

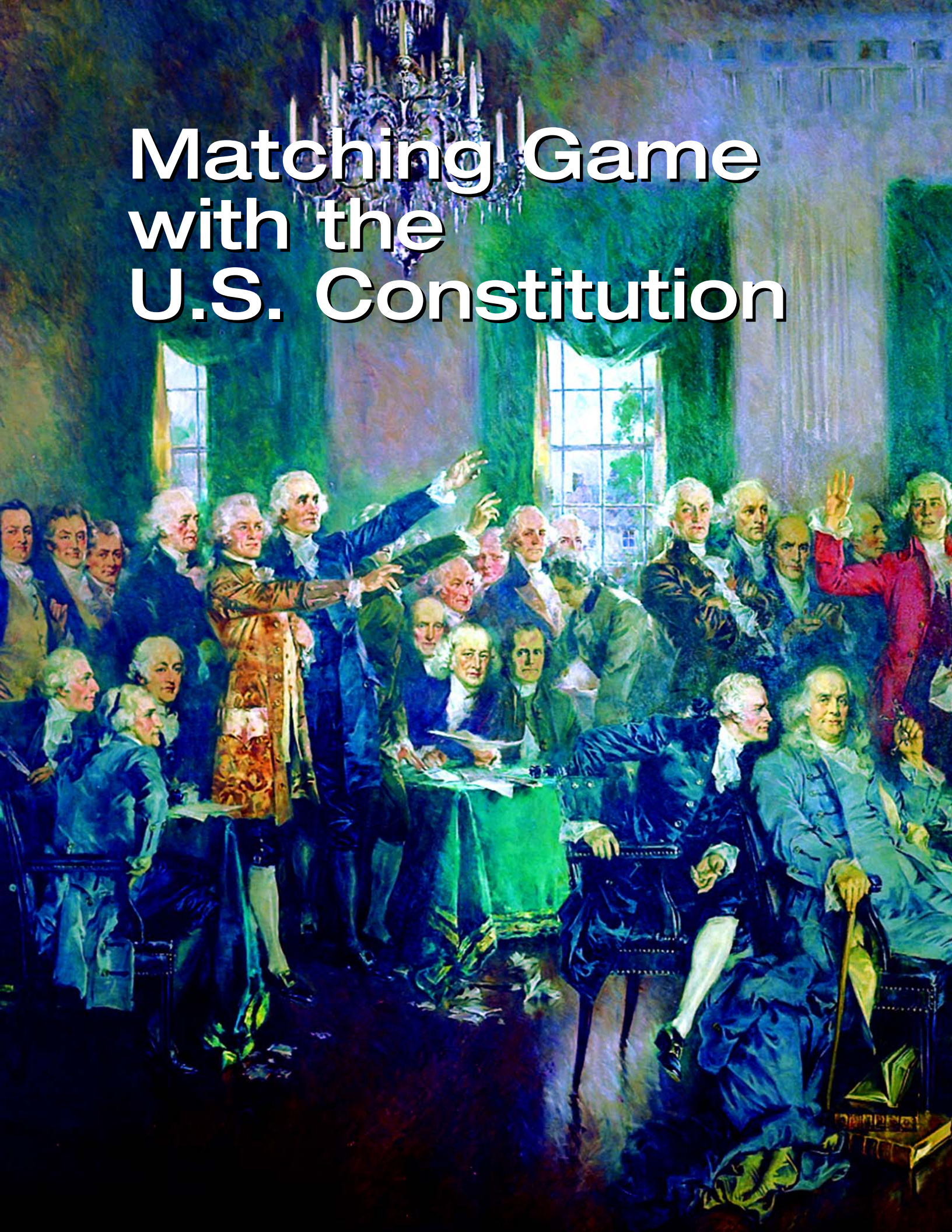
We the People

Constitution Day

ACROSS THE COUNTRY ★ SEPTEMBER 17 ★ ★ ★ constitutionday.civiced.org



Matching Game with the U.S. Constitution





ABOUT CONSTITUTION DAY

In 1952, President Harry S. Truman signed a bill that moved I Am an American Day from the third Sunday in May to September 17 in order for the holiday to coincide with the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. Congress renamed the holiday Citizenship Day. A joint resolution passed in 1956 requested that the president proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 each year as Constitution Week.

In 2004, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia entered an amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 to change the name of the September 17 holiday to Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. The purpose of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day is to commemorate the creation and signing of the supreme law of the land and to honor and celebrate the privileges and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship for both native-born and naturalized citizens.

Byrd's amendment, known as Public Law 108-477, requires that all schools receiving federal funds hold an educational program for their students on September 17 of each year. This lesson, which is adapted from curricular materials on the Constitution produced by the Center for Civic Education, is designed to assist schools and federal agencies to meet the requirements of this law.

OBJECTIVES	PROCEDURE
<p>By the end of this lesson, students will</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 understand what the Constitution is and what it does for them; 2 recognize key images related to the Constitution and its history. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Begin the lesson by telling students that it is Constitution Day. Ask students if they have ever heard of the Constitution and to share what they know about it. 2 Read background information about the Constitution aloud to students. Use either the story provided here or other suitable materials. (Some schools have Constitution books geared toward younger students.)
TERMS TO KNOW + IDENTIFY	
<p>American flag</p> <p>Benjamin Franklin</p> <p>Bill of Rights</p> <p>Constitution</p> <p>courts</p> <p>George Washington</p> <p>James Madison</p> <p>law</p> <p>signing the Constitution</p> <p>White House</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 After reading the background story, check for students' understanding. 4 Prepare students to play the Matching Game by sharing the following rules with them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cards will be placed face down on the carpet or table. • One student will be called on to turn any two cards over. If the cards match, the student will pick up the cards and take another turn. If they do not match, the student will turn their two cards back over and it will be the next student's turn. • The game ends when students have matched all the cards. The student with the most matches is the winner. <p>Rules for Matching Game</p>
MATERIALS	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Background story on the Constitution (page 5) 2 Five to six sets of game pieces (pages 11–14) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Play the Matching Game. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show each picture to students. • Do a practice game with five students while the other students observe. • Divide the class into groups of four or five, and have the students play the game in their groups.

- 6 After students have played for ten minutes, have them clean up the game and settle down into their seats. Show each picture to the students, and have them describe something that they have learned about that image.

BACKGROUND STORY ON THE CONSTITUTION

In 1787, a group of men met because they did not like the way the government worked. They fixed the government by writing the Constitution. We call these men the Framers. The Framers are famous. George Washington was a Framers. Benjamin Franklin and James Madison were Framers, too.

The Framers met during a hot summer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They had a lot of arguments about how to fix all the problems of the government. In the end, they agreed to the words in the Constitution. The Constitution created a new government.

After the Framers wrote the Constitution, they asked the states to vote to approve it. It took some time, but all the states did approve the Constitution.

Some people did not like the Constitution. Some people thought the Constitution did not do enough to protect the rights of the people.

After the Constitution was approved, the Bill of Rights was added. The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments, or changes, to the Constitution.

The law is the set of rules that we live by. The Constitution is the highest law. It belongs to the United States. It belongs to all Americans.

The Constitution says how the government works. The government has three parts. The executive branch has the president. He or she lives and works in a place called the White House. The legislative branch is the Congress. The judicial branch is the courts.

The Constitution lists some key rights. Rights are things that all people have just because they are alive. The Bill of Rights is a part of the Constitution. The Bill of Rights lists many rights of the people. By listing the rights, the Bill of Rights makes rights special. They are made safe.

The Bill of Rights protects important ideas. It protects your right to say what you want. It lets you think for yourself. It keeps the laws from being too hard. It gives rules for the police.

The Bill of Rights lets you believe in God if you want. No one can tell you not to believe. It lets you gather with your friends to talk. It makes sure that newspapers can print true stories.

The Bill of Rights also protects your home. It helps keep Americans safe. Today, we are happy the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution.

NOTES FOR THE TEACHER

The following content is provided as teacher background for the lesson on the Constitution.

What Is a Constitution?

A constitution is a set of fundamental customs, traditions, rules, and laws that set forth the basic way a government is organized and operated. Most constitutions are in writing, some are partly written and partly unwritten, and some are not written at all.

If you study the constitution of a government, you will be able to answer the following questions about the relationship between the government and its citizens.

Government

- What are the purposes of the government?
- How is the government organized?
- How does the government operate?

Citizens

- Who is a citizen?
- Do citizens have any power or control over the government? If so, how do citizens exercise their powers?
- What rights and responsibilities do citizens have?

By this definition of a constitution, nearly every nation has a constitution. Good governments and bad governments have constitutions. Some of the worst governments have constitutions that include lists of the basic rights of their citizens. A list of rights does not mean that the citizens actually enjoy those rights.

What Is a Constitutional Government?

Having a constitution does not mean that a nation has a constitutional government. If, for example, a constitution provides for the unlimited exercise of political power by one, a few, or many, it would not be the basis for a constitutional government. If a constitution says that power is to be limited, but it does not include ways to enforce those limitations, it also is not the basis for a constitutional government.

The principles of constitutional and limited governments are intertwined. Limited governments are characterized by restraints on power, such as laws that both the rulers and the governed must obey, and free and periodic elections. The opposite is unlimited government, in which those who govern are free to use their power as they choose, unrestrained by laws or elections. Aristotle described unlimited government as tyranny. Today the terms *autocracy*, *dictatorship*, or *totalitarianism* are frequently used to describe such governments.

What Are the Characteristics of the Higher Law?

In a constitutional government, the constitution, or higher law, has the following characteristics:

- It sets forth the basic rights of citizens.
- It establishes the responsibility of the government to protect those rights.
- It establishes limitations on how those in government may use their powers with regard to citizens' rights and responsibilities, the distribution of resources, and the control of conflict.

- It can be changed only with the widespread consent of the citizens and according to established and well-known procedures.

Source: *Constitution for the United States of America*.
Center for Civic Education, 1987.

How Did the Framers Create the Constitution?

The U.S. Constitution was written at a convention held in Philadelphia in 1787. The following describes the idea of a constitutional convention, how the Philadelphia Convention came to be, some of the most important people who attended it, and some of the first steps they took to create our present Constitution.

What Attempts Were Made to Solve the Problems of the Articles of Confederation?

Many political leaders, including Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, were dissatisfied with the government under the Articles of Confederation. They claimed the government was inadequate for meeting the problems of the United States.

A number of prominent leaders suggested holding a meeting of representatives of all the states. This idea of holding a special meeting, or convention, to discuss constitutional changes, instead of using the legislature, was an American invention. Most of the early state constitutions had been written by state legislatures. In 1780, Massachusetts became the first state to hold a constitutional convention.

By 1786, Madison and other leaders decided that if a convention could be used successfully in a state, it was worth trying at the national level.

In 1786, a meeting to discuss commercial problems was held in Annapolis, Maryland. Only five states sent representatives. Disappointed at the low turnout, Hamilton, Madison, and others wrote a report asking Congress to call a meeting in Philadelphia to suggest ways to change the Articles of Confederation to strengthen the national government. Congress did so after a delay of several months. Delegates to the Philadelphia Convention were authorized only to propose amendments to the Articles, not to develop an entirely new constitution, which is exactly what they did.

Who Attended the Philadelphia Convention?

Fifty-five delegates attended the meeting that later became known as the Philadelphia Convention. This group of men are now often called the Framers of the Constitution. Most of the delegates were fairly young: the average age was forty-two. About three-fourths of them had served in Congress. Most were prominent in their states, and some had played important parts in the American Revolution. Some delegates were wealthy, but most were not. A French diplomat in America at the time said that the Framers “without being rich are all in easy circumstances.”

Contemporary observers were impressed by the quality of the delegates to the Philadelphia Convention. Another French diplomat stationed in America observed that never before, “even in Europe,” had there been “an assembly more respectable for talents, knowledge, disinterestedness, and patriotism.” From Paris, Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams in London that the convention “is an assembly of demigods.”

We should remember, however, that some of the Framers were men of modest abilities or questionable motives. Probably the most balanced view of the men at Philadelphia has been given by Max Farrand, a historian, who wrote the following:

Great men there were, it is true, but the convention as a whole was composed of men such as would be appointed to a similar gathering at the present time: professional men, business men, and gentlemen of leisure; patriotic statesmen and clever, scheming politicians; some trained by experience and study for the task before them; and others utterly unfit. It was essentially a representative body.

Most of the Framers' stories are worth telling in detail. The following two are of particular importance.

George Washington George Washington was probably the most respected and honored man in the country. During the Revolutionary War, he left Mount Vernon, his Virginia plantation, to lead the American army to victory over the British. When the war was over, Washington returned to private life. Although convinced of the necessity for a strong national government, he was not interested in holding public office.

At first, Washington refused the invitation to attend the Philadelphia Convention. He later agreed to be a delegate from Virginia, fearing that if he did not attend, people might think he had lost his faith in republican government. Washington was unanimously elected president of the convention, although he was not active in the debates. His presence and support of the

Constitution, together with the widespread assumption that he would be the nation's first president, were essential to the Constitution's ratification by the states.

James Madison Of all the Framers, James Madison probably had the greatest influence on the organization of the national government. Born in 1751, Madison was one of the youngest of the revolutionary leaders, and by 1787 his talents had long been recognized and admired. In 1776, at the age of twenty-five, Madison was elected to the Virginia convention, where he was named to a committee to frame the state constitution. There, he first displayed his lifelong commitment to freedom of religion. Madison was instrumental in persuading George Mason, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, to change the clause that guaranteed "toleration" of religion to one that secured its "free exercise."

As a leader in Virginia politics and a member of the Confederation Congress, Madison was active in the 1780s in support of a stronger national government. His influence at the Philadelphia Convention was great, in part because he brought with him a plan he had already developed for creating a new national government—the Virginia Plan. After much debate over alternatives, this plan was used as the basis for discussion on improving the national government.

Had it not been for Madison, we probably would not know much about what happened during the convention. The Framers had decided to keep the discussions a secret, although delegates were free to take notes. Madison attended nearly every session and kept careful notes. Much of what we know today about what happened in the convention is based on his records.

After the convention, Madison collaborated with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay to write a defense of the new Constitution. This defense was a series of eighty-five articles written for newspapers in New York. In 1788, the articles were collected in a book titled *The Federalist*. The articles urged citizens of New York to vote for delegates to the state ratifying convention who were favorable to the Constitution. *The Federalist* is probably the most important work written on the basic principles and ideas underlying our constitutional government.

What Other Important Delegates Attended?

In addition to Washington and Madison, the delegates included many other prominent men. Benjamin Franklin was eighty-one and in poor health, but because he was internationally respected, his mere presence lent an aura of wisdom to the convention. Alexander Hamilton, although one of the strongest supporters of a strong national government, was outvoted within his own state delegation and left in frustration before the convention was half over. He returned for a few days and signed the completed document in September. Hamilton later played a major role in the struggle over ratification, as a principal author of *The Federalist* and as the leader of pro-Constitution forces in New York. James Wilson, although not as well known as Madison or Hamilton, was also a major influence in shaping the theory of the Constitution. Later, Wilson led the Federalist forces in Pennsylvania. In 1789, President Washington appointed him to be a justice of the Supreme Court.

Besides Madison and Wilson, the delegate who spoke most frequently at the convention was

Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania. Edmund Randolph, who as Governor of Virginia was officially the head of the Virginia delegation, introduced the Virginia Plan to the convention. Randolph, however, refused to sign the completed document. Roger Sherman of Connecticut was instrumental in forging the Connecticut Compromise on representation in Congress. George Mason, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, believed that the national constitution also should contain explicit guarantees of fundamental rights. Like Randolph, he did not sign the Constitution. Elbridge Gerry, who also refused to sign the Constitution, later led the forces against ratification in Massachusetts. Later still, he served as vice president under President James Madison.

What Important Founders Did Not Attend the Convention?

There also were some important political leaders who did not attend the Constitutional Convention.

Thomas Jefferson was in Paris as the U.S. ambassador to France. John Adams, who was recognized as a leading American political thinker, was serving as U.S. ambassador to Great Britain. Adams had been a principal architect of the Massachusetts constitution of 1780. The first volume of his *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* had also appeared in early 1787.

Patrick Henry, the revolutionary leader, refused to attend the Philadelphia Convention. He was against the development of a strong national government and was suspicious of what might happen at the convention. He supposedly said, "I smell a rat" to explain why he would not attend the Convention.

Other leaders not present at Philadelphia included John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and Richard Henry Lee. Besides these prominent individuals, one state—Rhode Island—refused to be represented at the convention.

What Happened When the Convention Began?

By Friday, May 25, 1787, eleven days after the convention was scheduled to begin, delegations from a majority of the states were present in Philadelphia. George Washington was unanimously elected president of the convention, and a committee was appointed to draw up the rules for the meeting.

The delegates agreed that each state would have one vote at the convention, even though the delegations varied in size. They also agreed that a member could not be absent from the convention without permission if his absence would deprive his state of its vote. In addition, delegates adopted a rule making it possible to reconsider issues freely. This way no decision had to be permanent until the entire plan was completed.

The Framers decided that what was said in the convention should be kept secret. There were two reasons for this.

- The Framers wanted to develop the best constitution they could. This required a free exchange of ideas. They were afraid that if their debates were made public, many of the delegates would not feel free to express their real opinions.
- The Framers also thought the new constitution would have a greater chance of being accepted if people did not know

about the arguments that went on while it was being created.

Once the rules were agreed on, the convention got to work. Almost immediately, the Framers decided to ignore their instructions from Congress to limit their work to amending the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they voted to work on the development of an entirely new constitution.

Source: *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution*, Level 3, Lesson 11, “Who Attended the Philadelphia Convention? What Did They Agree to Do?” Center for Civic Education, 1995.

MATCHING GAME CLIP ART



THE WHITE HOUSE



THE WHITE HOUSE



SIGNING THE CONSTITUTION



SIGNING THE CONSTITUTION

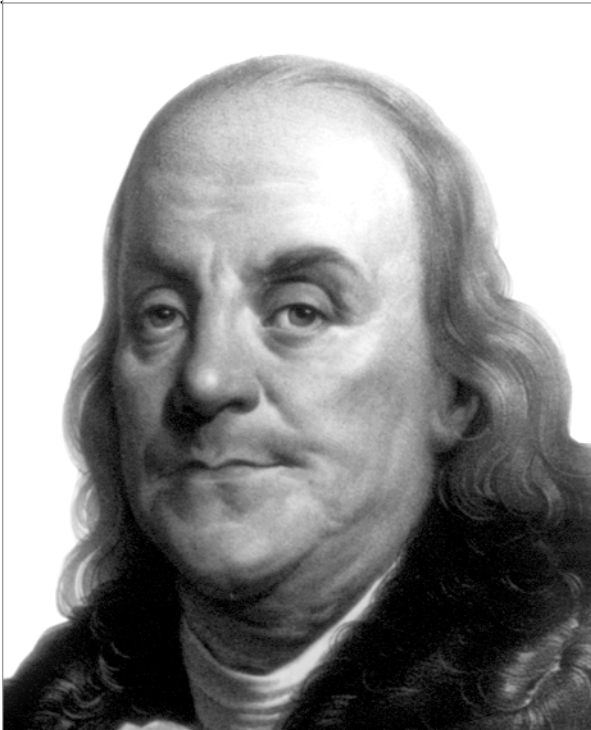
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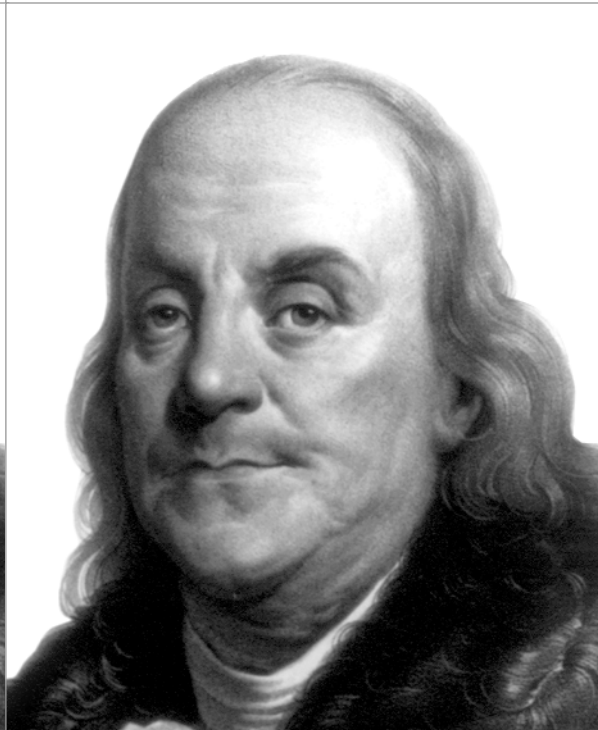
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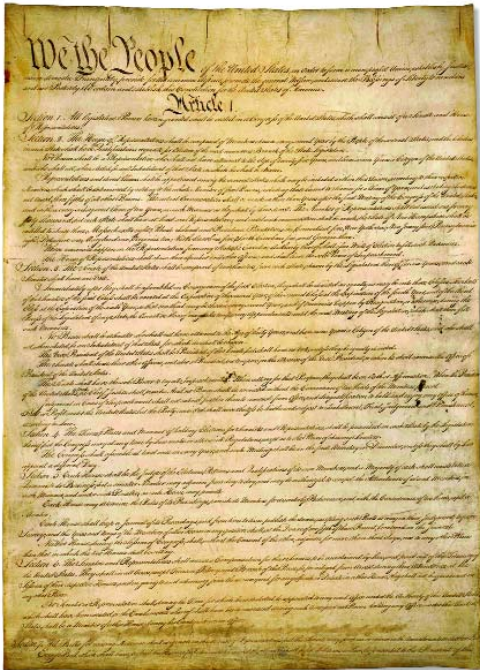


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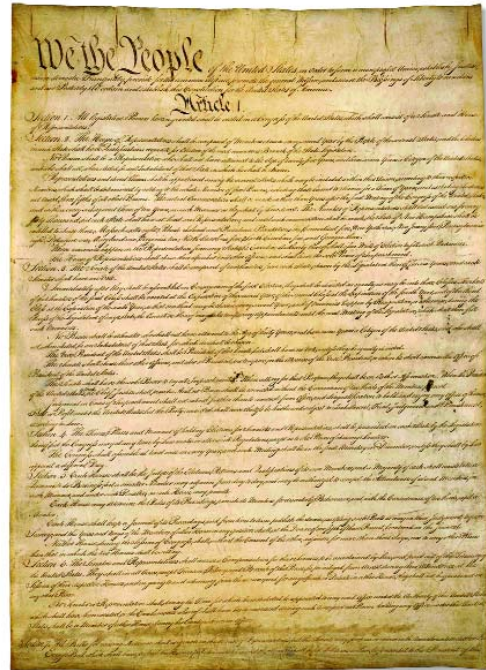


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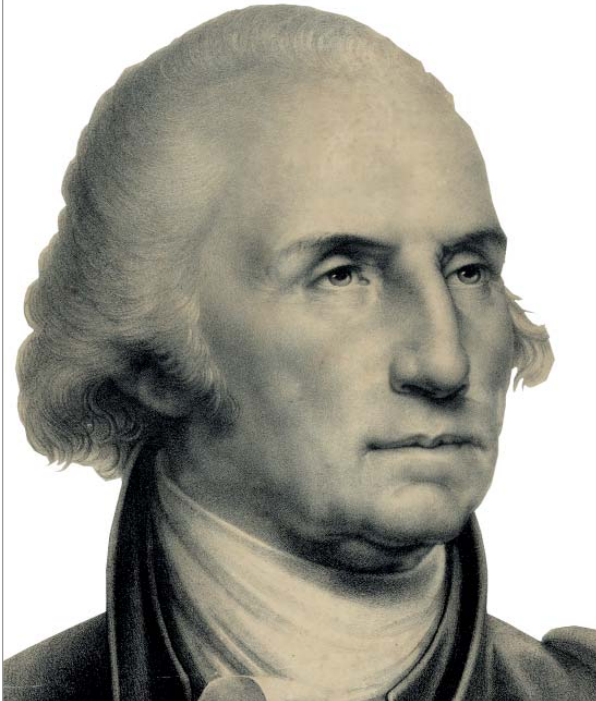
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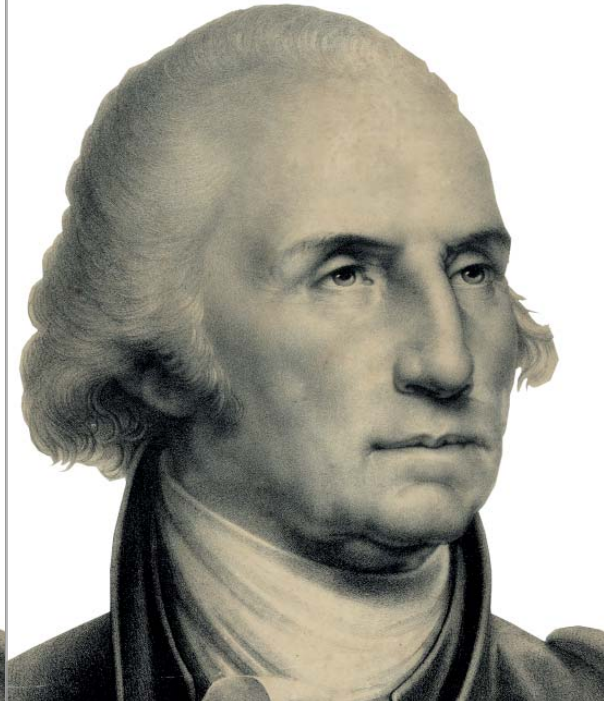
THE CONSTITUTION



THE CONSTITUTION



GEORGE WASHINGTON



GEORGE WASHINGTON

MATCHING GAME CLIP ART



THE AMERICAN FLAG



THE AMERICAN FLAG

CREDITS

This lesson was created for the Center for Civic Education's Constitution Day resources by Marie Nemes, Ritter Elementary School, Allentown, Pennsylvania.

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