

# 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.



## 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>



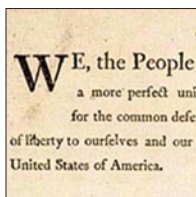
### Primary Documents in American History

<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)

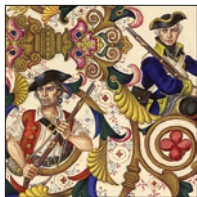
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/continuity-change/>



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

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

## PRIMARY SOURCES WITH CITATIONS



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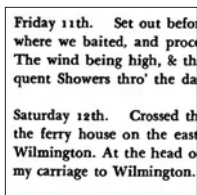
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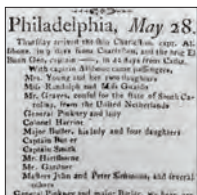
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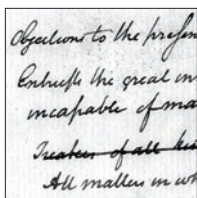
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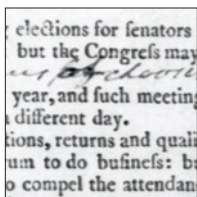
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<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/ac001/intro3.html>

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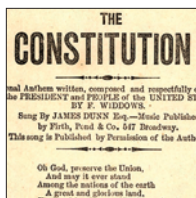
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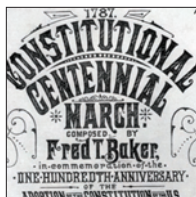
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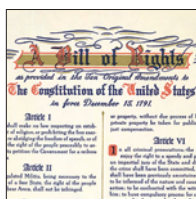
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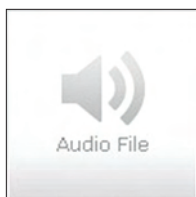
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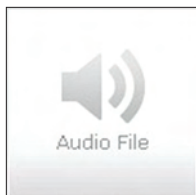
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