

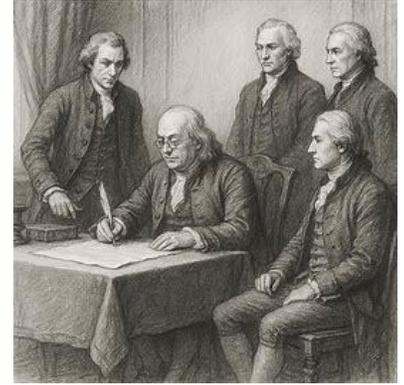


Name: _____

The United States Constitution

Imagine you're building a huge treehouse with your friends. First, you'd need a strong foundation to make sure it doesn't fall down. Next, you'd need to agree on rules, like who can use it and how to take care of it. A long, long time ago, the founders of the United States had a similar job. They had just won their independence from Great Britain and needed to build a new country! Their first set of rules, called the Articles of Confederation, was too weak—like a wobbly foundation.

So, in the hot summer of 1787, a group of 55 men, known as the Framers, met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They gathered in a room with the windows shut tight to keep their discussions secret. They argued, debated, and finally agreed on a brilliant new plan. This plan was the U.S. Constitution. It became the strong foundation and the ultimate rulebook for our government.



Crafting of the constitution.

This special document did three very important things:

1. **It Set Up the Government:** The Constitution created a government with three separate branches so that no single person or group could become too powerful. This is called "separation of powers."
 - The Legislative Branch (Congress: the Senate and the House of Representatives) is the law-making branch. They write, debate, and vote on laws. It's like the group of friends who decide the treehouse rules.
 - The Executive Branch (led by the President) is the law-enforcing branch. The President makes sure the laws are carried out and commands the military. This is like the friend who makes sure everyone is following the rules.
 - The Judicial Branch (the Supreme Court and other federal courts) is the law-explaining branch. They interpret the laws and decide if they agree with the Constitution. They are the referees.
2. **It Shared Power:** The Constitution also created a system of "checks and balances." This means each branch has special powers over the others to keep everything balanced. For example, the President can veto, or reject, a law from Congress, but Congress can override that veto with enough votes.
3. **It Protected the People:** Many people were worried that this new government might be too strong and take away their freedoms. To address this, the Framers promised to add a list of protected rights. In 1791, the first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, were added. These amendments protect our individual freedoms, like the freedom of speech, religion, and the press (the right to report news).



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The brilliant part of the Constitution is that it wasn't meant to be forever stuck in 1787. The Framers knew the world would change. They created a way to change the Constitution by adding amendments. It's like updating an app on a tablet—you add new features or fix old problems. So far, there have been 27 amendments, including ones that ended slavery, gave women the right to vote, and allowed all citizens 18 and older to vote.

More than just a historical document, the U.S. Constitution is a living guide. It's the highest law in the land, protecting our rights and providing a framework for our democracy that has lasted for over 230 years.

1. According to the passage, why did the Framers need to create a new constitution to replace the Articles of Confederation?

- a) The Articles of Confederation were written in Great Britain.
- b) The Articles of Confederation were too weak, like a "wobbly foundation."
- c) The Articles of Confederation did not have a Bill of Rights.
- d) The Articles of Confederation had too many amendments.

2. Read this sentence from the passage: "The brilliant part of the Constitution is that it wasn't meant to be forever stuck in 1787." What is the best evidence from the text that supports this idea?

- a) The Framers met in a room with the windows shut tight.
- b) The Constitution created three branches of government.
- c) The Framers created a way to change the Constitution by adding amendments.
- d) The Bill of Rights protects freedoms like speech and religion.

3. Imagine your class is creating a constitution. Using the U.S. Constitution as a model, describe one "branch" of your classroom government and one "right" you would include in a classroom "Bill of Rights." Explain your choices.
