

# THE CONSTITUTION

They met in Philadelphia in May 1787. Fifty-five men from 12 different states gathered, intending to revise the Articles of Confederation. As they began their meetings, however, Virginia Governor Edmund Randolph presented a plan prepared by James Madison.



Bill of Rights - Illustration  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99472755/>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The plan outlined a design for a new, centralized, strong national government. Thus began the four-month process of secret argument, debate and compromise that produced the Constitution of the United States. On September 17, 1787, the final draft of the document was read to the 42 delegates remaining at the convention.

Thirty-nine delegates affixed their signatures to the document and notified the Confederation Congress that their work was finished. Then the Congress submitted the document to the states for ratification. More argument, debate, and compromise took place. The Constitution was first ratified by the state of Delaware. On June 21, 1788, just nine months after the state ratification process began, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify and the Constitution established the U.S. government as it exists today. The U.S. Constitution remains the world's oldest written constitution.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Use the documents and sound files in this primary sources toolkit to help your students experience this long-ago event. Your students can view the documents, recorded notes and personal reflections of the delegates. They can read news reviews of the time. They can study a map and image of the places where these historic events occurred and can view paintings of the people involved in these events. They can view a chart, a broadside, the song lyrics and a graphical cover for a musical score. They can even listen to the words of later statesmen whose speeches record their beliefs about the duties of government and about being a U.S. citizen.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### **American Memory Timeline**

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/>



### **American Memory Timeline: The New Nation**

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/newnatn/newnatn.html>



### **Primary Documents in American History**

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/PrimDocsHome.html>



### **The U.S. Constitution: Continuity and Change in the Governing of the United States (grades 6 - 12)**

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/continuity-change/>



### **The Constitution: Counter Revolution or National Salvation? (grades 9 - 12)**

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/constitution/>

## PRIMARY SOURCES WITH CITATIONS



Szyk, Arrhur. Bill of Rights. Illustration. 1949. Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99472755/>



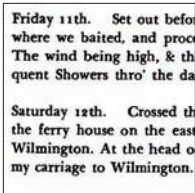
Scull, N. and G. Heap. *A Map of Philadelphia*. Map. Philadelphia: N. Scull, 1752. From Library of Congress, *Map Collections: 1500-2004*.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3824p.ct000294>



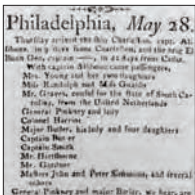
Trenchard, James, engraver. *A N.W. View of the State House in Philadelphia Taken 1778*. Etching. [1787.] From Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2004671521/>



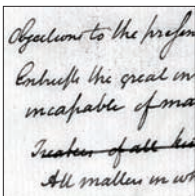
Washington, George. *The Diaries of George Washington*, Vol. V. May 1787. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979. Page 237. From the Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: The Diaries of George Washington*.

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgwd&fileName=mgwd/gwpagewd05.db&recNum=254>



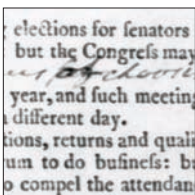
[*Newspaper Articles and Notices Printed in 1787 During the Constitutional Convention in Phila.*] 28 May 1787. From the Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2002705836/>



Hamilton, Alexander. *Notes for a Speech Proposing a Plan of Government at the Federal Convention*. 18 June 1787. From Library of Congress, *Words and Deed in American History: Selected Documents Celebrating the Manuscript Division's First 100 Years*.

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID%2B@lit\(mcc/018\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID%2B@lit(mcc/018)))



Washington, George. *Constitution, Printed, with Marginal Notes by George Washington*. 12 September 1787. From Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4. General Correspondence. 1697-1799. Image 233*.

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw4&fileName=gwpage097.db&recNum=232>

September 17, 1787  
ted States in Cong  
of making war, pe  
rrespondent execu  
eneral Governme  
ody of men is evid

Washington, George. *George Washington to United States Congress. 17 September 1787. From Library of Congress, A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, Introduction to the Annals of Congress.*

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/ac001/intro3.html>

WE, the people  
justice, ensure dom  
elfare, and secure  
ish this constituti  
  
1. All legislative

*United States Constitution [as Originally Adopted]. 17 September 1787. From Library of Congress, A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, Introduction to the Annals of Congress.*

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/ac001/intro4.html>

THE  
BOSTON  
AND  
COUNTRY  
Containing the latest Occurrences,  
MONDAY,

[*Front Page of The Boston Gazette.*] 26 November 1787. From Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog.*

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2004679481/>



Hintermeister, Henry. *The Foundation of American Government.* Image. Newark: Osborn, c.1925. From Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog.*

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/93504023/>



Christie, Howard. *Scene at Signing of the Constitution of the United States.* Image. [ca. 1960.] From Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog.*

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98501334/>

Affirmative.  
Y. N. S. P. D. M.  
Y. N. S. P. D. M.  
Y. N. S. P. D. M.  
Y. N. S. P. D. M.

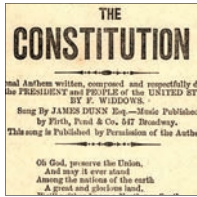
Jefferson, Thomas. *Chart of State Votes on the United States Constitution.* 1788. From Library of Congress, *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827.*

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page010.db&recNum=678>

all laws void of  
no foreign man  
no foreign arm  
no protection o  
a declaratory  
states make cit  
council of appo

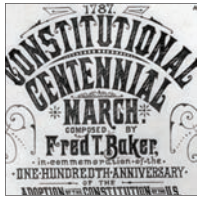
Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the Untied States Constitution.* n.d. From Library of Congress, *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827.*

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page010.db&recNum=677>



Widdows, F. *The Constitution*. Song sheet. NY: H. De Marsan, n.d. From Library of Congress *America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets*.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field\(DOCID%2B@lit\(as200560\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field(DOCID%2B@lit(as200560)))



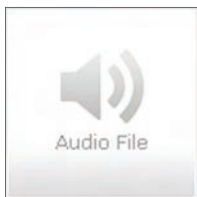
*Constitutional Centennial March*. Music cover illustration. 15 September 1887. From Library of Congress *Prints and Photographs Online Catalog*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2004682053/>



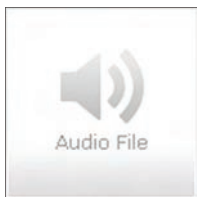
*A Bill of Rights as Provided in the Ten Original Amendments to the Constitution of the United States... December 15, 1791*. Broadside. 1950. From Library of Congress, *An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera*.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.24404400>



Coolidge, Calvin. "Duty of Government." Sound recording. n.d. From Library of Congress, *American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I and the 1920 Election, 1918-1920*.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/nfor:@field\(DOCID%2B@range\(90000068%2B90000069\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/nfor:@field(DOCID%2B@range(90000068%2B90000069)))



Harding, Warren G. "Americanism." Sound recording. n.d. From Library of Congress, *American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I and the 1920 Election, 1918-1920*.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/nfor:@field\(DOCID%2B@range\(90000027%2B90000028\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/nfor:@field(DOCID%2B@range(90000027%2B90000028)))