

Name: _____

History of the Kansas Constitution

Journalists are people who write about a variety of topics, like music or events happening in their community or state. Some journalists write about historical events, which are events that happened in the past. Today, you will imagine you are a news reporter who is learning about the history of the state constitution in Kansas. Then, you will write a story that will be published in a newspaper. Follow the steps below.

Step 1: Learn About the History of the State Constitution in Kansas

Read the passage below. Then, answer the questions.

During the 1850s, Kansas was a territory of the United States. A territory is a region that is not an official state. To become a state, territories had to accomplish certain tasks. One task was to write a State Constitution. A State Constitution is a document that describes laws that people must follow in that state. It also describes who the leaders in the government will be and what their responsibilities will be. For example, a State Constitution says that a governor is the leader of the state. It also says that he or she is responsible for making sure that people follow the laws of that state.



Another task was having the State Constitution approved by the United States government. If the government does not approve of the constitution, it is sent back to the territory. Then, the territory needs to make changes to the words in the constitution. After they make changes, they can send it back to the government for approval.

Kansas created four versions of its constitution. The first three were rejected! The fourth and final version was approved. The process took four years! Finally, on January 29, 1861, Kansas was recognized as an official state. Read about the four versions of the Kansas constitution below. Then, answer the questions.

Topeka Constitution

The first constitution was called the Topeka Constitution. It was created in 1855 in Topeka, Kansas. One law in this constitution stated slavery would be illegal in Kansas. This meant that people in Kansas could not own slaves. When this constitution was sent to the United States government for approval, it was rejected!

Lecompton Constitution

In 1857, another version of the constitution was created in Lecompton, Kansas. This constitution was called the Lecompton Constitution. This constitution said that slavery would be legal in Kansas. When this constitution was sent to the U.S. government, it was rejected.

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Leavenworth Constitution

In 1858, the third version of the constitution was created in Leavenworth, Kansas. This version was called the Leavenworth constitution. The Leavenworth Constitution was similar to the Topeka Constitution because it said that slavery would be illegal. The Leavenworth constitution also said that African American men had the right to vote. When this constitution was sent to the U.S. government, it was rejected.

Wyandotte Constitution

The last and final constitution was created in 1859 in Wyandotte, Kansas. This constitution was called the Wyandotte Constitution. This constitution said that slavery would be illegal. This constitution also said that women had more rights. For example, the constitution said that women could own property, like pieces of land. Before this constitution was written, only men could own property! This constitution also determined the boundary lines for Kansas. A boundary line is a line where two areas meet. For example, a map shows a boundary line between Kansas and Missouri. This line shows what land is in Kansas and what land is in Missouri. The Wyandotte constitution was finally approved by the United States government in 1860. As a result, Kansas could finally become an official state!

Answer the questions below.

1. How can a territory become an official state?

2. What was one difference between the Lecompton Constitution and the Leavenworth Constitution?

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3. Which of the four constitutions gave African Americans the right to vote?

4. In your opinion, do you think a state constitution needs to be approved by the United States government? Explain your reasoning.

5. What would happen if a state or country didn't have a constitution?

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Step 2: Plan your Story

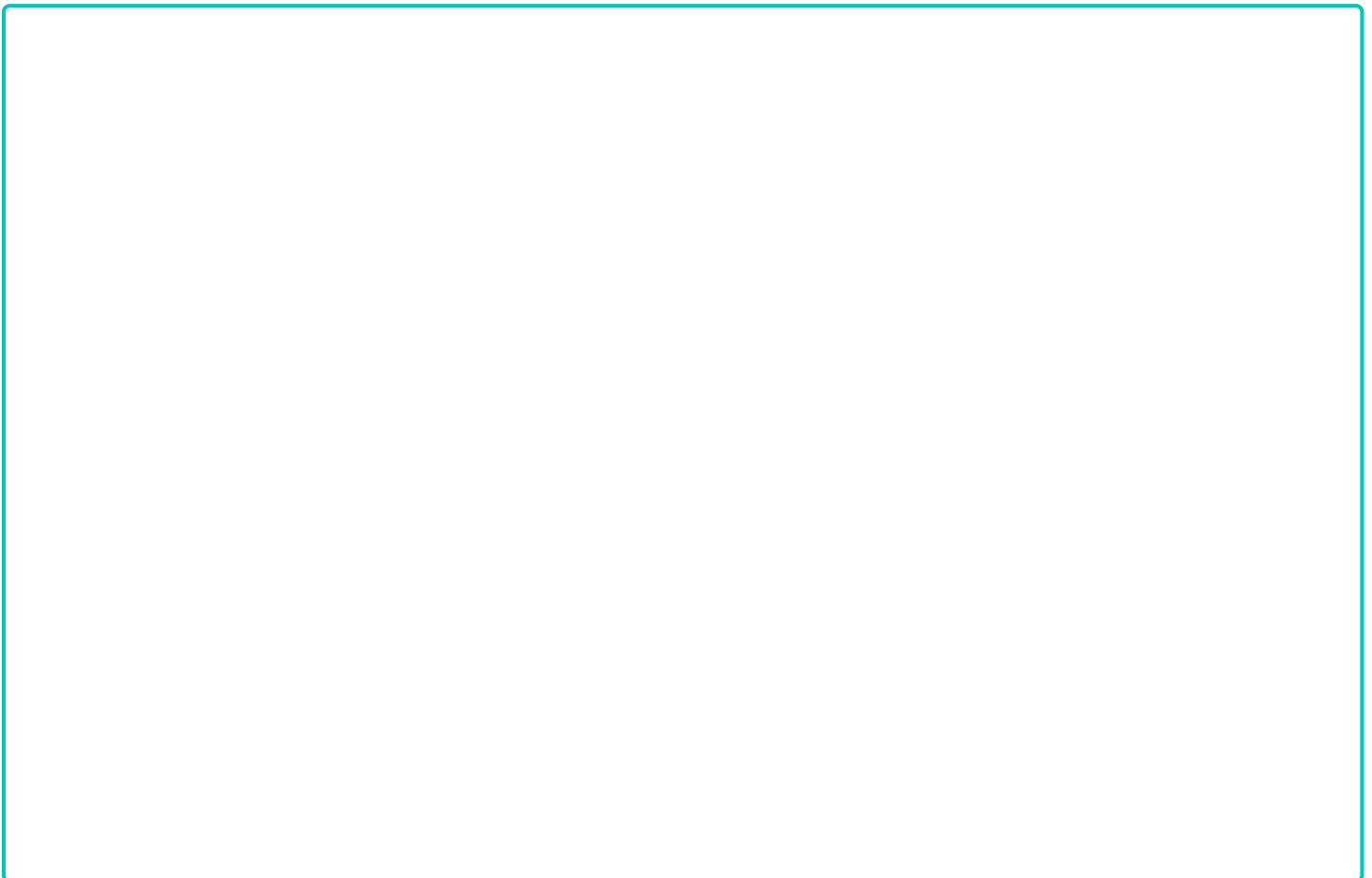
Imagine that you are a journalist on a different planet. This planet is home to a variety of creatures that are not found on Earth. The planet also includes several territories, just like the United States had in the 1800s! To become an official state, the territories must write state constitutions that are approved by the planet's national government. As a journalist, you will write a story about a territory's new constitution. Follow the steps below to plan your story.

Planet Name

Write the name of your planet on the line below.

Picture of Planet

In the box below, draw a picture of the planet. Then, draw at least three boundary lines on the planet. The boundary lines will divide the planet into different territories.



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Territory Names

Write the names of the territories on the lines below.

New Constitution

Choose one territory to create a new constitution for. Write the name of the territory on the line below. Then, write at least 5 laws that are included in this constitution.

Name of Territory: _____

Laws included in the territory's constitution:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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Step 3: Write a Story

Write a story about a territory’s new constitution. The story will be published online and in newspapers around the planet. Your story must include the following:

- Name of the territory you chose to write about.
- Information about the laws included in the territory’s constitution.
- Information about whether the first version of the constitution was approved or not.

Name of Territory: _____
