

Pillars of the American Constitution Classroom Application

Constitutional Literacy Institute
June 26th, 2023

Purpose of these sessions

The morning sessions are to increase our knowledge (Think like a Student)

The Quill sessions are to increase students and our research skills (Think like a Researcher)

The pedagogy sessions are to provide specific lesson plans (Think like a Teacher)

The classroom application sessions are to break down into ideas, concepts and units for students. (Think like a Teacher)

Big picture Unit Outline of Constitutional Literacy

Monday- Foundations, Sources, and Big Concepts of CL
(Knowledge)

Tuesday- Process of CL (Skills)

Wednesday- Dispositions of CL, Making our leaders Human
(Dispositions), Electric Cord

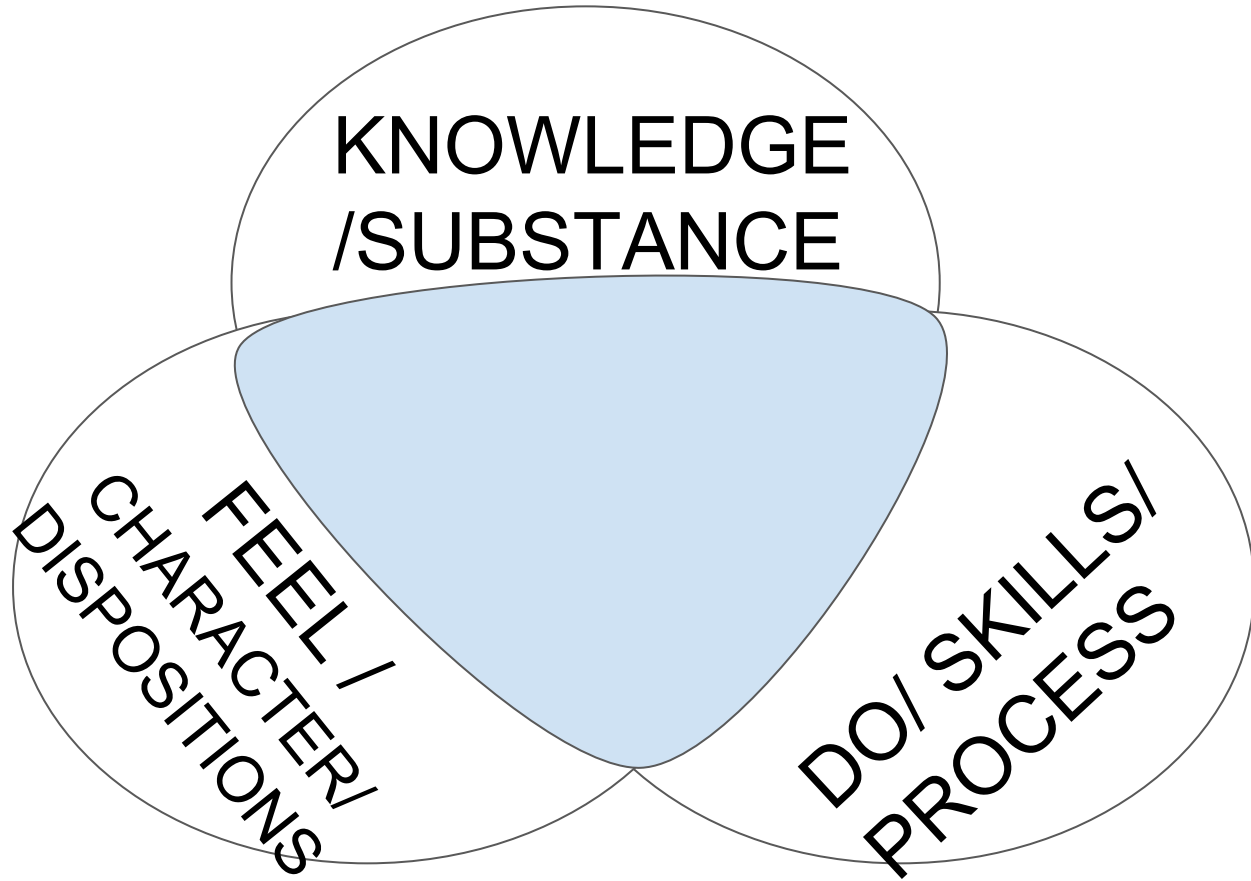
Thursday- Contradictions and Controversial Topics of CL

Friday- Reflections and “Why’s” of CL

Objectives for Today

- 1) Teachers will understand the four pillars of the American Constitution and theorize how to create a unit to address the four pillars.

- 1) Teachers will be theorize about the tensions and balances struck by our Constitution and come up with examples to share with students across multiple units.
 - a) Examples: Legislative vs. Executive, Democracy (Anarchy) vs Monarchy (Demigods), Individual Liberties vs Social Justice, Efficient vs Deliberative, Federalism, Checks and Balances, etc.



REPUBLIC OF THE UNITED STATES

CONSTITUTION (C)

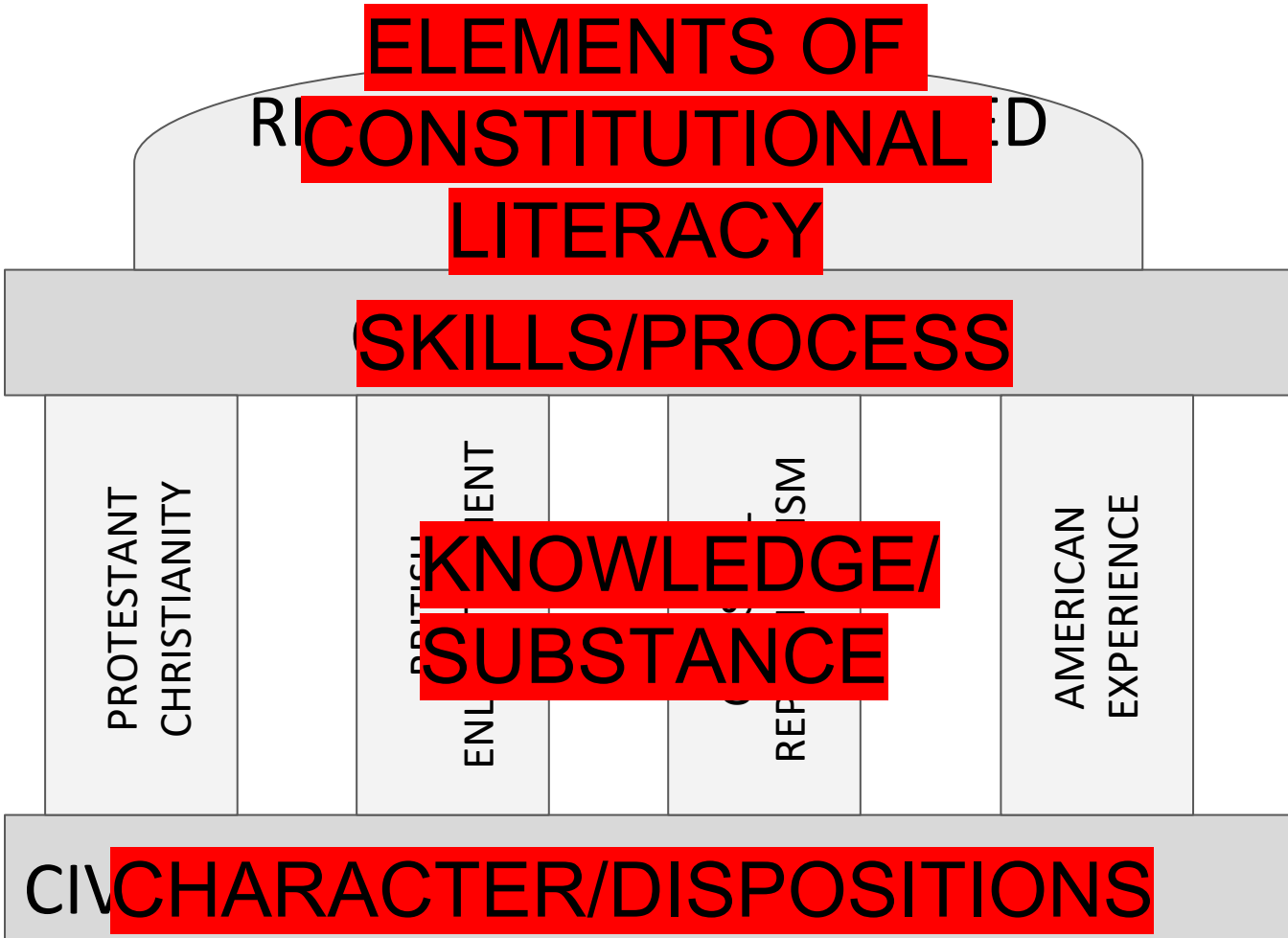
PROTESTANT
CHRISTIANITY

BRITISH
ENLIGHTENMENT

CLASSICAL
REPUBLICANISM

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CIVIC VIRTUES/ DISPOSITIONS (c)



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Four Pillars

Who/ what are the most important theories, or thinkers, documents, of events that can or should be covered to highlight the Four pillars of Protestant Christianity, British Enlightenment, Classical Republicanism?

What are the lessons or concepts each bring that influences our Constitution and who/what do you use?

Examples- Montesquieu- Spirit of Laws, Locke- Natural Rights, Smith- Capitalism, Aristotle- Golden Middle Way also Aristotle's Regimes, Cicero- Liberalism, Puritans- Freedom of Religion, Rousseau- Social Contract, Beccaria- Criminal Justice, Wollstonecraft- Women's Rights, Blackstone- Common Law, Revolution and Declaration, Common Sense, Articles of Confederation, State Constitutions, Interaction with Natives. etc.

Cato- Better to Die than Live in Tyranny



Joseph Addison, 1713 *Cato*




Tensions and Contradictions Framework

We will spend this week identifying, describing and exploring many of America's influences and values. We as individuals are living, complex, complicated, and often contradictory. Sometimes, depending on our circumstances, we react in emotional or logical ways. As individuals we are in a fight to build ourselves up, or tear ourselves down. We have the seeds of greatness, love, and kindness as well as the seeds of destruction, hate and selfishness. Which you are you going to be today?

The same can be said about the identity of America. America's Identity as we have seen is living, complex, complicated and often contradictory. Depending on circumstances or history she has done both great and terrible things. As a nation of citizens are we building ourselves up, or tear ourselves down? We have the seeds of greatness, love, and kindness as well as the seeds of destruction, hate and selfishness. What is the American of today, and what is her future?

Nature of our Nation- Agency

It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from **reflection and choice**, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on **accident and force**.

A rectangular frame with a dark blue border containing a quote in a typewriter-style font. The text is centered and reads: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

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-Maya Angelou

Tensions or Dialectics/ Binaries

Dialectic/Binaries- Two things that are in a person or place that 1) appear to oppose each other and that 2) COMPROMISE and educate/ build each other and 3) works to find COMPROMISE resulting in both identity traits being strengthened and refined.

Synonym- Interaction, Communication, Hip

Examples- Teacher vs. Student, Individual vs. Family (if willing to COMPROMISE), Individual Rights vs Good of Society, Monarchy vs Oligarchy vs Democracy, Liberal vs Conservative, Justice vs Mercy, Originalism vs Living Constitutionalism

Conflicts or Contradictions

Contradiction- Two things that are in a person or place that 1) oppose each other that 2) cannot work or will not work together and 3) will eventually destroy or damage the person or place where the contradiction exists.

Synonym- Hypocrisy, conflict, paradox

Examples: Good vs Evil, Facts vs Conspiracy, Freedom vs Slavery, (which eventually led to the Civil War), Individual vs Family (if it cannot or will not COMPROMISE) Teacher vs Student

“Why is it useful to find binaries? They are the sites of uncertainty, or more than one point of view. As such, they are the breeding ground of ideas. . . . When you find a binary opposition in an essay, a film, or a political campaign, you locate the argument, the struggle that the film, essay, or political campaign is having with itself, the place where something is at issue”

-Writing Analytically, by

Rosenwasser and Stephen

Student example- Farewell Address 2023

My advice to the President is to remember balance. Don't sit idle. You have power; use it, and use it wisely. At the same time, don't become a dictator. The biggest fears of America's founders were a **monarchy and anarchy**- two polar opposites. America's government, a representative democracy, is in the center. As a matter of fact, most of the best times in America involved centered dialectics. One dialectic the President most needs to focus on is the balance between **action and morals**. Herbert Hoover had wonderful morals. He was an amazing business manager and humanitarian. Hoover promoted **capitalism and economic power to businesses**. These policies might have been okay, had Hoover not been president during the Great Depression. Hoover refused to offer financial aid from the federal government, which meant nothing was done to solve the depression. He refused to shift his dialectic to fit current needs. Hoover's successor, FDR, pulled the dialectic back toward **government**, but not to the extreme, he still believed in rugged individualism. This eased a lot of the tension caused by the Great Depression, and things began to get better. Keep centered. America is full of compromises between **federal and state governments, government and business**, and many more dialectics. Remember that it is your job to maintain these balances. A centered country is less likely to divide.

Discuss

What are some tensions or binaries (dialectic or conflict) of America and when can they be discussed?

Preamble- We the People (National) of the United States (Federal)

Example- Federalism- Local vs State vs Federal

Rural vs Urban, Can be discussed within the Jefferson (DR)/Hamilton (Federalist) debate on the future of America. Or again in the 1920's

Voting and Representation- Direct vs State- Constitutional Convention, 17th Amendment, Electoral College

Individual Liberty and Social Justice- Civil Rights of 1950's-60's, Covid and Masks

What else?

What we learned today? Or current issues

“The American Experience” (4th column) – some suggested sources for teachers

Failures (and successes) of the **British system**

- Declaration of Independence
- Paine’s “Common Sense”

Failures (and successes) of our **first “national” government**

- Articles of Confederation
- Hamilton’s *Federalist 15*

Failures (and successes) of **state governments** from 1776 –
1787

- Madison’s “Vices of the Political System”

“Tensions” at the Founding – some suggested sources for teachers

Federalist 37 – tensions and compromises

- balancing worthy but irreconcilable goals
- balancing national vs. state power
- balancing interests of big vs. small states
- balancing interests of slave vs. non-slave states

Federalist 10 and *Federalist 51*

- majority rule vs. minority rights in republic (“tyranny of majority”)

Preamble

Ratification debate tensions

- whether the Articles were working (or not)
- whether the new government would be an aristocratic tyranny (or not)
- whether the new government would destroy the states (or not)
- whether a republic needed to be small (or not)
- whether the Constitution required a Bill of Rights (or not)
- <https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/libertyandjustice/ch1/01/>