



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## We the People: A Constitutional Convention!

### Characters:

**Narrator 1 & 2:** (Speak clearly to the audience)

**George Washington:** (The leader, calm and fair)

**James Madison:** (Has lots of ideas, carries a notebook)

**Benjamin Franklin:** (Wise and old, maybe uses a cane)

**Delegate from a Big State (Pennsylvania):** (Wants power based on population)

**Delegate from a Small State (Delaware):** (Wants equal power for all states)

**Delegate from the South:** (Concerned about farming and trade)

**Delegate from the North:** (Concerned about business and money)

**All Other Students:** (The rest of the class can be other delegates, sitting at desks or tables)

### Setting:

Independence Hall in Philadelphia, 1787. It's a hot summer. A sign can say "Constitutional Convention." A few desks are arranged to look like a meeting room. A large piece of paper or poster board labeled "The Constitution" is on an easel or chalkboard, mostly blank.

### Props:

Quill pens (feathers taped to pencils)

Scrolls or old-looking paper

A gavel for George Washington

A fan for Benjamin Franklin (it's hot!)

A notebook for James Madison

The large "Constitution" poster

**Adaptability:** You can easily add more lines or delegates to include more students. The "All Delegates" lines are perfect for the whole class to say together.

**Costumes:** Simple touches like tricorne hats (made from black construction paper), vests, and collared shirts can suggest the time period.

**Set:** Draw a simple "rising sun" on a piece of paper and tape it to the back of the teacher's chair for Franklin's line.

**Learning Objective:** The play highlights key 3rd grade concepts: the purpose of the Constitution, the idea of compromise, and the roles of famous founders like Madison, Washington, and Franklin, without getting into overly complex details.

# The Play

(Narrator 1 and Narrator 2 step to the front of the stage.)

**Narrator 1:** Welcome to Philadelphia, in the summer of 1787! The American Revolution is over, and we are a free country!

**Narrator 2:** But things are not working very well. The first set of rules, called the Articles of Confederation, are too weak. The states are arguing like siblings in the back of a wagon on a long trip!

**Narrator 1:** So, important leaders from all thirteen states have come together to fix the problem. They are called delegates.

**Narrator 2:** Their meeting is called the Constitutional Convention. And they have a very big job to do!

(Narrators step to the side. The delegates are sitting at desks. They look hot and frustrated. George Washington stands at the front, gavel in hand. James Madison is taking notes.)

**George Washington:** (Bangs gavel once.) Order! We must have order. We have been arguing for weeks. We need a new plan for our government. Mr. Madison, please remind us of the problem.

**James Madison:** (Stands up, holding his notebook.) Thank you, General Washington. The problem is that our current government is too weak. It can't collect taxes to pay soldiers. It can't settle fights between states. We need a stronger national government, with a President, a Congress, and courts.

**Delegate from a Big State:** (Stands up proudly.) I represent Pennsylvania, a big state with many people! I think states with more people should have more votes in Congress. That's only fair!

**Delegate from a Small State:** (Stands up quickly.) I am from Delaware, a small state! That's not fair at all! That means big states would get to make all the rules. We need every state to have the same number of votes. Equal power!

(The other delegates start mumbling and arguing. "No, we need more votes!" "No, we must be equal!" George Washington bangs his gavel.)

**George Washington:** Gentlemen, please! We will get nowhere if we do not compromise.

**Benjamin Franklin:** (Stands up slowly, fanning himself.) The General is right. The sun does not shine on one side of the street and not the other. It shines for everyone. We must find a solution that shines for both large and small states.

**James Madison:** (Thinking hard.) I have an idea! What if we have two parts to our Congress? One part, let's call it the House of Representatives, would have votes based on a state's population. Big states are happy!

**Delegate from a Big State:** (Nods.) I like that part!

**James Madison:** And the other part, let's call it the Senate, would give every state—big or small—two votes. Exactly the same! Small states are happy!

**Delegate from a Small State:** (Smiles.) I like that part! Two for everyone... that seems fair.

**All Delegates:** (Nod and murmur in agreement.) A compromise! Good idea!

**George Washington:** We must also agree that the government can control trade between states and with other countries, to help both business and farms.

**Delegate from the North & South:** (Look at each other and nod.) We can agree to that.

**George Washington:** Then we have our second compromise. James, please add these ideas to our plan.

(James Madison goes to the big poster and pretends to write. He can actually write words like "Great Compromise")

**Narrator 1:** After a long, hot summer of debating and compromising...

**Narrator 2:** The delegates finally finished writing the Constitution on September 17, 1787.

(Benjamin Franklin stands and points to the sun painted on the back of George Washington's chair.)

**Benjamin Franklin:** Throughout this convention, I have often looked at that sun on the chair and wondered, is it a rising sun or a setting sun? Today, I have the happiness to know that it is a rising sun. Our new nation is just beginning!

**George Washington:** (Stands proudly.) This document—the Constitution—creates a government of the people, for the people. It is not perfect, but it is a strong foundation. It gives us a way to change it as our country grows. Does everyone agree?

(All the delegates stand up.)

**All Delegates:** (Together) Aye!

**James Madison:** (Holding up the large poster.) The first words are the most important: "We the People of the United States..." It means all of us, together.

(All the delegates, including the narrators, come to the front of the stage.)

**Narrator 1:** The Framers of the Constitution showed us that by talking, listening, and compromising...

**Narrator 2:** People with different ideas can work together to build something amazing.

**Whole Cast:** (Facing the audience) Thank you for coming to our Constitutional Convention!

(All bow.)