

**The 1812 Louisiana Constitution**  
**Designed by: Tim Jordan, Teacher**  
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**Introduction**

In this lesson we will again use primary source material from the LSU digital library to learn about the first Louisiana Constitution. This early blueprint for state government consists of six main sections or Articles. The document is thirty-two pages long and was published in French and English in New Orleans in 1812. Now, let's explore and learn about the first official Louisiana Constitution in Louisiana history!

**Content Area and Grade Levels**

This lesson about the first Louisiana Constitution is anchored in Social Studies and is intended for use by high school students (grades 9-12).

**Curriculum Standards**

Louisiana Curriculum Standards to be addressed in this lesson are:

Civics

- \*C-1A-H1 Analyzing the necessity and purposes of politics and government and identifying examples of programs that fit within those purposes.
- \*C-1A-H2 Comparing and evaluating the essential characteristics of various systems of government and identifying historical and contemporary examples of each.
- \*C-1B-H1 Analyzing the central ideas and historical origins of American constitutional government and evaluating how this form of government has helped to shape our society.
- \*C-1B-H2 Explaining basic democratic beliefs and principles of constitutional democracy in American society and applying them to the analysis of issues of conflicting beliefs and principles.

History

- \*H-1A-H2 explaining and analyzing events, ideas, and issues within a historical context.
- \*H-1A-H3 Interpreting and evaluating the historical evidence presented in primary and secondary sources.
- \*H-1A-H4 Utilizing knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history and methods of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary issues.

\*H-1A-H5 Conducting research in efforts to analyze historical questions and issues.

## **Implementation Overview**

This lesson may be implemented in conjunction with a unit on the Louisiana Purchase or the United States Constitution. The primary activity of the lesson involves students analyzing the Louisiana Constitution of 1812 and then drawing up a constitution for their particular school, using the Louisiana Constitution as a guideline. In the next part of the lesson, the student will compare the Louisiana Constitution to the United States Constitution of 1789 and create a graphic organizer of both documents. The class, after this activity, should be able to better understand the purpose of Constitutions and be able to provide evidence that the writers of the Louisiana Constitution were influenced by the Founding Fathers of the United States.

\*Estimated project time: 2-3 one-hour class periods.

## **Resources Needed:**

1. Internet access to download primary source information from the LSU Digital Library.
2. Louisiana. *Constitution or Form of Government of the State of Louisiana*. (New Orleans: Printed by Jo. Bar. Baird, printer to the Convention, 1812). Available through the LSU Digital Library at <http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.org/u/?lapur,15852>.

## **Entry Level Skills and Knowledge**

Along with basic reading and writing skills, the student should have some understanding or concept of the purpose of a written constitution. This lesson is recommended after a careful study of the U.S. Constitution.

## **Evaluation**

The student will be evaluated on his/her original written school constitution as well as his/her compare/contrast essay on the Louisiana Constitution of 1812 versus the U.S. Constitution of 1789. The total project is worth 100 points.

## **Possible Variations**

This lesson has many opportunities for adapting to age, grade level, and difficulty. It could be especially useful to Civics teachers.

## **Conclusion**

A lesson on constitutional law in Louisiana is invaluable in helping students to understand the peculiarities of each state constitution. Also, students should realize how the writers Louisiana Constitution in 1812 used the U.S. Constitution as a guide.