

A LESSON ON THE CONSTITUTION

NOT long ago one of the graduates of Harrisonburg State Teachers College was asked to teach a model history lesson in the sixth grade, following a procedure that is typically deductive or inductive.

She chose for her topic the origin and nature of the Federal Constitution, using *Our Republic*, the regular text in Virginia graded public schools, as a basis for the study, assigning in advance pages 211-214 and pages 522-528 of the text for special study in preparation. Pages 522-528 contain the text of the Constitution itself; pages 211-214 give an account of the making of the Constitution and an outline of its contents.

The procedure was mainly inductive. A number of questions were asked about certain particulars, and then conclusions drawn from these particulars were established at various stages.

Introductory Statement

This will be an inductive lesson on the nature and origin of the Constitution of the United States. Particulars facts will be brought out by means of definite questions; then more or less general conclusions will be drawn from the facts as ascertained.

This lesson is also a review in the early political documents of our country, and should recall the background or foundations of our political history. The main textbook used is *Our Republic*, by Riley, Chandler, and Hamilton.

Development

Not all of the questions and answers are reproduced in this report, but the main questions are given and the answers that were finally accepted.

Question 1. The first ten amendments to the Federal Constitution do what?

Answer. They guarantee certain rights. They are often called a bill of rights.

Question 2. Article I, the first part of the body of the Constitution, deals with what?

Answer. With Congress, the law-making body of the United States.

Question 3. Article II deals with what?

Answer. With the qualifications and powers of the President.

Question 4. Article III deals with what?

Answer. With the Federal Courts—the courts of the United States Government.

Question 5. Article IV deals with what?

Answer. Article IV defines certain powers and privileges of the states.

Statement by the teacher: We see that the Constitution was built on an interesting plan. The Bill of Rights relates to citizens in general; Article I relates to Congress; Article II to the President; Article III to the Federal Courts; and Article IV to the states.

The Bill of Rights was not an original part of the Constitution, but it was added very soon, and it was probably taken for granted all the time.

Question 6. What does the Constitution do with reference to all these mentioned—citizens, Congress, the President, Federal Courts, and the states?

Answer. It confers powers and limits powers.

Question 7. A law that confers powers and at the same time limits powers might be called what?

Answer. A supreme law; a fundamental law.

Question 8. Can we make a definition? What is the Constitution of the United States?

Answer. It is the fundamental law of the United States.

Question 9. Is this the only fundamental law you can think of?

Answer. Virginia has a constitution—a fundamental law. Every one of our 48 states has a fundamental law. The Confederate States had a fundamental law. The Articles of Confederation were a fundamental law for Continental Congress and

for the states during the Revolution. The Northwest Ordinance was a fundamental law for the Northwest Territory.

Question 10. Can you name any constitution that is not a fundamental law?

Answer. No. Every constitution is a fundamental law.

Question 11. Let us make some more definitions. Robert, what is the constitution of Virginia?

Answer. It is the fundamental law of Virginia.

Question 12. What was the Confederate Constitution?

Answer. It was the fundamental law of the Confederate States of America.

Question 13. What were the Articles of Confederation?

Answer. They were the fundamental law of the United States up to 1789.

Statement by the teacher: So much for the nature of the Constitution—the Federal Constitution and other constitutions.

Let us now inquire briefly into its origin.

Question 14. When was the Federal Constitution made?

Answer. 1787.

Question 15. Where was it made?

Answer. At Philadelphia.

Question 16. What was the body that made it called?

Answer. The Constitutional Convention.

Question 17. Was it the regular law-making body of the country?

Answer. It was not. It was a special body.

Question 18. What was the regular law-making body called?

Answer. Continental Congress.

Question 19. Did Continental Congress ever make any fundamental laws?

Answer. Yes, at least two.

Question 20. What two? Name them.

Answer. The Articles of Confederation, in 1777; and the Northwest Ordinance, in 1787.

Question 21. Does Congress now make fundamental laws—constitutions?

Answer. No. It can only propose amendments. Congress is subject to the Constitution.

Question 22. What is Congress?

Answer. It is the regular law-making body of the United States.

Question 23. What is a constitutional convention?

Answer. It is a special representative body, chosen to make a fundamental law.

Question 24. Where do you suppose the Constitutional Convention of 1787 got its ideas?

Answer. Some, no doubt, from the old Constitution—the Articles of Confederation.

Question 25. How many years of experience had they had with the old Constitution?

Answer. Ten.

Question 26. Had the old Constitution worked well?

Answer. No, but it had been worth much for experience.

Question 27. Can you think of any other sources of the Federal Constitution?

Answer. Franklin's plan of union of 1754.

Answer. The New England Confederation of 1643.

Answer. The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut of 1639.

Question 28. Do you recall others? Probably there were others.

Answer. The Mayflower Compact of 1620.

Answer. The colonial charters.

Question 29. Was there anything of special interest in Virginia?

Answer. The Virginia charter of 1618. This led to the House of Burgesses in 1619. This was really the beginning of representative government in America.

Statement by the teacher: I think you are right. All these documents you have mentioned doubtless contributed something to the great constitution of 1787-1789.

And probably Magna Carta in England,

and the Bill of Rights of 1689 were also important sources. It is possible that the Charter of Liberties granted by King Henry I in 1100 was also thought of. James Madison and other members of the convention of 1787 were careful students of history. We might almost say that the study of history made the Constitution of 1787. It was not a miracle, or a mere happy thought of the moment. It had centuries of experience behind it.

I am pretty certain that the Virginia Bill of Rights, drawn up by George Mason in 1776, and the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson the same year, were also familiar to the makers of the Constitution.

Do not overlook the fact that all great constitutions, fundamental laws, have not been the creation of a moment or even of a year, but have been the work of many years. They are the products of experience, sometimes of bitter failure. The failure of the old Constitution (the Articles of Confederation) had a great deal to do with the success of the new one.

Question 30. Do you know of anything that is going on now which shows that a constitution is a growth, a product of years?

Answer. Yes. In Virginia now the General Assembly, the Governor, and the people of Virginia are trying to improve the constitution of the state, the fundamental law of Virginia.

Reported by JOHN W. WAYLAND

SOME FACTS REGARDING HABIT FORMATION

SEVERAL weeks ago a little woman from Czecho-Slovakia spoke at the college; by way of introduction she said that Americans always began their talks with a joke or two. Being a good American, I want to tell you of the kindergartner who one day was waiting in the station for a train and saw a mother with a little child about two years old. The mother was feed-

ing a banana to the child. The kindergartner kept quiet as long as she could and then said to the mother, "You oughtn't to feed that child banana; it isn't good for him." Whereupon the mother answered, "You can't tell me anything about raising children. Ain't I buried six?"

It is not my purpose, then, to tell you how to raise your children, but merely to bring to your attention one of the most important factors of right living; namely, *habit formation*. No doubt some of the habits your children have formed have caused you no little concern. When I was a teacher of young children the formation of right habits was always uppermost in my mind; one of the first things a teacher of little children says about a child is that he has good habits or bad habits, as the case may be.

What I have to say classifies itself into three parts,

First, a definition and classification of habits

Second, rules or helps for making and breaking habits

Third, practical application or importance of habits

Habits are acquired or learned ways of behaving and, whether we will it or no, the child is going to form habits. He comes into this world a helpless little being with some ready-to-wear acts; he can cry, kick, coo, eat; he can withdraw his foot or hand if it touches something uncomfortable; he also has a nervous system in rather poor working order but sensitive, open to all suggestions which may come to it. This nervous system craves activity, and is therefore affected by everything that happens to it. Something is happening every minute.

Nature is a wise mother and nurse. She is a good psychologist, too. She sees to it that her children are made ready for the community in which each has to live. The fish has a very limited world; all it has to know is how to get out of the way of danger, how to get something to eat, so its