Thematic Unit: New Government in the Developing Nation
Grade Four

In grade four, the Brighton Central School District Social Studies Curriculum covers the New Nation and Government, aligning with NYS standards for the elementary grades.

- **Unit Goals and Possible Resources**
  1. Students will understand what democracy is and why it is important.
  2. Students will gain knowledge of key figures in the development of the Nation’s government.
  3. Students will be exposed to documents composed by early leaders and will tie their importance to life today.

- **Standards:** SS 5.1, SS 5.2, SS 5.3, SS 5.4, ELA 1.1, ELA 1.2, ELA 2.1, ELA 4.1, MST 2.1, MST 3.2, MST 3.4, MST 4.4, Theater Arts 1.1, Visual Arts 1.1

- **Essential Question:** Why is Government Important?

1. **Initial Research on Key Figures for Cooperative Biographies:** The class will divide into three groups and will be responsible for researching an area in the life of Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson or George Washington. In this lesson students will practice researching skills with teacher led guidance.
2. **Literature Study:** Over the weeks of the unit the class will complete a literature study based on the book *Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution.* Students will use teacher created literature logs, character analysis sheets and vocabulary marks to learn more about key figures and the Constitution.
3. **Bill of Rights:** Students will break into groups and rewrite the first ten amendments to the Constitution using “kid-friendly” language. They will then create a poster or short skit depicting the amendment.
4. **Class Constitution:** As a cooperative class, students will create the “4th Grade Constitution” for the classroom.
5. **Branches of the Government:** Students will split into three groups and become “experts” on one branch of the government using classroom resources to research. Groups will jigsaw and teach one another about the different branches.
6. **Presidency:** Students will review the accomplishments of George Washington and his contributions to the office of President. They will then create a campaign poster as if he was running for a third term, highlighting his strengths and achievements.
7. **Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase:** Students will learn about the Louisiana Purchase and then create “before and after” maps of the US and analyze the area of territory gained.
8. **Ben Franklin and Electricity:** Students will learn about Ben Franklin’s discovery of electricity and create a replica of the kite used in his experiment.
9. **The Electoral College System:** Students will create a mock election and record charts based on votes using the Electoral College system as a model.
10. **Culminating Event:** As a culminating event, students will present their cooperative biographies in the form of a play. Each member of the group has been responsible for a different aspect of the key figure’s life. They will combine each aspect by chapter to create a biography. They will then write a script based on these chapters. They will choose roles for each student to play and create costumes and basic scenery to support their story. Students will receive help in writing the scripts and creating scenery by high school students involved in the drama program serving as mentors to each group. Students will perform the plays in front of the class as a way to teach others about their key figure.