Lesson Description: Students will learn the Preamble by singing it in a song, and learning the motions that tell the story. They will examine the Preamble to the Constitution and rewrite it in their own words. They will then look at how the definition of “We the people” has changed over the last 200 years. They will do this by investigating what the definition was in 1787 and compare it to who it means today. They will then read Article V, which states the way that changes to The Constitution can be made. Students will brain storm what changes they think have occurred to this phrase in the last 200 years. How and why were these changes made? They will then work in groups to research Amendments 13, 14, 15, 19, 24, and 26 to discover exactly when, how and why things changed. Students will then write about how these changes have affected their life.

Grade: 4/5

Time Required: 3-4 periods

Benchmarks:

History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data [Analysis].

4-5: students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them, and analyze change over time.

Civics Standard One: Students will examine the structure and purposes of governments with specific emphasis on constitutional democracy [Government].

4-5: Students will understand that governments have a variety of structures and exist for many purposes and that in America, these are explained in the United States and State constitutions.

English/ Language Arts Standard Three: Students will access, organize, and evaluate information gained by listening, reading, and viewing

4-5: Students will organize, manipulate, and express the information and ideas relevant to a defined need.

Essential Question: How has the meaning of “We the people” in The Constitution changed over the last 200 years?

Enduring Understanding: The Constitution is a living document, meaning that its meaning can change both in fact and interpretation.
Materials:

America Rocks Video: or the free excerpts of the song “The Preamble” at http://www.school-house-rock.com/AmericaRock.html
Copy of words to the song “The Preamble Way” (A)
Hand Motions for the Preamble (B)
Copies of the Preamble of the Constitution for each student (C)
How Well Do I Know These Words (D)
Amendment Research (E)
I-Chart (F)
Story Map (G)
Dictionaries
Sources for researching the 13, 14, 15, 19, 24, and 26 Amendments to the Constitution

Books:
“The Words We Live By” by Linda R. Monk
“A More Perfect Union” Betsy Maestro
“We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution” David Catrow
“We the People: The Constitution of the United States of America” Peter Spier

Internet websites:
http://www.barefootsworld.net/constit1.html#preamble
http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html
http://www.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/
http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/constitution/amendment.htm

Encyclopedias
Sentence strips

Procedures:
1. Review previously taught lessons about why we need a constitution, and the basic concept of the constitution. We need it to create order in a civilization. The Constitution of the United States set up the basic framework of our government. It set up the three branches of government, lists the powers of the federal government, sets procedures for elections, lists steps for amending, and requirements of ratification.

2. Introduce the Preamble with the song from America Rocks. Teach the song by singing several times (be sure each student has a copy of the words handout A) or ask your Music Teacher to teach it to the students. Use handout B and teach the hand signals to the Preamble, movements will help many students learn it, and the movements will help the students understand some of the terms. Possibly have some sing and some sign. (differentiated instruction)

3. Discuss what the word Preamble means. This paragraph introduces and tells the purpose of The Constitution.

4. Distribute another copy of the Preamble broken into key phrases. (handout C) Have
students use a “How Well Do I know these Words?” chart (handout D) putting the words in the appropriate column: I still need help finding a meaning, I think I know the meaning, I know the meaning. Most words in the Preamble will fall in category 1, some in 2 and very few in category 3. Have students share category 3 words and teach them to the rest of the class. Have students try to predict the meaning of category 2 words.

5. Divide students into groups of 2 or 3 depending on the number of students. Assign each group a phrase from the Preamble. Suggest resources (listed under materials) and have each group look up the meaning of their words. Then use other resources to try to develop a better understanding. For example: “We the Kids” and “We the People” explain the preamble in pictures.

6. Once they have found the meaning, have them rewrite the phrase in “fourth grade words” on a sentence strip. When everyone has completed this, post the rewritten Preamble on a wall, the board, or chart paper. Read together in its simplified form. Discuss meaning.

7. Once students understand what the Preamble says, discuss who “We the people” are. Ask students if everyone in the class would be included? (no one would be, due to age) Would they be included as an adult? What age would that be? Ask who would have been included in “We the people” in 1787? They will probably know some people would be excluded, but probably won’t be aware of how many.

8. Ask if anyone knows how the meaning of those three words could have changed over the last 200 years? Is it just interpretation? Has the meaning been officially changed? How can The Constitution be changed? Look at Article V either in its original form, or its abbreviated form from the appendix of “A More Perfect Union”.

9. Ask students to work in groups to list what changes they think have been made regarding who “We the people” are, and possibly when they think they happened.

10. Start a jigsaw by creating expert groups to research each of the pertinent amendments (13, 14, 15, 19, 24, 26) Complete research worksheet. (handout E) Make resources available. Many are annotated, which will help their understanding. Make sure each group is aware that each person in the group will be responsible for teaching what they have learned about their amendment.

11. Regroup students with each group having an expert on each amendment. Each expert is responsible for teaching the main points of their amendment and how it relates to who “We the people” were and are. Ask students to focus on change over time, and be sure to go in chronological order. Students will complete an I-chart (handout F) as they learn the information about the different amendments.

12. Have students work in teams and think about whether or not any of the other phrases
in the Preamble would look different today than in 1787. Possible responses: establish justice, (only men on juries, and all white juries), provide for the common defense, (men and women in the army, types of weapons, fighting in other countries) promote the general welfare (more social programs, more rules protecting people).

Debrief:
Have students complete a Story Map (handout G) showing the sequence of events in pictures and words.

Assessment:

Students are given the Preamble and asked how its changes in meaning over the last 200 years affects them. They are asked to give examples.
Hey, do you know about the U.S.A.?
Do you know about the government?
Can you tell me about the Constitution?
Hey, learn about the U.S.A.

In 1787 I'm told
Our founding fathers did agree
To write a list of principles
For keepin' people free.

The U.S.A. was just startin' out.
A whole brand-new country.
And so our people spelled it out
The things that we should be.

And they put those principles down on paper and called it the Constitution, and it's been helping us run our country ever since then. The first part of the Constitution is called the preamble and tells what those founding fathers set out to do.

We the people
In order to form a more perfect union,
Establish justice, insure domestic tranquility,
Provide for the common defense,
Promote the general welfare and
Secure the blessings of liberty
To ourselves and our posterity
Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

In 1787 I'm told
Our founding fathers all sat down
And wrote a list of principles
That's known the world around.

The U.S.A. was just starting out
A whole brand-new country.
And so our people spelled it out
They wanted a land of liberty.
And the preamble goes like this:

We the people
In order to form a more perfect union,
Establish justice, insure domestic tranquility,
Provide for the common defense,
Promote the general welfare and
Secure the blessings of liberty
To ourselves and our posterity,
Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.
Hand Motions for memorizing the Preamble

**WE**
(Point hands to chest)

**JUSTICE**
(Turn hands over and simulate holding knives)

**THE PEOPLE**
(Distribute arms)

**ENSURE**
(Place index finger in palm, like an umbrella for protection)

**OF THE UNITED STATES**
(Interlock fingers of both hands)

**DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY**
(Fold hands to chest, simulating sleep)

**IN ORDER TO FORM**
(Raise hand as if molding something, like a snowball)

**PROVIDE**
(Raising hands outward as if offering something)

**A MORE PERFECT UNION**
(Thumb fingers outward against each other)

**FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE**
(Double up fists, defending self)

**ESTABLISH**
(Observation hands, pressing down)

**PROMOTE THE GENERAL**
(make a military salute)
WELFARE
(Put hand over your heart)

AND SECURE
(Grasp the air with right hand)

THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY
(Raise right arm high in a Statue of Liberty pose)

TO OURSELVES
(Put hands to chest)

AND OUR POSTERITY
(Indicate different heights with a hand coming down in suit-caps fashion)

DO ORDAIN
(Simulate laying on of hands)

AND ESTABLISH
(Outstretch hands, pressing down)

THIS CONSTITUTION
(Imaginary unrolling a scroll)

FOR
(Hold up four fingers)

THE UNITED STATES
(Imaginary fingers of both hands)

OF AMERICA
(Imaginary arms, simulating the American Eagle in flight)
Preamble

(handout C)

We the people

In order to form a more perfect union,

Establish justice,

insure domestic tranquility,

Provide for the common defense,

Promote the general welfare and

Secure the blessings of liberty

To ourselves and our posterity

Do ordain and establish this Constitution
for the United States of America
How Well Do I Know These Words?

(Handout D)

**Directions:** As you read the words of the Preamble decide if you know a meaning for the word well enough to explain it, only think you now what it means, or don’t know it at all. Write each word in the correct column. Write your best guess at a definition for columns 2 and 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>I Don’t Know this Word</strong></th>
<th><strong>I Think I Know the Meaning of this Word</strong></th>
<th><strong>I Know this Word</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Amendment Research
(handout E)

1. Amendment number: ________________

2. Date ratified: _________________

3. What it says: ______________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

4. What does it mean in your own words:
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

5. What affect did this have on who “the people” were?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

6. Who benefited the most?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

7. How?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
### I-Chart

(Handout F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We The People</th>
<th>Amendment 13</th>
<th>Amendment 14</th>
<th>Amendment 15</th>
<th>Amendment 19</th>
<th>Amendment 24</th>
<th>Amendment 26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What I Know</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Who it benefits</strong></td>
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<td><strong>How it benefits them</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Who it doesn’t benefit</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Story Map

**Sequencing and Comprehension**

(handout G)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First</th>
<th>Then</th>
<th>Next</th>
<th>Last</th>
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What happened?  

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<td>______________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sources

Catrow, David, “We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America” Scholastic, New York, NY 2002

    A very creative depiction of the Preamble. Illustrated with funny characters showing the meaning of the different phrases.


    Excellent story of the Constitutional Convention and the resulting Constitution With copies of the Constitution and an annotated, simplified version of the Amendments


    Excellent resource that explains the Constitution and the amendments in plain English. It also gives a great deal of background.

Spier, Peter, “We the People: The Constitution of the United States of America” Doubleday Books for Young Readers, United States, 1987

    Tells the story of the Constitutional Convention. Shows the words of the Preamble through pictures. Also includes the Constitution and the Amendments

Internet websites:
http://www.barefootsworld.net/constit1.html#preamble

    Has an annotated version of the Preamble, the Constitution and all of the Amendments

http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html

    Very basic and easy to understand information about the Constitution, the Preamble, and the Amendments. Well explained

http://www.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/

    Interactive site with many activities to do at home or at school

http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/constitution/amendment.htm

    A wealth of information. Especially details about the Constitution and its meaning.