

A Note to Educators:

Thank you for your interest in the Constitution Rules program for grades K–2!

Program Objectives: After completing the Constitution Rules! program with the National Archives, students will be better able to:

- Understand what the Constitution is and why the United States has one
- Connect the Constitution to their own lives and communities
- Identify the three branches of government
- Analyze primary sources

Program Documents: You can access all the documents and images included in this teacher guide and the National Archives presentation in this [folder](#) on DocsTeach.

How To Use This Guide: There are no required activities for this distance learning program. Instead, we've assembled a collection of activities that you can select from to share with students before or after their program with the National Archives or throughout your unit on the Constitution as you see fit. Get started with the optional pre-program activities here or use the table of contents on the next page to navigate this guide.

Pre-Program Activities: An optional activity to prepare students for their National Archives program.

[The Constitution and Our Community](#) (30 minutes) *Class Discussion and Graphic Organizer*
Introduce the idea of the classroom as a community and explore the concept of rules, rights, and responsibilities. **Materials:** Project or recreate the graphic organizer on [page 5](#).

Post-Program Materials: Keep the conversation going after the program with post-program activities that start on [page 6](#).

[Make Your Own Three Branches of Government Tree](#) (60 minutes) *Review and Craft Activity*
Review the responsibilities of the three branches of government by cutting and pasting words and images from the program on the Three Branches Tree. **Materials:** Share the Three Branches Tree Printout and Leaf pieces on [page 7](#), scissors, glue, and crayons.

[Write a Classroom Constitution](#) (30 minutes) *Class Discussion and Writing Activity*
Work together to write a classroom Constitution. **Materials:** Project or recreate the Classroom Constitution template on [page 10](#).

Plus explore [American Symbols](#) and [Make Your Own Great Seal!](#)

We want to hear from you!

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Pre-Program Activities

The following pre-program activities are designed to support student learning about the Constitution. These activities are not required. Feel free to facilitate only the activities that you think would be most helpful for your students.

The Constitution and Our Community

Use the following script to introduce the idea of the classroom as a community and consider the different communities each student is a part of. The graphic organizer on [page 5](#) can be shared with the class and completed during the discussion.

Estimated time: 30 minutes

What makes a community?

Ask students to think about the different communities their classroom belongs to and add their responses to the different arches of the graphic organizer, starting with “you” in the first arch. Some arches may include multiple answers. Feel free to annotate or add to the graphic organizer as your students see fit. Sample answers could include the school, town, state/territory/federal district, tribal nation, and so on. For the purposes of this discussion, the final arch should be the United States of America.

In this classroom, you are a part of a community, a group of people that come together to learn and help each other. Our classroom is a part of an even bigger community (our school).

As an individual, you can be a part of many groups, or many communities. What is another group that you are a part of? (Answers may vary for ideas for the smaller arches, and could include families, buildings, teams, neighborhoods, etc.)

Eventually, our different communities are part of a larger community.

We all have a responsibility to participate in our communities in a way that respects each other. Responsibilities are things we have to do. Sometimes we have different responsibilities based on our roles in our community. Let’s think about our classroom as an example:

- What are your responsibilities as students in our classroom?
- What are my responsibilities as your teacher in our classroom?
- What about at home? Can anyone think of a job or responsibility they have at home?

Next, let’s think about our town. What are some different jobs or responsibilities people have in our town? (Answers could include different community jobs, but also responsibilities like cleaning up litter.)

As members of a community, we agree to respect each other, follow the rules, and fulfill our responsibilities. A written document can serve as a symbol of our agreement to do these things. The Constitution of the United States is a document that describes the way the government is structured and its responsibilities, protects the rights of the people, and serves as the highest law of the land. Our United States Constitution is over 230 years old!



Show a picture of the [United States Constitution](#). During our visit with the National Archives, we are going to learn more about this important document and learn about special jobs it creates for the United States government.

Vocabulary

Community - a group of people that share things such as location, language, religion, rules and codes of conduct, and/or government, to name a few.

Constitution - a written document that describes the way government is structured as well as its powers and responsibilities. The Constitution of the United States structures our government around three branches: the legislative, executive, and judicial. It protects the rights of the people and is the highest law in the land.

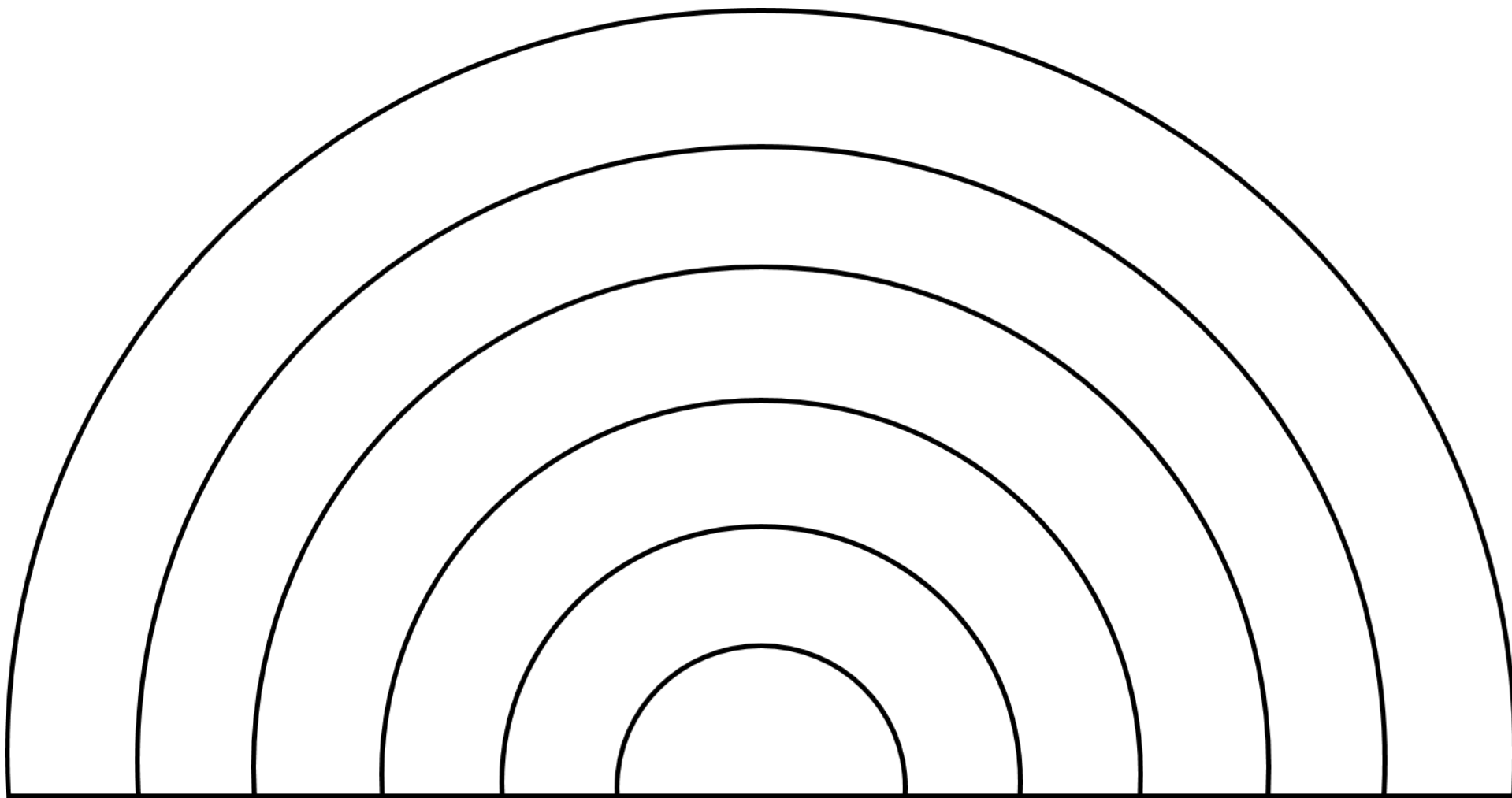
Government - the leadership and organization that establishes and carries out the rules of a community, state, or nation.

Laws - rules that maintain order and safety that members of a community agree to follow. In our country they are created by legislators (or lawmakers) elected by the people.

Responsibilities - obligations or duties that one needs to fulfill (things you have to do).

Rights - freedoms or claims that one has (things you get to do)

Our Communities Graphic Organizer



Post-Program Activities

The following post-program activities provide opportunities to review key ideas from the program and build on students' knowledge of the Constitution.

Make Your Own Three Branches of Government Tree

Use this activity to review the responsibilities of the three branches of government. This activity can be completed together as a class or by students working on their own or in small groups.

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Materials

- Three Branches Tree and Three Branches Leaves
- Scissors
- Glue
- Crayons or colored pencils

During the program with the National Archives, students analyzed photographs that highlighted the different responsibilities of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government. Using the Three Branches Tree and the Three Branches Leaves on [pages 7–8](#), your students can review the jobs and responsibilities of the three of branches of government. Students can cut and paste the leaves where they belong on the Three Branches Tree and color the tree.

Vocabulary

Congress - one of the three branches (or parts) of our federal government. It is made up of two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress's responsibilities are primarily outlined in Article I of the Constitution and include passing laws, approving Presidential appointments, and declaring war.

Executive Power - the responsibility and authority to carry out or enforce the laws of the United States. Our Constitution gives this power to the President in Article II.

Judicial Power - the responsibility and authority of the courts to interpret what the laws mean and how they are applied. Our Constitution makes the Supreme Court the nation's highest court.

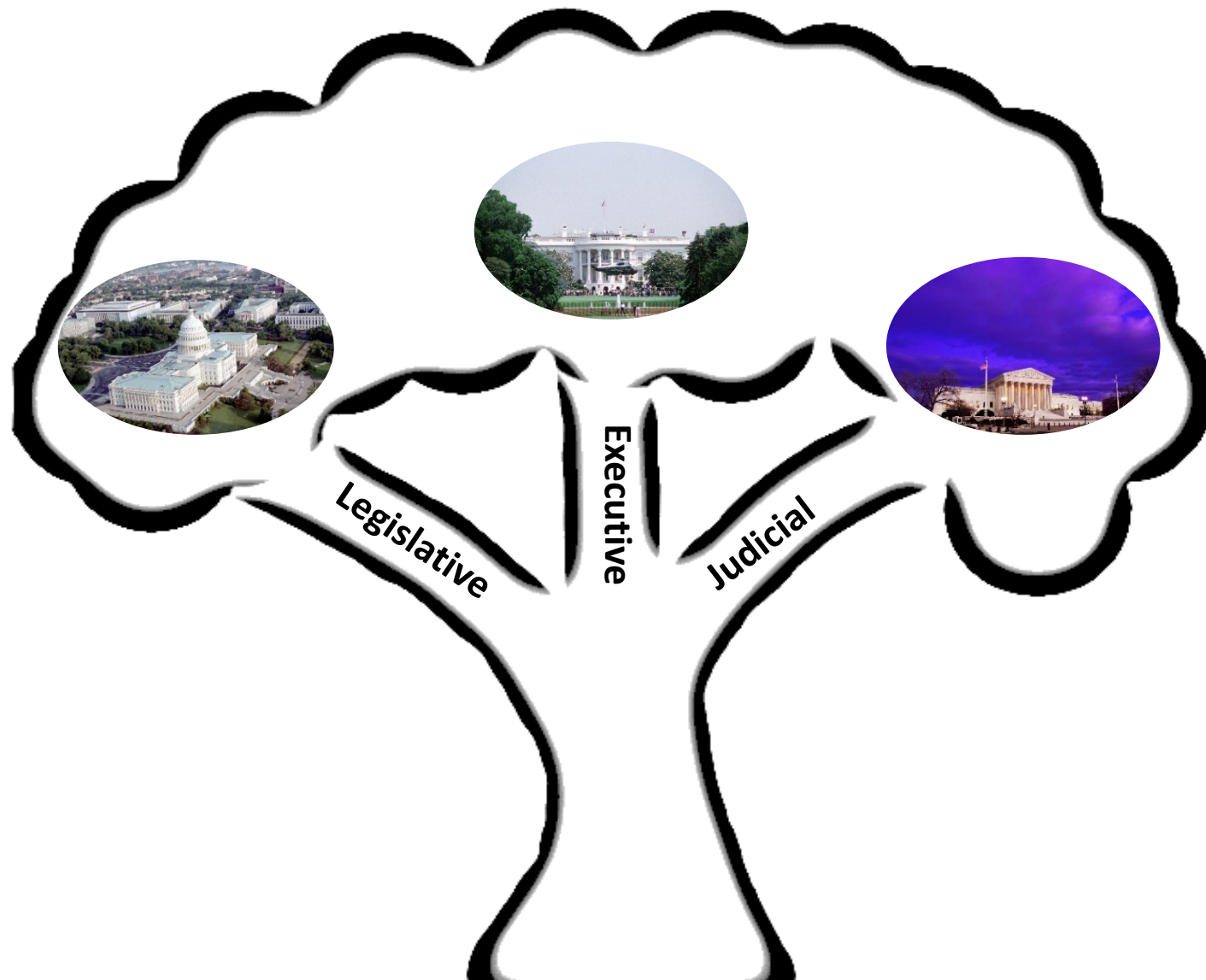
Legislative Power - the responsibility and authority to make laws. Our Constitution gives this power to the Congress in Article I.

President - head of the executive branch of our federal government and the leader of our country. The duties and responsibilities of the President are primarily outlined in Article II of the Constitution and include making sure the laws are faithfully carried out, being the commander-in-chief of our military forces, and conducting foreign policy with other countries.

Supreme Court - one of the three branches (or parts) of our federal government, the highest court in the land. Article III outlines the jobs of the Supreme Court, which include interpreting the meaning of the laws and deciding if they are in line with the Constitution.



Our Three Branches of Government



Write a Classroom Constitution

Using the Classroom Constitution template on [page 10](#) or a big piece of paper, your students can work together to write a classroom Constitution.

Estimated time: 30 minutes

We the people of (teacher's name) class, do agree to this Constitution.

Article One: Student Responsibilities—List the jobs and responsibilities of the students

Article Two: Teacher Responsibilities—List the jobs and responsibilities of the teacher

Share a close-up of the [signatures](#) on the Constitution. Ask students if they know why people sign documents. What does it mean to put your name on something? Remind students they are a part of the “We the People” of the Constitution.

Signatures: Invite students to sign the classroom Constitution.

If multiple classrooms complete this activity, hang the class constitutions in the hall and invite students to compare!

Our Classroom Constitution

We the People of _____ class, do agree
to this Constitution.

Article 1: Student Responsibilities

Article 2: Teacher Responsibilities

Signed on _____ .



Symbols of the United States of America

In this activity, students will consider how symbols can be used to represent different communities and review three common symbols for the United States.

Estimated time: 30 minutes

A symbol is an image or an object that stands for or represents something else. When we see these symbols, they bring to mind thoughts and feelings that may be hard to put in words or would take many words to do so.

Examples of symbols:

- The shape of a heart can represent love.
- Street signs can represent things to look out for, like students crossing.
- Sports teams have logos and/or mascots that serve as their symbols.
- Your school might have a mascot that represents it to people in the community.
- The White House is a symbol for the President.

Symbols of the United States

Our country has symbols that represent the United States and what it stands for. When we see these symbols, it brings to mind the values and ideals that the United States of America was founded on and continues to stand for today.

Share the American symbols on pages 13 – 15 with students. Ask students to share their observations or think about what the different pieces of each symbol represent. The following background information is also provided as reference.

The American Flag (image on [page 13](#))

Our flag is one of the most recognizable symbols of the United States. Each country has its own flag. While the whole flag represents our country, the flag is made up of different shapes and colors that represent additional ideas.

The Colors

The American flag is made up of three colors: red, white, and blue. These colors are the same as those used in the British flag because Britain was our “mother country.”

- Red represents valor and sacrifice—giving things up for the benefit of others.
- White represents purity and innocence—being honest and true to your beliefs.
- Blue represents loyalty and justice—being “true blue” means you are reliable.

The Shapes

- 13 red and white stripes on our flag represent the original 13 colonies who created the Constitution and became united as one country.
- 50 white stars in the blue rectangle in the upper left-hand corner represent each of the 50 states that make up our United States.

Uncle Sam (image on [page 14](#))

Uncle Sam is a character who is believed to have been inspired by Samuel Wilson, a meatpacker during the War of 1812. The idea came from the United States' initials U.S., which were stamped on barrels of beef. Those who saw the stamp joked that it had been sent to them by U.S., aka Uncle Sam.

Uncle Sam's Features

Uncle Sam is depicted as a man with white hair and a white beard. He can sometimes look very serious. He looks like that when he wants to show that he means business and is not fooling around. Other times he looks friendly and welcoming to show he is a nice guy.

Uncle Sam's Clothing

Uncle Sam is often drawn wearing red and white striped pants and a jacket or vest of blue with white stars. His most recognizable fashion accessory is his top hat!

The Bald Eagle (images on [page 15](#))

The bald eagle became a symbol for the United States in 1782 when Charles Thomson, the Secretary of the Congress, was asked to combine several designs for a Great Seal of the United States. The eagle is a symbol of strength and determination.

The Eagle's Accessories

When used in government seals, the eagle is often depicted with additional symbols.

- The shield decorated in red and white stripes and stars represents protection.
- Arrows represent strength or war.
- An olive branch represents peace.

Discussion Questions

Ask your students to share their responses to the following questions and use them as a jumping-off point to discuss American symbols.

When you see the flag / Uncle Sam / the American eagle:

- What thoughts come to your mind?
- How do these symbols make you feel?
- What does each of these symbols say about the United States?
- Can you think of any other symbols that represent the United States?

Symbol Scavenger Hunt

Share the images located in this DocsTeach.org [folder](#) with your students and ask them to find and identify the symbol that appears in the photograph. Use these questions as a jumping-off point for a class discussion on symbols.

- Can you find any American symbols?
- What does that symbol represent?
- Why do you think it is in this image?

The American Flag



Caption: The American flag flying over the U.S. Capitol Building, 2/1/2001
National Archives Identifier: [6521651](#)

Uncle Sam



Caption: "I Want You for the U.S. Army Enlist Now" World War II Poster featuring artwork of Uncle Sam pointing at the viewer, 1941–1945

National Archives Identifier: [513533](#)

Bald Eagle



Caption: Bald eagle sitting on tree stump, 2000
National Archives Identifier: [166698532](#))



Caption: The Presidential Seal; 1/18/1989
National Archives Identifier: [6435639](#)

Make Your Own Great Seal

In this activity, students will be asked to consider how they can use pictures to represent themselves and their communities. Students will identify what types of things are important to them and then express what they stand for by creating a Great Seal for themselves. Finally, they will work together to create a Great Seal ([page 18](#)) for the class.

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Background Information

Share the [Design of the Great Seal](#) with students.

In July 1776, the Continental Congress decided it needed a “national coat of arms” or seal to represent the new nation. Over the course of six years, there were several attempts at developing a successful design. Finally, a design created by Charles Thompson and revised by William Barton was submitted and approved on June 20, 1782.

The Great Seal of the United States is the symbol of our independence as a nation. Its obverse is used on official documents to authenticate the signature of the President, and it appears on proclamations, warrants, treaties, and commissions of high officials of the government. The Great Seal's design, used as our national coat of arms, is also used officially as decoration on military uniform buttons, on plaques above the entrances to U.S. embassies and consulates, and in other places. Both the obverse and the less familiar reverse, which is never used as a seal, are imprinted on the one-dollar bill.

Several symbols are incorporated into the Great Seal

- There are 13 arrows, 13 stripes, 13 stars, and 13 letters in the motto all representing the original 13 colonies that became the first 13 states.
- The olive branch represents peace.
- The arrows represent war.
- The eagle faces to the side of peace.
- The constellation of stars represents a new nation taking its place among other nations.
- The motto *E Pluribus Unum* means “out of many, one”—in a word, “unity.”

Share the Design Your Own Seal template ([page 18](#)) with students to create a seal that represents who they are and what they believe. Ask them to think about what is important to them. Their ideas do not have to be as lofty as those represented in the Great Seal of the United States (e.g., they may list a sports team, a favorite cartoon character, their pet, a favorite food). Anything appropriate is fair game for inclusion.

As students think about their design, you can use the following prompts:

- What symbols will you include?
- What colors will you use?
- What words might you include?
- What is your personal motto?
- What values are represented in your seal?

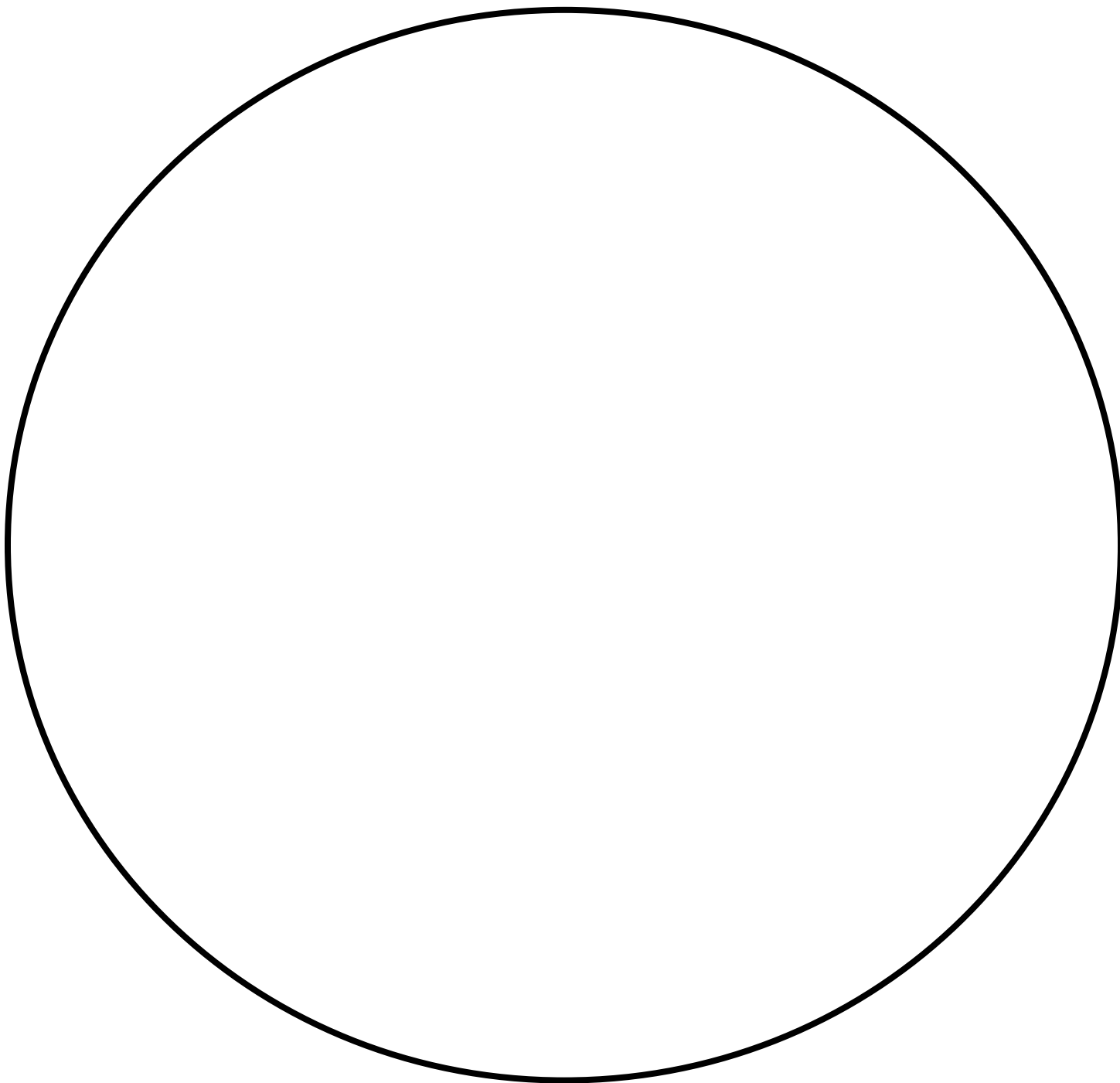
Next, invite students to brainstorm how they can represent their whole class in a classroom seal. Using the same template, you can work together to create this symbol.

As students brainstorm, you can use the following prompts:

- What values do we promote in our class?
- What should we expect from each other?
- How can we work together?
- What symbols can we use to represent these ideas?
- What should our class motto be?

You can also invite students to choose one part of their individual seal to include in the class seal.

Design Your Own Seal



Additional Resources

America's Founding Documents: [The Constitution](#)

Sign the [Constitution](#)

Primary Sources and Teaching Activities for Teaching the Constitution on [DocsTeach](#), the online tool for teaching with documents from the National Archives.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework Alignment

- D2.Civ.1.K-2 Describe roles and responsibilities of people in authority.
- D2.Civ.2.K-2 Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.
- D2.Civ.3.K-2 Explain the need for and purposes of rules in various settings inside and outside of school.
- D2.Civ.5.K-2 Explain what governments are and some of their functions.
- D2.Civ.12.K-2 Identify and explain how rules function in public (classroom and school) settings.
- D2.His.2.K-2 Compare life in the past to life today.
- D2.His.9.K-2 Identify different kinds of historical sources.
- D2.His.10.K-2 Explain how historical sources can be used to study the past.

