

Grades: 9-12

A More or Less Perfect Union, A Personal Exploration by Judge Douglas Ginsburg, "A Constitution in Writing"

Constitutional expert Douglas H. Ginsburg reveals his perspectives as well as those of historically disadvantaged Americans, direct descendants of those involved in pivotal civil rights cases, historians, business owners, judges and other Americans.

Examine the struggles and compromises in the creation of the document that protects our liberties. Constitutional experts, "Framers" and every day Americans weigh in on the rule of law, the branches of government and the debate over originalism.

After watching this episode, choose from the following questions and/or tasks to extend your learning

Question Box 1

- The program opens with a song: "We got rid of these far away governments. Why would we want to create another one of our own?" Why would we want to create another one of our own?
- What does U.S. history portray?
- What are the Articles of Confederation?
- Does the Constitution protect us from an overreaching government? What evidence do you have to support or contradict this finding?
- Why is America called an "experiment"?
- What was created to guarantee the fairness of a democracy while trying to achieve part of the stability of a monarchy?
- How was George Washington received by the colonies?
- What is an "exceptionalist" view?
- Explain how slavery is seen as the epitome of America's original sin.
- How is the Constitution itself a lawless act?
- What is the biggest advantage of a Republic?
- What do you know about the Magna Carta that you didn't know before watching this?
- Where are copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, an early copy of Magna Carta kept for safekeeping? Why is it important to safeguard these primary sources?
- What does Federalism mean?

Question Box 2

- Do you agree with the statement "Our Constitution is only as strong as the people"?
- When you think about the Constitution as a whole, what does it mean to you?
- What were some of my most powerful learning moments in the program?
- How much did you know about the subject before we started? Explain.

Continued on the next page...

- What are some of the things that the government does to protect the population?
- Article 1, Section 1.' of the Constitution states -'All legislative powers herein granted...' - 'Herein granted shall be vested in a Congress...' -'Shall be vested in a Congress of the United States.' What does this mean?
- What does the program say the miracle of the Constitution is? Do you agree?

Box 3 (Tasks)

- The Constitution states that, “All men are created equal...” yet African Americans were not considered citizens, women were not included and Native Americans were not granted the opportunity to vote until 1924. The $\frac{3}{5}$ Compromise stated that 3 slaves out of every 5 could be counted for representation purposes. Why would both Northern and Southern states agree to such a compromise? Use mathematics to justify your reasoning.
- Read the Constitution <https://constitutionus.com/>. What stood out for you and what made you think about something differently? Summarize the Constitution in a way you feel is appropriate.

Box 4 (Enrichment)

- Discuss orally with someone what these statements mean from the program: “The constitution is important because it provides the law that governs those who govern us. It protects us from the government overstepping its bounds”. (ELD) Use vocabulary and examples from the program.

Box 5 (Tasks)

- In this episode it is stated that if the delegates had included the disbandment of slavery in the Constitution there would have never been a United States. Imagine that the constitution had never passed. Describe what you think the country and the government might look like today. What does the idiom, “The lesser of two evils” mean?
- Have you had to select between the lesser of two evils? Was it difficult, why or why not?
- Describe why the delegates may have felt they were selecting the lesser of two evils in allowing slavery to continue.
- Describe the process you use to make difficult decisions. Does your process work for you? Why or why not? Watch this short video on making difficult decisions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=241&v=SgNQGnwJ4Gk&feature=emb_l ogo
- Have you ever experienced any of the cognitive biases presented in the video? If so, which ones?
- How can you use the information in the video to help you make better decisions?