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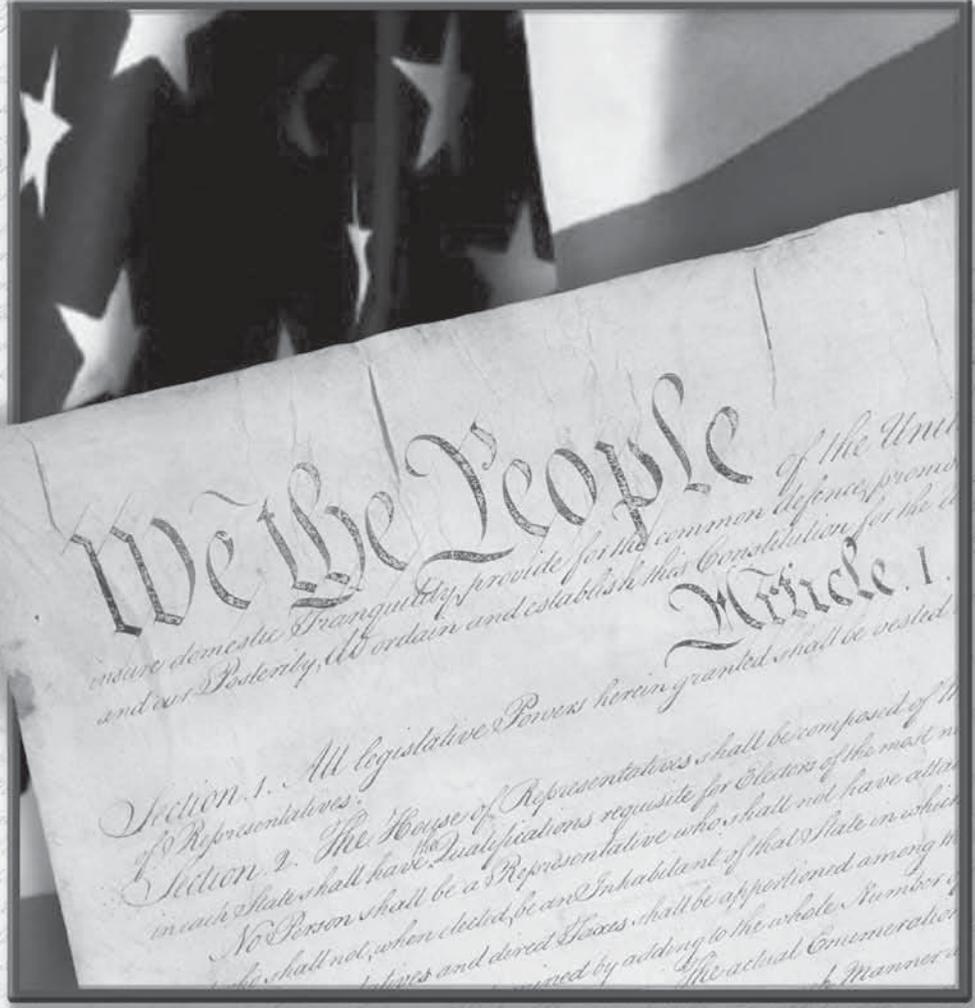
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The Constitution

A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding the Constitution and Its Impact on the United States of America



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Dear Teacher or Parent,

Three of the most important words in the Constitution are *We the people*. Those words, which begin our Constitution, turned the eighteenth century world of kings and queens and potentates upside down. Those three words were the harbinger of a New World order where democratic forms of government were taking root, replacing the ancient monarchies of Europe. The power to govern was no longer in the crown of a king but lay with the people, *We the people*.

Though our nation is young among the nations of the world, the United States has the oldest written constitution on Earth. Nearly two-thirds of the world's governments have constitutions drafted since 1970. The American constitution, on the other hand, was drafted in 1787 during a long, hot summer in Philadelphia over 210 years ago. The 55 convention delegates shaped an enduring document that has withstood the test of time. Countries around the world have used it as a model for their own governments.

This book introduces students to the Preamble and the Articles of the Constitution, as well as, the Amendments that followed. Through the activities and games in this book the students will explore why the framers wrote the Constitution in the first place. They will also meet the signers and learn about the arguments and compromises that shaped the document into what has made it arguably the greatest document of its kind.

Students study the Constitution through a variety of activities that test comprehension and understanding of the basic concepts found in the Constitution from the Preamble to the Amendments. The activities and games are designed to work together as one unit but may also be used alone to supplement a textbook. All of these activities can be used to enrich your existing program.

Sincerely,



Douglas M. Rife and Gina Capaldi



Teacher Notes

Constitutional Convention

Objectives

- To identify the three main plans put forth at the Constitutional Convention
- To identify the events that led to the ratification of the Constitution

Vocabulary

Constitutional Convention Event at which the framers wrote the document that lays out the foundations of the American government

delegates

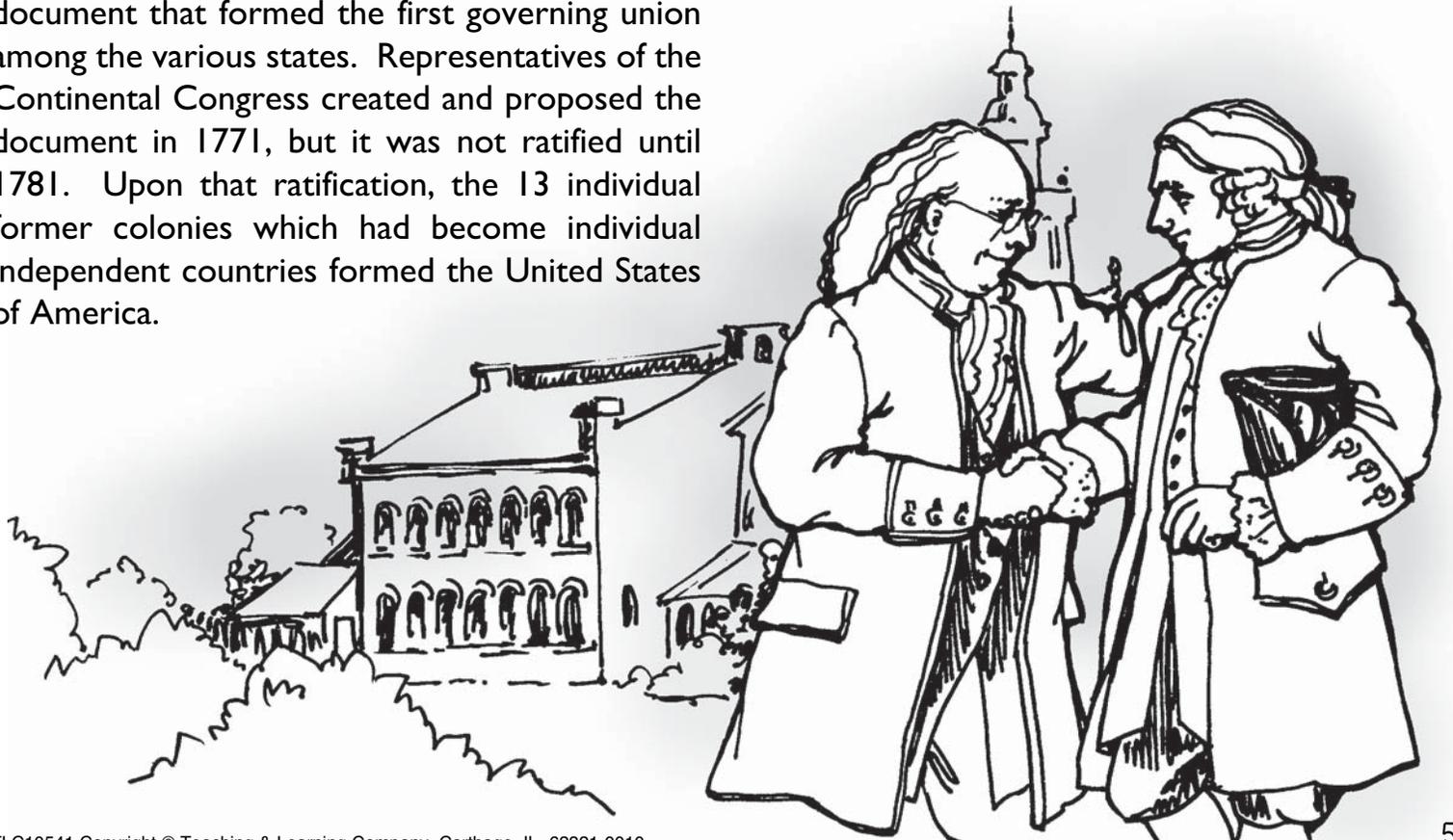
The people elected to represent the various states at the Constitutional Convention

Background Information

The Constitutional Convention took place during the summer at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the Old State House. Fifty-five delegates from the former colonies came together to amend the Articles of Confederation. The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union was the document that formed the first governing union among the various states. Representatives of the Continental Congress created and proposed the document in 1771, but it was not ratified until 1781. Upon that ratification, the 13 individual former colonies which had become individual independent countries formed the United States of America.

Suggested Lesson Plan

1. Explain the lesson objectives. Review the vocabulary and background information with the students.
2. Invite the students to study the “Constitutional Time Line” handout on page 9 and complete the matching exercise.



Delegates to the Constitutional Convention by State

**Indicates delegates who did not sign the Constitution*

Connecticut

William Samuel Johnson
Roger Sherman
Oliver Ellsworth*

Delaware

George Read
Gunning Bedford, Jr.
John Dickinson
Richard Bassett
Jacob Broom

Georgia

William Few
Abraham Baldwin
William Houstoun*
William L. Pierce*

Maryland

James McHenry
Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer
Daniel Carroll
Luther Martin*
John F. Mercer*

Massachusetts

Nathaniel Gorham
Rufus King
Elbridge Gerry*
Caleb Strong*

New Hampshire

John Langdon
Nicholas Gilman

New Jersey

William Livingston
David Brearly
William Paterson
Jonathan Dayton
William C. Houston*

New York

Alexander Hamilton
John Lansing, Jr.*
Robert Yates*

North Carolina

William Blount
Richard Dobbs Spaight
Hugh Williamson
William R. Davie*
Alexander Martin*

Pennsylvania

Benjamin Franklin
Thomas Mifflin
Robert Morris
George Clymer
Thomas FitzSimons
Jared Ingersoll
James Wilson
Gouverneur Morris

South Carolina

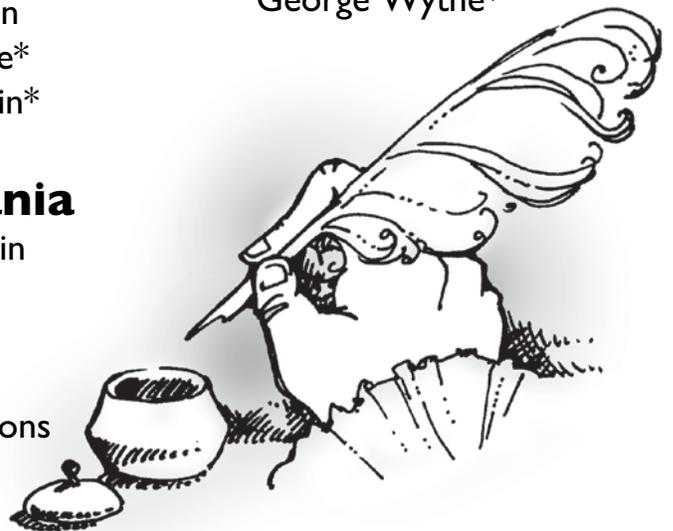
John Rutledge
Charles Cotesworth
Pinckney
Charles Pinckney
Pierce Butler

Rhode Island

Rhode Island did not
send delegates to the
Constitutional Convention.

Virginia

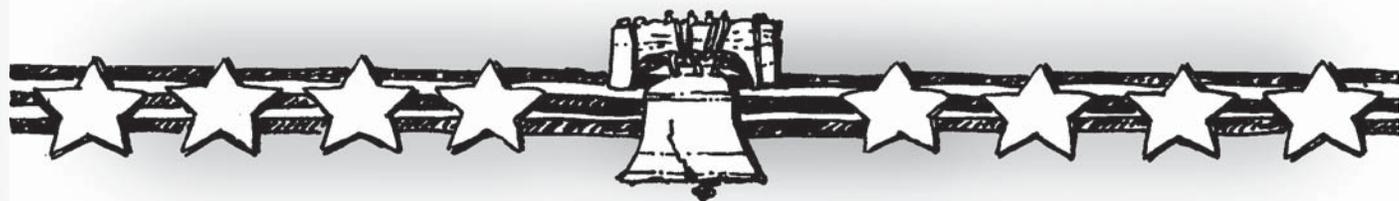
John Blair
James Madison, Jr.
George Washington
George Mason*
James McClurg*
Edmund J. Randolph*
George Wythe*



Constitutional Convention

1786

Representatives from five states held a convention in Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss problems between the states. Delegates adjourned the meeting deciding little except to plan a convention in Philadelphia the following May to take up issues with all of the states.



1787

The Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia began in May of 1787. Originally the plan was for the delegates to amend the Articles of Confederation, not to propose a new constitution. But on May 25, the delegates voted to write a new constitution. Edmund Randolph of Virginia presented the Virginia Plan. It called for a government with three branches—the executive branch, legislative branch and judicial branch. The legislative branch was to be made up of two houses, both of which would have its number of seats determined by population. The Virginia Plan also proposed that the legislative branch would elect the executive and judicial branches.

The delegates from the smaller states objected to this plan because they believed that the heavily populated states would have too much power. William Paterson of New Jersey offered a nine-point proposal to amend the Articles of Confederation. The New Jersey Plan would have one legislative body, every state having an equal vote. The office of executive was to be led by several people chosen by Congress. Congress would be granted the power to tax and regulate trade. Both proposals were hotly debated at the convention.

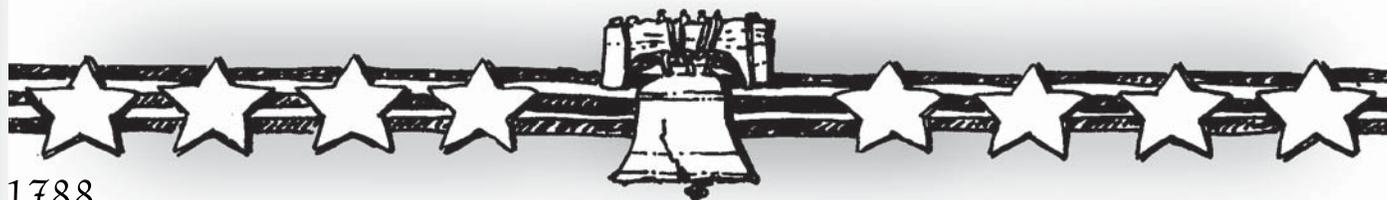
Roger Sherman of Connecticut presented the Connecticut Plan. That Plan was a compromise between the two plans and became known as the Great Compromise. It proposed a legislature with two houses, the upper house would have two seats per state, and the lower house representation would be based on population.

After the debates, the document was given to Gouverneur Morris to style. On September 17, 1787, the 39 delegates approved the Constitution. Copies of the Constitution were then sent to each of the 13 states for ratification. Each of the 13 states held conventions to decide on ratification of the Constitution. Delegates in each state were sent to conventions to vote on whether or not their state would ratify or vote for the Constitution to be the new law of the land, replacing the Articles of Confederation. The Constitution was completed and signed in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania State House and sent to the states for ratification. The framers had debated how amendments could be added to the new Constitution during the May to September convention. There had also been debate about adding a Bill of Rights even before the Constitution was finished.

George Mason of Virginia offered to write a bill of rights. He deeply distrusted powerful, centralized and autocratic government and believed that individual rights had to be protected. Though Mason had authored the Virginia Bill of Rights, the delegates voted down his proposal. Mason was so upset that the document did not include a bill of rights that he refused to sign the completed Constitution.

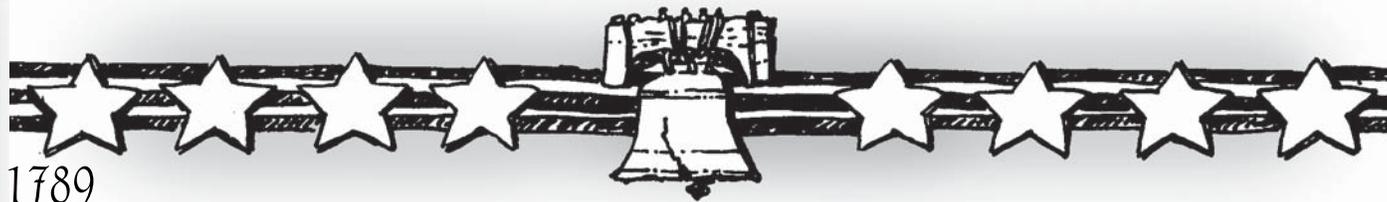
Below is a chart that shows the dates of ratification, when the vote was taken and what the tallies were for and against for each of the original 13 states.

State	Date	For	Against
Delaware	December 7, 1787	30	0
Pennsylvania	December 12, 1787	46	23
New Jersey	December 18, 1787	38	0
Georgia	January 2, 1788	26	0
Connecticut	January 4, 1788	128	40
Massachusetts	February 6, 1788	187	168
Maryland	April 28, 1788	63	11
South Carolina	May 23, 1788	149	73
New Hampshire*	June 21, 1788	57	47
Virginia	June 25, 1788	89	79
New York	July 26, 1788	30	27
North Carolina	November 21, 1789	195	77
Rhode Island	May 29, 1790	34	32



1788

June 21, the ninth state, New Hampshire ratified the Constitution. The new Constitution went into effect. The new government began to take shape.



1789

April 1, the first House of Representatives was organized.

April 6, George Washington was elected President. He was greeted by cheering crowds from Virginia to New York. Washington was the most celebrated American of his time.

April 30, George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States. He took the oath of office, required by the Constitution, on the balcony of the Federal Building in New York City.

Name _____

Constitutional Time Line

Place the following events in the order in which they happened on the time line below.

George Washington is inaugurated as the first President of the United States.

Delaware becomes the first state to ratify the Constitution.

The Constitution is approved.

The Constitutional Convention convenes in Philadelphia.

New Hampshire becomes the ninth state to ratify the Constitution.

The United States House of Representatives is organized.

Time Line

May 25, 1787 _____

September 17, 1787 _____

December 7, 1787 _____

June 21, 1788 _____

April 1, 1789 _____

April 30, 1789 _____

