

Constitution Day

A Look Back

Exploring Guide

1. Why were the Articles of Confederation weak and destined for failure?
The Articles of Confederation were weak and destined for failure because the 13 states refused to give up power. The national government couldn't raise money through taxes and had no executive power to enforce its limited authority.
2. What two issues discussed at the Constitutional Convention were resolved by compromise?
Representation and separation of powers were the two issues that were resolved by compromise.
3. The governmental powers were divided among three branches. What are those branches? What system is used to make sure no single branch of government can gain too much power?
The governmental powers are divided among executive, legislative, and judicial branches. A system of checks and balances makes sure that no single branch of the government can gain too much power over the other branches.
4. What are some (at least two each) of the powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government?
Answer may vary but should include some of the following information.
Legislative branch: creates laws, approves judges, and declares war.
Executive branch: enforces laws, appoints judges, commander in chief of the armed forces.
Judicial branch: decides meaning of laws, can serve for life, and can rule laws unconstitutional.
5. The issue of representation was difficult. Delegates to the Convention presented two representation plans. Describe each plan. Was one plan chosen over the other or did the delegates reach some type of compromise? Explain your answer.
 - The Virginia Plan: Each state would be represented in Congress according to the size of its population. This plan would have favored Virginia because, at that time, it was the state with the largest population. The plan would have given Virginia greater power in the government.
 - The New Jersey Plan: Each state would be equally represented in Congress. Even though New Jersey was a small state with a small population, it would have had the same power in the government as the large states.
 - Compromise: The legislature would have two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state would be represented according to population in the House of Representatives, and all states would be equally represented in the Senate.
6. The four documents listed below marked important steps in the birth of the United States. Match each document with the correct description by writing the letter of the correct description on the line next to the name of the document.
Declaration of Independence: d. On July 4, 1776, the American colonies used this document to proclaim their freedom from Britain. This document was a statement of beliefs, intentions, and the reasons for the colonists' action.
Articles of Confederation: c. In 1781, the Continental Congress signed this document to form the first national government of the United States. The new government it established was not successful because the states didn't want to give up power to a central government.



Constitution: a. It set up a strong national government without taking too much power from the states. It was ratified in 1788 after the Framers promised to include a Bill of Rights.

Bill of Rights: b. Ratified in 1791, the document contained the amendments that guarantee freedom and rights to individuals and states, and protect them from the power of the national government. It is considered the foundation of modern American civil liberties.

Explore the Constitution

Constitution Scavenger Hunt

1. Article I gives *legislative*, or lawmaking, power to Congress. Article II gives the president executive power. Article III gives judicial power to the Supreme Court and to inferior (lower) courts.
2. Which article of the Constitution addresses the rights of the states?
Article IV
3. Which article of the Constitution addresses how the Constitution can be amended?
Article V
4. Article VI, clause (paragraph) 2, states that judges in every state must go by what the Constitution says. It says that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
5. How many of the 13 states were required to ratify the Constitution before it could go into effect?
nine
6. How old would you have to be to serve in the House of Representatives?
25 years old
7. To *impeach* means to formally accuse an official of a crime. Who has the “sole power of impeachment” in the Constitution?
House of Representatives
8. How many senators are there from each state and how long is the term served by a member of the Senate?
two senators and six years
9. What is the minimum age for a senator?
30 years old
10. Only one constitutional responsibility is defined for the vice president. What is it?
president of the Senate
11. What is the minimum age for the president?
35 years old
12. Article II, Section 2, clause 2, identifies two powers of the president. What are those powers?
make treaties, appoint Supreme Court judges, and other high-level officials
13. The only crime defined by the Constitution can be found in Article III, Section 3. What is it?
treason
14. Which section of Article IV tells you that there could be 51 or 52 states someday?
Section 3
15. If two-thirds of the Congress or two-thirds of the states propose an amendment to the Constitution, it will take effect when three-fourths of the states ratify it.