: "Click on the link below to complete the puzzle. Use the clues in the puzzle to open a lock." In the bottom left of the graphic, the text "Go to puzzle" is written in a blue, underlined font. In the bottom right corner, there is a small, tilted image of a colorful jigsaw puzzle.

Jigsaw Puzzle Challenge

Click on the link below to complete the puzzle. Use the clues in the puzzle to open a lock.

[Go to puzzle](#)

Note: The teacher might want to check ahead of time to make sure the website *Jigsaw Planet* is not blocked by the district or school's internet filter. Here is the URL to the puzzle students must access for this activity:

<<http://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=315e043e7920>>

If this website is not accessible, the teacher can share the following link that contains the information found in the puzzle:

<<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1NSW2MMbs0faMJK82sqZMIQiLsHzjttxb0jzebpEQ3g/edit?usp=sharing>>.