

# THE FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

*A  
Three-Act  
Drama*







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS



John  
Adams



Ben  
Franklin



Patrick  
Henry



Thomas  
Jefferson



Richard  
Henry Lee



James  
Madison



George  
Mason



George  
Washington



Abby



John



Marie



Regis

ACT ONE: *The Declaration of Independence* ..... Page 1

ACT TWO: *The Constitution* ..... Page 7

ACT THREE: *The Bill of Rights* ..... Page 13

...The curtain rises over Philadelphia, 1776....



## ACT I

# *The Declaration of Independence*

### FEATURING:



Thomas Jefferson



John Adams



Richard Henry Lee



READ

BEGINNING IN THE 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, British people came to North America. They set up their own colonial governments.

Over time, they began acting on their own—and England didn't like that. The King and Parliament (the group of lawmakers in England) wanted to be in control of the colonies. By the 1760s, tensions were high. The British colonists did not like how England was treating them. Parliament passed laws

Note: **Bolded** words appear on vocabulary pages

*Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.*

Richard Henry LEE?  
I don't think I've  
ever heard of you.

*Resolved That these <sup>united</sup> colonies are  
ought to be free and independant  
that they are absolved from all  
to the british crown and that all  
connection between them and the  
great Britain is and ought to  
dissolved*

'Absolved of allegiance  
to the British Crown'?  
What does that mean?

I was the one who presented the official resolution that we should split from England. It's named after me: **The Lee Resolution**.



that affected the colonies (including taxes), but the colonists had no say in those laws. The colonists were angry about “**taxation** without **representation**.”

The colonies **petitioned** Parliament asking for the laws to be **repealed**, but the taxes kept coming. The colonists stepped up their resistance with the **Boston Tea Party**. In response, Parliament cracked down on the colonial **press**. British officers could search the colonists’ homes for any (or no) reason. Colonists accused of crimes were held without trials.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ➡

*Congress picked a committee of five people to write an official Declaration and I was the main author.*

*I wrote the Declaration in a house outside Philadelphia. It was a nice place, but there were stables across the street and the flies were horrible!*

*By “Crown” they meant the King. They meant that the Colonies no longer had to be loyal to England.*

*and of rights  
/states;  
allgeme  
indicial  
Make of  
be totally*

*Sniff  
Sniff*



## MATCH THE TERMS ON THE LEFT

Introduced the resolution  
that the colonies should be  
independent states

*July 2, 1776*

Chief author of the  
Declaration of Independence

*Thomas Jefferson*

Home state of  
Thomas Jefferson

*Philadelphia*

The date Congress voted  
to break from England

*Virginia*

The date Congress approved  
the Declaration  
of Independence

*July 4, 1776*

City where the Continental  
Congress met

*New York*



More soldiers arrived in  
Massachusetts Bay Colony and  
the colonists were forced to let  
the soldiers live in their homes.

The people in the other British  
colonies saw that they had to be united  
against these abuses. The colonies sent  
**delegates** to meet in Philadelphia  
in 1774. This group was called the  
Continental Congress. Fifty-six people,  
representing 12 of the 13 colonies,

*Have you ever wanted to declare  
independence from something?*

*What are some  
reasons NOT to declare  
independence? Why?*

*hmmm...*



REFLECT

What are some  
ways you act  
with honor in  
your own life? How can  
you act honorably in  
school? Playing a sport?  
As part of a club?

*What are some things you'll have to  
take care of on your own?*

"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence,



were there. They decided they would continue to petition the **Crown** and **boycott** British goods.

The Continental Congress met again after the Revolutionary War had begun. This time, all 13 colonies sent delegates. They appointed George Washington to command a Continental Army to fight the British. Many argued for a break from England. John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and others believed: 1) Englishmen in the colonies had the same **rights** as Englishmen in England, including life, **liberty**, and **property**. 2) The purpose of government was to protect the rights of the people. 3) It was the right of the people to choose the form of government that would best protect their rights.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

#### WORD FIND

e p h i l a d e l p h i a k i r g m t  
n i e i t e n s n d l e n a i h s s s  
e l b a n e i l a n i s o e g e d s h  
d e c l a r a t i o n o s r e f f e j  
a u o c i r t b e s e i n o l o c r s  
d t n c g g i g c o m m i t t e e g c  
a o s i r o r g e m a m k n i q t n e  
m e e s t o b n h m k n c o l u o o a  
s r n e e e w s r t t e i u o a u c v  
h c t g n n d n n s s v d i g l c f o  
inalienable jefferson adams consent  
philadelphia george rights equal  
dickinson united colonies crown vote  
declaration committee Britain Congress

WOW!

After hearing about the Declaration, the American Army tore down the statue of King George III.

What does Divine Providence mean?

That means "Heaven's protection."

we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

ACT I: The Declaration of Independence



*The Declaration of Independence  
can be divided into three parts.*

*Part I explains why it was justified for the colonies to separate from Great Britain.*

*Part II gives a list of complaints against the King and Parliament.*

Part III states that even though the British and American people shared a common heritage, the time had come to declare independence. They declared a new identity as "free and independent states."

*Put this part of  
the Declartion of  
Independence into  
your own words...*

...We hold these truths  
to be self-evident, that  
all men are created equal,

that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. -That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

[illegible]

## t Drama





THINK

► *We hold these truths to be self-evident*

► *that all men are created equal*

► *that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights*

► *that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*

► *That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men,*

► *deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*

**endowed:** given    **unalienable:** unable to be taken away    **liberty:** the right to be free    **pursuit:** effort to get something    **secure:** keep safe    **instituted:** put in place    **deriving:** getting    **just:** fair    **consent:** agreement to



THINK

“If you had a chance to meet the President of the United States, how would you greet him? A bow, or a handshake?”



READ

They saw no sign that British **tyranny** would end. Their many petitions had been ignored. The only solution they saw was to break away from England and form a new government.

In June of 1776, Congress chose a committee of five to draft a formal Declaration, and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia would be the chief draftsman. Representatives from all 13 colonies agreed and the Congress voted to separate from England on July 2. The Congress approved the Declaration of Independence two days later on July 4, 1776.

According to the Declaration, the “united colonies” were now “independent states.” Now what?

On the same day that Congress chose a committee to write the Declaration, it also appointed a group to draft a new plan of government. The Articles of Confederation were approved in 1777 and went into effect in 1781. But before long, many people would begin to see problems with this form of government.



DISCUSS

In 1776, every country in Europe was led by a King or Queen. How do Kings and Queens get their power? How do you think a King would respond to the idea that all people are born equal?



## ACT II

### The Constitution

#### FEATURING:



George Washington



James Madison



Ben Franklin



AFTER THE U.S. WON INDEPENDENCE FROM England, the states had to decide what to do next. They had just fought a war to be free from **tyranny**. To avoid this problem in the future, the states created a weak national government under the Articles of Confederation. But before long, many people would begin to see problems with this form of government.

Once again, there were troubles with **representation**. With England, the colonies had had no voice.

*This was the first time in world history that the people decided a form of government was not working, and then came up with a plan to replace it.*

*I think the little guy near the front sitting down is taking notes.*

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

*Then unscramble the circled letters to form a word:*



1. Opening lines of the Constitution:



2. Means "between two or more states":



3. Delegate from New York: Alexander




4. Number of Articles in the Constitution:



5. Delegates wished to prevent:



*Unscramble the circled letters to answer the last question:*

6. The Constitution was written to secure the blessings of  !




*People  
deb  
more*

*That's James M  
He took detaile  
throughout the C*



Under the Articles, all states had an equal voice. This sounded fair at first. But was it “fair” if the state with the smallest population could block a law that the rest of the country wanted?

The states all had their own laws for **commerce** and even their own money. George Washington and others feared that the America they fought so hard for might be lost if they did not take action.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 

*Through all the debates over a new constitution, there was peace. There was no fighting or bloodshed. I'm pretty proud of that. You should be too.*

*Shhhh, this is a very important meeting.*

*They look so serious.*

*I think they look determined.*

*... across the country  
... ated that plan for  
... than a year before  
... agreeing on it.*

*Madison.  
... d notes  
... onvention.*





READ

Washington and other leaders recommended revising the Articles of Confederation to grant Congress the power to make rules for commerce between the states, create executive and judicial branches, an easier amendment process, and a better system of representation. The Confederation Congress authorized a "Convention" and scheduled it to begin in May of 1787.

Twelve of the 13 states sent delegates, and

*Help me put these events in order.*



The Constitution was sent to the 13 states for ratification (approval).



THINK

George Washington led the Constitutional Convention.

The Constitution went into effect for the states that approved it.

The Constitution was completed and signed by 49 delegates.

The ninth state ratified the Constitution.

Some well-known Americans decided the Articles of Confederation were not working.

Washington was chosen to be leader. The delegates (55 in all) worked hard all summer long. They compromised to solve problems. For example, to solve the problem of representation, they decided that the Congress would have two chambers, or houses. States would have equal votes in the Senate. In the House of Representatives, membership would be by population. To solve the problems of

commerce between states, the national government would have the power to coin money and make rules for **interstate** commerce.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ➞

*I heard my neighbor bounced a check once."*



DISCUSS



► **Separation of Powers:** *The national government was divided into three parts: the branch to write laws (Congress); the executive branch to carry out laws (led by the President) and the judicial branch to settle arguments under the laws (headed by the Supreme Court).*

► **Republican Government:** *The people elect representatives to write and carry out laws.*

► **Checks and Balances:** *If one branch tried to grow too strong, the others had ways to stop or “check” it.*

► **Limited Government:** *The national government was given only certain powers.*

► **Federalism:** *State governments are another “check” on the national government. One Founder called this a “double security” for the people.*

How would you put each of these constitutional principles in your own words?

What did you put for checks and balances?

Not that kind of check! It's about keeping our government “in check” or not too powerful.

The delegates discussed and debated here all summer? How did you ever get them to agree?

It was a long, hot summer. We disagreed on some things, but we kept at it. We all wanted what was best for our new nation.





Though more time had gone by, the lessons from the colonial era were still in their minds. The national government was now stronger than it had been under the Articles of Confederation, but it was still limited. Power was divided into three branches, and each branch could stop the others from growing too powerful.

*What form of government did you come up with in there?*

*A republic, if you can keep it.*

*Can you imagine trying to have all the millions of Americans write and approve all laws? That's why we elect people to represent our interests in Congress.*





*The U.S. is not a democracy.  
We're a republic. In a  
republic, the people elect  
representatives to write  
laws and carry them out.*



### DISCUSS

The Constitution is a set of rules about making rules. What types of rules can your parents set for you? Your teachers? A sitter?

Are there any types of rules that different authority figures can NOT make for you?

How, if at all, will some of these answers change when you are an adult?

The Constitution was complete. Now, would the states approve it?

For the Constitution to go into effect, it would have to be approved by nine of the 13 states.

The delegates had finished their work of writing the Constitution. The harder work of explaining to their countrymen why they should ratify the Constitution had just begun.

*Virginia here I come!*

*I hope they'll like the  
new Constitution  
back in New York.*

???

RULES



## ACT III

### *The Bill of Rights*

#### FEATURING:



James  
Madison



Patrick  
Henry



George  
Mason

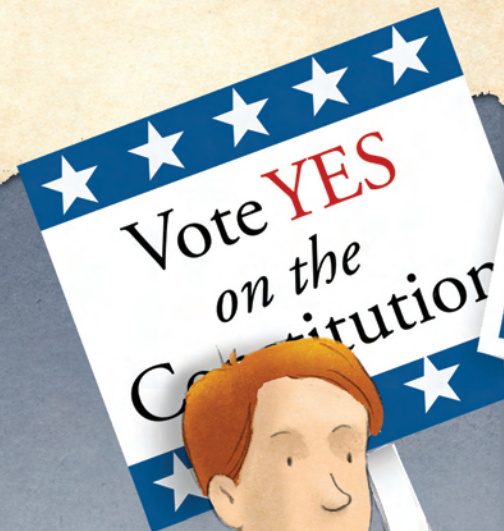


READ

WHEN THE CONSTITUTION was completed in September of 1787, copies were sent to the states for **ratification**. The people in each of the states had their own official meetings, called Ratifying Conventions, to vote on whether or not to approve the Constitution. One concern that kept coming up was that the Constitution did not have a bill of rights. For generations,

*The people will have virtue and will elect wise representatives.*

*This Constitution is a great improvement over the Articles of Confederation.*



*Madison's back in his home state trying to convince his fellow Virginians to approve the Constitution.*



Englishmen had been protected by bills of rights. Should the new Constitution include one?

The people who were in favor of the Constitution were called **Federalists**. Those people who opposed it were

called **Anti-Federalists**. One of the things that Federalists and Anti-Federalist argued about was whether a bill of rights was a good idea.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ➞

*Guard the public liberty. Suspect **EVERYONE** who approaches that jewel.*

**NO**  
Bill of Rights,  
**NO**  
Constitution!

STATES NEEDED: 9

Delaware ✓	Massachusetts ?
Pennsylvania ✓	New York ?
New Jersey ✓	North Carolina ?
Georgia ✓	Rhode Island ?
Connecticut	
Maryland ✓	
South Carolina ✓	
New Hampshire ✓	

*I'd sooner chop off my **right** hand than sign!*

George Mason helped write the Constitution, but he ended up refusing to sign it. One reason George Mason refused to sign the Constitution was because it did not have a bill of rights.

*That's Patrick Henry. He was invited to the Constitutional Convention but refused to go.*

*He said he "smelled a rat."*





Federalists James Madison and Alexander Hamilton had been strong supporters of the Constitution at the Constitutional Convention. They wrote a series of essays called *The Federalist Papers*. In *The Federalist Papers*, they argued that people should support the Constitution. They said it created

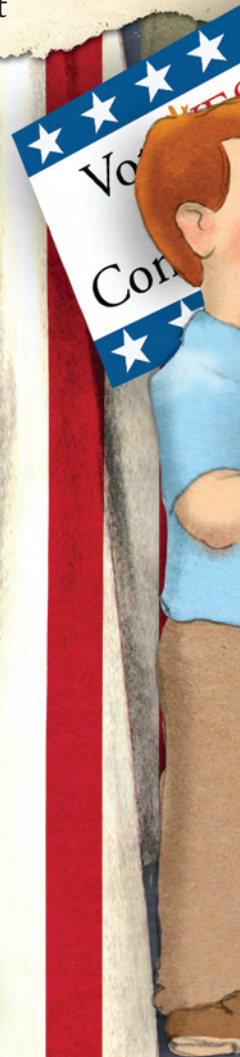
a national government that was strong enough to do what was needed. The Constitution listed the powers of the national government, so there was no reason to add a list

of things it could NOT do. By limiting the national government with enumerated (or a list of) powers, it would not grow too strong that it would take over the states and the peoples' lives. A bill of rights, Hamilton said, could even be dangerous if it made people think that the government had all powers EXCEPT those limits in a bill of rights.

**Anti-Federalists**, including Patrick Henry and George Mason, argued against the Constitution. Their study of world history, as well as their own experience in the colonies, had shown them that governments tend to grow too strong. They feared that the national government

Dear Mr. Madison  
half a loaf is better  
than no bread. If we  
cannot secure all  
our rights, let us  
secure what we can.


Thomas Jefferson is  
in Paris writing to  
his friend Madison.





would soon begin to take on powers it had not been given. Many shared this fear and believed that a bill of rights (a list of some of the things the government cannot do) would give the states and the people more **security** against the government.

The delegates at the Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Virginia and New York Ratifying Conventions agreed to approve the Constitution if the First Congress would seriously consider a Bill of Rights.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 



DISCUSS

What were 2 reasons the Anti-Federalists wanted a bill of rights added to the Constitution? What were 2 reasons the Federalists did not think one should be added? Draw a star next to the reasons that you think are strongest.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

*Madison came to believe that adding a bill of rights was in the best interest of the new nation.*

*The amendments would highlight some of our important freedoms, but they wouldn't take anything away from the Constitution.*

It's June 8, 1788. Madison is proposing to the U.S. House of Representatives that amendments should be added to the Constitution.

*So he changed his mind!*

Constitution!  
**NO**  
Bill of Rights,  
**NO**





READ

James Madison honored that promise and introduced 39 proposals to a Congress.

Congress agreed, after several revisions, to adopt 28 of his proposals and put them as a list of 12 amendments at the end of the Constitution. Ten of the 12 amendments were approved by the states 1791 and became the Bill of Rights.



THINK

Four of the rights in the Bill of Rights are mentioned on this page. Can you find them all?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_





# Congress of the United States,

begun and held at the City of New York, on  
Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

I still worry the national government will grow too strong, but this was a good addition the Constitution.

Congress tried out many different wordings for the amendments.

Excuse me, Mr. Madison would you sign this petition?



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.  
In the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Monday, 24th August, 1789.  
RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ASSEMBLED, TWO THIRDS OF BOTH HOUSES, THAT THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES BE PROPOSED TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE SEVERAL STATES, AS AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, ALL OF WHICH ARTICLES, WHEN RATIFIED BY THREE FOURTHS OF THE SAID LEGISLATURE, TO BE VALID TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES AS PART OF THE SAID CONSTITUTION—VIZ.  
ARTICLES IN ADDITION TO, AND AMENDMENT OF, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, PROPOSED BY CONGRESS, AND RATIFIED BY THE LEGISLATURES OF THE SEVERAL STATES, PURSUANT TO THE FIFTH ARTICLE OF THE ORIGINAL CONSTITUTION.  
ARTICLE THE FIRST.  
After the first enumeration, required by the first Article of the said Constitution, there shall be one Representative for every thirty thousand persons, until the number shall amount to one hundred; after which the proportion shall be so regulated by Congress, that there shall not be less than one hundred Representatives, nor less than one Representative for every forty thousand persons, until the number of Representatives shall amount to two hundred; after which the proportion shall be so regulated by Congress, that there shall not be less than two hundred Representatives, nor less than one Representative for every fifty thousand persons.  
ARTICLE THE SECOND.  
No law varying the compensation to the members of Congress, shall take effect, until an election of Representatives shall have intervened.  
ARTICLE THE THIRD.  
Congress shall make no law establishing religion, or any test of faith, or any civil or political disability, on account of religion.  
ARTICLE THE FOURTH.  
The Freedom of Speech, and the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances, shall not be infringed.



**DIRECTIONS:** Complete the chart using the information below and/or a copy of the Bill of Rights. For the last column, draw a “stamp” to represent the freedoms in each amendment.

*Adding the Bill of Rights to the Constitution made it even more clear that our government protects individual rights.*



AMENDMENT	What it protects	
1 First Amendment	The rights to freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.	If you draw your stamps on a separate sheet of paper, you can trade stamps with your friends.
2 Second Amendment	The right to keep and bear arms.	
3 Third Amendment	No quartering troops in peacetime.	Be sure to explain the meaning of each amendment, how you exercise it, and the meaning of your own stamp to them.
4 Fourth Amendment	No unreasonable searches.	
5 Fifth Amendment	If the government charges you with a crime, it has to follow the law. You cannot be put on trial more than once for the same crime, or forced to give evidence against yourself. Finally, if the government takes your property for a public use, it has to pay you for it.	
6 Sixth Amendment	If you are accused of a crime, you have the right to be told what that crime is, to have a speedy, public jury trial where it happened, to call witnesses, to ask questions of witnesses against you, and to have the help of a lawyer.	
7 Seventh Amendment	Jury trials will be held for civil (non-criminal) trials where more than \$20 is involved.	
8 Eighth Amendment	No “cruel and unusual” punishments or bail/fines that are too high.	
9 Ninth Amendment	This list of limits on government power might not be complete.	
10 Tenth Amendment	If a power isn’t given to the national government, the states and the people keep it.	