Notes:

“Good morning class! Every class has rules that benefit students and teachers. What are some rules that we have to help students behave correctly?”

“Why do we have rules?”

“Today we’re going to do something very special. We are going to start creating our own constitution and everyone will sign it. At your tables I want you to come up with 5 most important rules you think we should have and write them down on the paper that’s on your table.” Allow the students to work on this for a few minutes. “Later we will put together our final constitution.”

“Today our goal is to explain why the United States Constitution was necessary. So what are we going to do today? Explain why the United States Constitution was necessary.”

“In previous classes we have mentioned the Articles of Confederation, who can tell me something about them?” Allow time for the students to answer.

“The Articles of Confederation were ratified by all 13 states on March 1, 1781. What does it mean when I say that the 13 states ratified the Articles of Confederation?” Allow time for the students to answer. “The goal of the Articles was to unite the states without giving the central government too much power. At the time of the creation of the articles, the US was dealing with the Revolutionary War. So who can tell me why the articles would create a weak central government?” Allow time for the students to answer.

“It soon became apparent that there was a need for a stronger Federal government. The articles were too weak. Let’s take a look at problems with the articles of confederation.

* Each state had only one vote, no matter what size it was.
* 9 out of 13 states had to agree in order to create and pass laws.
* The government could not regulate trade.
* The government could not generate taxes so it didn’t have a source of money.
* The government could not enforce laws.
* The government could not effectively stop rebellion.

In Massachusetts in 1786, farmers were struggling to make a profit and in turn were not able to pay the taxes that the Legislature had raised in order to pay off their revolutionary debt. There were public meetings held to discuss the “suppressing and tyrannical” government. It was then that Daniel Shays, a Revolutionary War office and farmer led 2,000 men to try to shut down the courts so they could prevent foreclosures and tax auctions. Even though the state militia was able to take care of this situation, it showed many Americans that the government was too weak.

Because of all these things, a stronger government needed to be created. This is where the Constitution comes into play. In place of the Articles of Confederation, the United States Constitution was created. The Constitution is like the list of rules that you all came up with, except it is for the whole country. It is the supreme law of the land. It explains how the government works and brings order to the United States.”

Show the *TLC Elementary School: Understanding Government* video. “Next time we will break down the U.S. Constitution. So what is it that we can do? Explain why the United States Constitution was necessary.”