Linda R. Monk - *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* - Grade 8

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Learning Objective: The goal of this one to two day exemplar is to give students the opportunity to observe the dynamic nature of the Constitution through the close reading and writing habits they've been practicing. By reading and rereading the passage closely, and focusing their reading through a series of questions and discussion about the text, students will explore the questions Monk raises and perhaps even pursue additional avenues of inquiry. When combined with writing about the passage, not only will students form a deeper appreciation of Monk's argument and the value of struggling with complex text, but of the Preamble of the Constitution itself.

Reading Task*: Rereading is deliberately built into the instructional unit. Students will silently read the passage in question on a given day—first independently and then following along with the text as the teacher and/or skillful students read aloud. Depending on the difficulties of a given text and the teacher's knowledge of the fluency abilities of students, the order of the student silent read and the teacher reading aloud with students following might be reversed. What is important is to allow all students to interact with challenging text on their own as frequently and independently as possible. Students will then reread specific passages in response to a set of concise, text-dependent questions that compel them to examine the meaning and structure of Monk's argument. Therefore, rereading is deliberately built into the instructional unit.*

Vocabulary Task: *Most of the meanings of words in this selection can be discovered from careful reading of the context in which they appear. Where it is judged this is not possible, <u>underlined</u> words are defined briefly for students in a separate column whenever the original text is reproduced. At times, this is all the support these words need. At other times, particularly with abstract words, teachers will need to spend more time explaining and discussing these words. Teachers can use discussions to model and reinforce how to learn vocabulary from contextual clues. Students must be held accountable for engaging in this practice. There is a longer discussion of this in the "Vocabulary" section. In addition, for subsequent readings, high value academic ('tier two' words) have been **bolded** to draw attention to them. Given how crucial vocabulary knowledge is to students' academic and career success, it is essential that these high value words be discussed and lingered over during the instructional sequence.*

Discussion Task: *Students will discuss the passage in depth with their teacher and their classmates, performing activities that result in a close reading of Monk's text. The goal is to foster student confidence when encountering complex text and to reinforce the skills they have acquired regarding how to build and extend their understanding of a text. A general principle is to always reread the portion of text that provides evidence for the question under discussion. This gives students another encounter with the text, reinforces the use of text evidence, and helps develop fluency.*

Writing Task*: Students will paraphrase Thurgood Marshall's quote and then write an explanation of Monk's text in response to one of three prompts. Teachers might afford students the opportunity to rewrite their explanation or revise their in-class paraphrase after participating in classroom discussion, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.*

Text Selection: This selection, taken from Appendix B of the CCSS, while brief, allows for an in-depth investigation into three of the most highly charged words in the Constitution and offers a capsule history of the dramatic and sweeping changes to how the phrase "We the People" has been interpreted over the years. Rich both in meaning and vocabulary, not only does the excerpt from Monk's text validate the close reading approach, but it also presents a focused and concise opportunity that students in both ELA and history classrooms will find engaging.

Outline of Lesson Plan: This lesson can be delivered in one or two days of instruction and reflection on the part of students and their teacher, with the possibility of adding additional days of instruction (see Appendix A) or an additional day devoted to peer review and revision of the culminating writing assignment.

Standards Covered: The following CCS standards are the focus of this exemplar: RI.6-8.1-3, 5, & 6; W.6-8.2, 4 & 9.

The Text: Monk, Linda R. *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution*

Exemplar Text	Vocabulary
From "*The Preamble*: We the People"	
The first three words of the Constitution are the most important. They clearly state that the people—not the king, not the legislature, not the courts—are the true rulers in American government. This principle is known as popular sovereignty.	*Elected body that creates laws*
But who are "We the People"? This question troubled the nation for centuries. As Lucy Stone, one of America's first advocates for women's rights, asked in 1853, "'We the People'? Which 'We the People'? The women were not included." Neither were white males who did not own property, American Indians, or African Americans—slave or free. Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African American on the Supreme Court, described the limitation:	
> for a sense of the evolving nature of the constitution, we need look no further than the first three words of the document's preamble: 'we the people.' when the founding fathers used this phrase in 1787, they did not have in mind the majority of America's citizens . . . the men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 could not... have imagined, nor would they have accepted, that the document they were drafting would one day be construed by a Supreme Court to which had been appointed a woman and the descendant of an African slave.	*interpreted*
Through the Amendment process, more and more Americans were eventually included in the Constitution's definition of "We the People." After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment gave African Americans citizenship, and the Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the vote. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote nationwide, and in 1971, the Twenty-sixth Amendment extended suffrage to eighteen-year-olds.	*formal change to a legal contract* *membership in a state or nation with rights, privileges, and duties*

Day One: Instructional Exemplar for Monk's *Words We Live By*

Summary of Activities

1. Teacher introduces the day's passage with minimal commentary and students read it independently
2. Teacher then reads the passage out loud to the class and students follow along in the text
3. Teacher asks the class a small set of guiding questions and tasks about the passage in question
4. Teacher assigns homework that asks students to write an analysis of Monk's passage

Text under Discussion		Directions for Teachers/G Students
The first three words of the Constitution are the most important. They clearly state that the people—not the king, not the legislature, not the courts—are the true rulers in American government. This principle is known as popular sovereignty.	*Elected body that creates laws*	**1. Introduce the text and s independently** Other than giving the brief words students would likely from context (underlined in giving any background con guidance at the outset of the students are reading the tex reading approach forces stu exclusively on the text inste background knowledge and field for all students as they Monk's argument. It is criti independence and creating reading that students initial texts like Monk's passage w prefatory material, extensiv teacher explanations.
But who are "We the People"? This question troubled the nation for centuries. As Lucy Stone, one of America's first advocates for women's rights, asked in 1853, "'We the People'? Which 'We the People'? The women were not included." Neither were white males who did not own property, American Indians, or African Americans—slave or free. Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African American on the Supreme Court, described the limitation: for a sense of the evolving nature of the constitution, we need look no further than the first three words of the document's preamble: 'we the people.' when the founding fathers used this phrase in 1787, they did not have in mind the majority of America's citizens . . . the men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 could not... have imagined, nor would they have accepted, that the document they were drafting would one day be construed by a Supreme Court to which had been appointed a woman and the descendant of an African slave.	*interpreted*	**2. Read the passage out lo follow along** Asking students to listen to exposes students a second t and structure of her argume their own close reading of t clearly and carefully will al
Through the Amendment process, more and more Americans were eventually included in the Constitution's definition of "We the People." After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment gave African Americans citizenship, and the Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the vote. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote nationwide, and in 1971, the Twenty-sixth Amendment extended suffrage to eighteen-year-olds.	*formal change to a legal contract* *membership in a state or nation with rights, privileges, and duties*	follow the shape of Monk's reading out loud with stude improves fluency while off access to this complex text. skillful modeling of the rea students who may be dysflu pronunciations and syntacti

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The first three words of the Constitution are the most important. They clearly state that the people—not the king, not the legislature, not the courts—are the true rulers in American government. This **principle** is known as popular **sovereignty**. But who are "We the People"? This question troubled the nation for centuries. As Lucy Stone, one of America's first advocates for women's rights, asked in 1853, "'We the People'? Which 'We the People'? The women were not included." Neither were white males who did not own property, American Indians, or African Americans—slave or free.	*Elected body that creates laws*	**3. Ask the class to answer a small set of text-depen questions and perform targeted tasks about the pa answers in the form of notes, annotations to the te formal responses as appropriate.** As students move through these questions, and re text, be sure to check for and reinforce their under academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (w **boldfaced** the first time it appears in the text). At questions may focused on academic vocabulary. **(Q1) What is (and isn't) the meaning of "popular s Why does Monk claim that this is the form of gove America?** These are fairly straightforward questions for stud but must be grasped to understand the remainder o analysis. The second question requires students to first three words of the Constitution refer to the do popular sovereignty, and perceptive students will connect the title of the chapter and/or the opening paragraph to the Constitution's Preamble. **(Q2) Is Lucy Stone confused when she asks "Whic People'?" Why does Monk say this question has " nation"?** Students need to be able to discern that Stone is n rather critical of the seemingly all-embracing phra People" when looked at in the light of America's this history that Monk says is "troubled". Then it that the "true rulers in American Government" did women, Native Americans, free blacks, enslaved Americans, or even white males who did not own Students should be able to deduce that those with primarily white men with property. N.B. *Assuming this is a part of a unit on governm students should be familiar with terms like Consti Supreme Court, and Preamble. Given their impo teachers should still "check-in" with students and to help solidify students' grasp of these concepts. this reading will serve as a solid introduction to t words.*

Text under Discussion		Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions
Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African American on the Supreme Court, described the **limitation**: for a sense of the **evolving** nature of the constitution, we need look no further than the first three words of the document's preamble: 'we the people.' when the founding fathers used this phrase in 1787, they did not have in mind the majority of America's citizens . . . the men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 could not... have imagined, nor would they have accepted, that the document they were drafting would one day be <u>construed</u> by a Supreme Court to which had been appointed a woman and the **descendant** of an African slave.	*interpreted*	**(Q3) What does the phrase "founding father Why does Marshall think the founding fathe have imagined a female or black Supreme C** This question is a good way to summarize t so far as answering it will drive students ba read and discussed earlier. The correct ans making the connection between the lack of granted to women and blacks by the founde wrote the Constitution—and recognizing M that at the time he was writing both a femal descendant of a slave were members of the Court—the judicial body that holds the fina of the Constitution. **Having discussed the meaning of Marshall's students to put his ideas into their own word two to three sentence paraphrase.** Insisting that students paraphrase Marshall will solidify their understanding of Monk's well as test their ability to communicate tha understanding fluently in writing. Teachers circulate and perform "over the shoulder" c with students to check comprehension and commentary that could lead to on the spot r "translation" of Marshall's ideas. **Sidebar: Images of the Supreme Court over century** If students are particularly intrigued by the the Supreme Court, Appendix B includes a images of the justices every forty years star vividly illustrating the demographic change undergone.

Time	Text of "*The Preamble*: We the People"		Directions for Teachers/Guiding Que
10 Minutes	Through the Amendment process, more and more Americans were eventually included in the Constitution's definition of "We the People." After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment gave African Americans citizenship, and the Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the vote. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote nationwide, and in 1971, the Twenty-sixth Amendment extended **suffrage** to eighteen-year-olds.	*formal change to a legal contract* *membership in a state or nation with rights, privileges, and duties*	**(Q4) What evidence is there in this pa Marshall's claim about the "evolving constitution"?** This question requires students to m evidence to completely answer the q that the amendment process change who was included in "the people." **Sidebar: The Goals of the Constitutio** If students are intrigued, teachers ca students the text of the Preamble an identify what the founding fathers w accomplish in forming a Constitutio through popular sovereignty: **Text of the Preamble** We the People of the United States, more perfect Union, establish Justic Tranquility, provide for the commo the general Welfare, and secure the to ourselves and our Posterity, do or this Constitution for the United Stat

Time	Explanatory Writing Assignment: Directions for Teachers and Students
Homework	**For homework write a paragraph length explanation that answers one of the following prompts. Provide evidence f response to justify your analysis:** • Explain how the notion of who "the people" were has changed over time in America. • How does Thurgood Marshall's presence on the Supreme Court illustrate the evolution of the constitution? • Analyze Monk's explanation of the modifications that have been made to the Constitution. **Extension Activity for Day Two:** During the next class period, the teacher could have students peer review or revise the pieces they completed for homework.

Explanatory Writing Assignment: Guidance for Teachers

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Teachers might wish to consider the following guidance with regards to evaluating the following prompts:

- Explain how Amendments 13, 14, 15, and 19 have changed the notion of who "the people" were over time in America.

  Teachers should look for a logical explanation of the evolution of who has been considered a "person" in the eyes The paragraph could be organized chronologically, noting that at the nation's founding the creators of the constitu mind the majority of America's citizens" and primarily saw persons as white males with property. Students shoul time, however, the notion of "We the People" has grown to include African Americans (through the 13th, 14th, a well as women with the Nineteenth Amendment. They might invoke Thurgood Marshall's observation that these discriminated against, now have representatives on the Supreme Court—the final arbiter of the Constitution's "W could end by noting the extension of the franchise to 18 year olds and perhaps point out that the final status of on on remains unexplained—Native Americans.

- How does Thurgood Marshall's presence on the Supreme Court illustrate the evolution of the constitution?

  Teachers should look for student essays that address the question asked, i.e. focus on why the fact that Thurgood M Supreme Court reflects the notion of an evolving constitution. Students might start by explaining that Marshall was American on the Supreme Court" and note that at the founding of America "We the People" did not recognize the s Americans "slave or free." They might go on to explain what is meant by an evolving constitution, citing the fact th amendment process" groups that were earlier not included under the framework of popular sovereignty were now a African Americans, the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments added to the constitution specifically addressed their status) Marshall's ascension to the court a century later. To round out their essay, they might integrate Marshall's ironic o men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 could not... have imagined… that the document they were drafting woul by a Supreme Court to which had been appointed … the descendant of an African slave."

- Analyze Monk's explanation of the modifications that have been made to the Constitution.

  Students might begin their paragraph by observing that Monk begins her analysis noting the significance of sovereignty and how that opens up the question of who "the people" are. Teachers should look for students then causal mechanisms for change to the Constitution, from the role of "advocates for women's rights" like Lucy Sto trailblazers like Thurgood Marshall, "the first African American on the Supreme Court." But students should give amendment process" and how through it "more and more Americans were eventually included in the Constitution People.'" Students might round out their paragraphs by citing some of the changes to the constitution in the form (e.g. "the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote nationwide").

Appendix A: Additional Instructional Opportunities for Monk's *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution*

If teachers wish to add additional instructional time, they might consider having small groups of mixed ability students or even individual students pursue one of these lines of investigation.

1. Although Marshall is right in claiming that the Founding Fathers did not imagine an African-American or a woman serving on the court, they did envision possible changes to the Constitution and created an amendment process to accommodate such changes. Indeed, right after the Constitution was written, ten Amendments were passed, commonly referred to as the Bill of Rights. Students could look into the reasons why the Constitution was altered so soon after it was adopted or pick one of the Amendments in the Bill of Rights and research the history of that particular amendment or a particular legal case connected with it. (e.g. Gideon v. Wainwright and the Sixth Amendment).

2. The idea of a changing definition of "people" in Monk's text will intrigue middle school students. They could examine the different "types" of people at the nation's founding (immigrants, Native Americans, indentured servants, slaves, etc) and how they have been viewed within a Constitutional framework. Specific historical events could be used to illuminate the treatment of groups not protected by the constitution, from the Cherokee Removal to the Chinese Exclusion Act to even the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment.

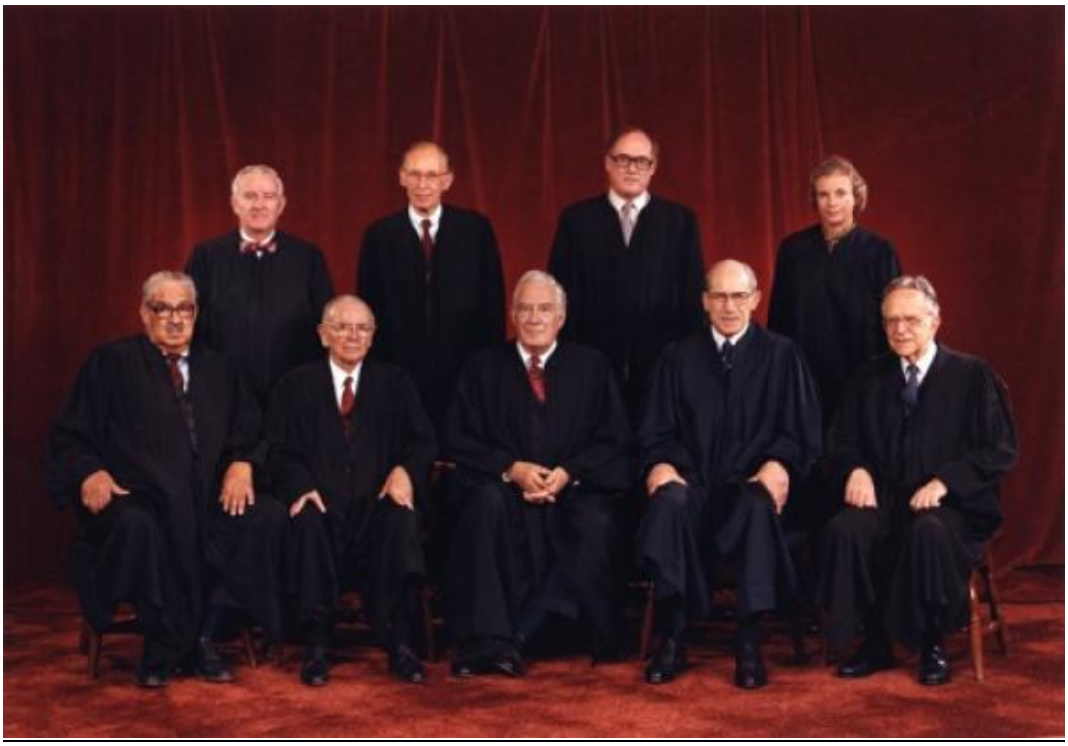
3. There are many times the Constitution is invoked on both sides of a debate about rights. To reinforce the concept that the U.S. Constitution is a living document, students could investigate an area of debate where the interpretation of an Amendment or amending the Constitution is central to the argument and then debate it in class. Some possibilities are gun control, balancing the federal budget, gay marriage, or even the legality of selling alcohol.

4. Students could select one of the amendments mentioned by Monk that expanded the conception of who "the people" were and research it more in depth, examining the historical background, the reasons for its adoption, and its effects both intended and otherwise.

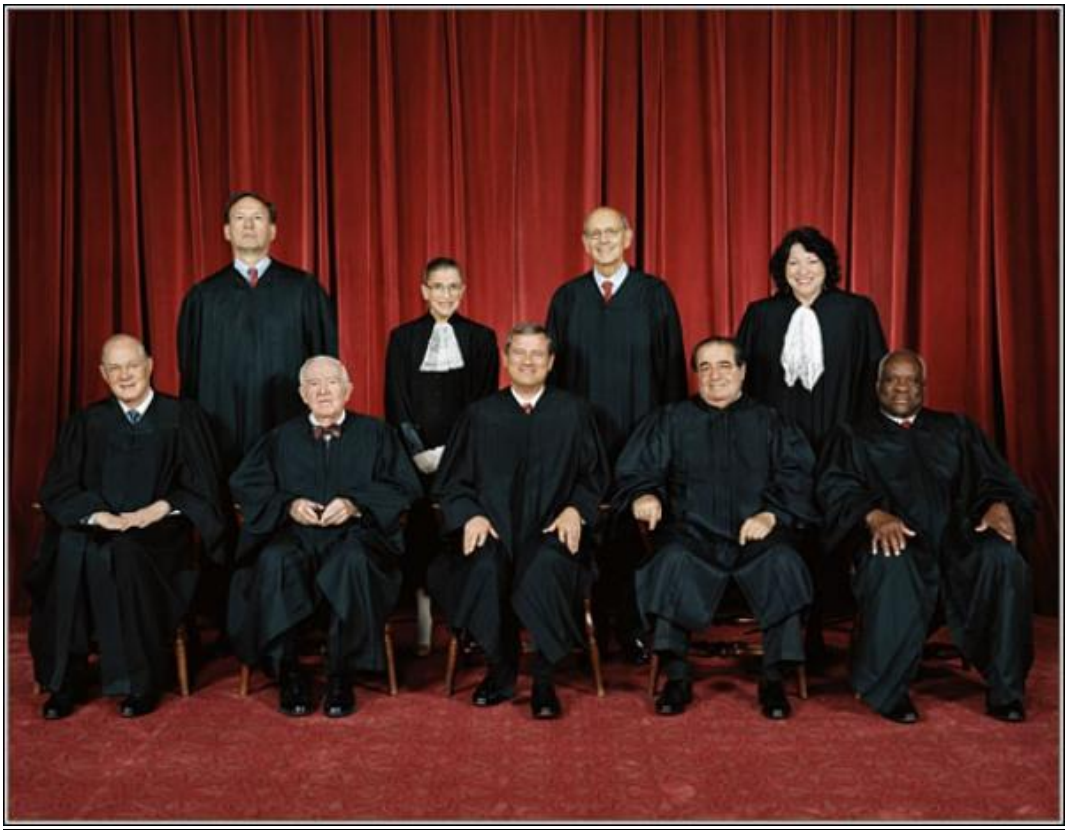
Appendix B: Images of the Justices of the Supreme Court

Fuller Court, 1890

Taft Court, 1930



Berger Court, 1970



Roberts Court, 2010

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