

CONSTITUTION DAY LESSON

* GETTING TO KNOW THE SIGNERS THROUGH ROLE PLAY *

- ❖ After we won the Revolutionary War, our newly formed country called together a Constitutional Convention to write a Constitution.
- ❖ The Convention took the entire summer of 1787 and 55 delegates worked to complete our Constitution. It took them 100 days. Many thought writing a Constitution would be an impossible task because so many disagreements broke out between the delegates.
- ❖ The biggest fight was between the small states and the big states. No one could figure out how to make it fair. The small states wanted equal representation so that the big states would not control everything. The big states wanted representation based on the number of people in their state.
- ❖ The small states' delegates kept threatening to walk out of the Convention. But finally, a compromise was formed. The number of representatives in the House would be based on population, but each state got equal representatives in the Senate. This satisfied both the big states and the small ones.
- ❖ We finally had a Constitution!
- ❖ Thirty-nine men of various backgrounds came together in Philadelphia on September 17, 1787, to sign the Constitution of the newly formed United States of America.
- ❖ Of these men, many were born and raised in other countries. One was a former British soldier and one of the delegates was even raised by Indians!

Who would like to discover more about the men who wrote our Constitution?

SUGGESTIONS:

By using the enclosed cards, distribute to those who wish to participate.

Talk about the signing of the Constitution as listed above. Then ask for volunteers to “become” the signers of the Constitution. Each volunteer comes forward and pulls a card or slip of paper from a bag, bowl, or box. He/she then reads the card taken, telling the group who he/she is and giving pertinent facts about that particular “Signer.”

Recommendation: Supply markers and a poster board for the students to sign the name of their Signer after they have read their cards.

(To make this work efficiently, you may have to pick volunteers – 10 to 15 at a time – and hand out cards as they line up. Otherwise, the lesson may take a long time.)

Please note that six signers of the Constitution—George Clymer, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, George Read, Roger Sherman, and James Wilson—also signed the Declaration of Independence. An asterisk appears next to the names of those signers on the cards.

The information regarding the Constitution signers largely came from the National Park Service website (nps.gov). For more information about this game, please contact the chambers of the Hon. Leanna K. Weissmann, Indiana Court of Appeals, (317) 232-6895 or kimberly.jackson@courts.in.gov.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

New York ~1755-1804 (died around age 49)

- *I was born in the West Indies.
- *I was the first Secretary of the Treasury.
- *I was killed in a duel with Aaron Burr.
- *My picture is on the \$10 bill.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Virginia 1732-1799 (died at age 67)

- *I was born in Virginia.
- *I led the Continental Army during the war.
- *I served 2 terms as President.
- *My picture is on the \$1 bill.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN *

Massachusetts 1706-1790 (died at age 84)

- *I was the 10th son of a candle and soap maker.
- *I signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
- *I was 81 years old when I signed the Constitution.
- *My picture is on the \$100 bill.

JAMES MADISON

Virginia 1751-1836 (died at age 85)

- *I was the oldest of 10 children.
- *I am from Virginia.
- *I eventually became President of the United States.
- *My picture is on the \$5000 bill (which was last printed in 1969).

ABRAHAM BALDWIN

Georgia 1754-1807 (died at age 52)

- *My dad was a blacksmith.
- *I graduated from Yale University at the age of 18 but continued to study theology.
- *I founded the University of Georgia.

RICHARD BASSETT

Delaware 1745-1815 (died at age 70)

- *My father was a tavern owner.
- *I attended the convention regularly but never made a speech.
- *I was Governor of Delaware and a U.S. Circuit Judge.

GUNNING BEDFORD JR.

Delaware 1747-1812 (died at age 65)

- *I was the 5th of 11 children in my family.
- *I graduated from Princeton, and my classmate was James Madison.
- *I was from Delaware, and I fought hard for small states' rights.

JAMES BROOM

Delaware 1752-1810 (died at age 52)

- *My family farmed, and my father was a blacksmith.
- *I was a farmer and a surveyor of the land.
- *I made maps for General George Washington during some of the battles.
- *I became the first Postmaster in Wilmington.

JOHN BLAIR

Virginia 1732-1800 (died at age 68)

- *I never spoke at the convention and preferred to work behind the scenes.
- *I was a Supreme Court Judge.
- *I studied law in London, England.

WILLIAM BLOUNT

North Carolina 1749-1800 (died at age 50)

- *My father operated a farm and a mill and sold tar and turpentine.
- *I operated a horse racing track with my father.
- *I only signed the Constitution to make it unanimous.

DAVID BREARLEY

New Jersey 1745-1790 (died at age 45)

- *I was captured by the British in the war, but some Patriots snuck me out of prison.
- *I became a New Jersey judge.
- *As a soldier, I was cool, determined, and brave.

PIERCE BUTLER

South Carolina 1744-1822 (died at age 77)

- *I was born in Ireland and became a wealthy planter.
- *I came to the United States as a British soldier.
- *I married a South Carolina woman and took up the cause for independence.

DANIEL CARROLL

Maryland 1730-1796 (died at age 65)

- *I came late to the Convention because I was ill.
- *I owned most of the land that became Washington, D.C.
- *I lived a life of a gentleman planter.

GEORGE CLYMER *

Pennsylvania 1739-1813 (died at age 73)

- *I became an orphan at age 7 and was raised by my rich uncle.
- *I owned a store and supported the war because it was good for business.
- *I negotiated one of the first treaties with the Cherokee and Creek Indians.

JONATHAN DAYTON

New Jersey 1760-1824 (died at age 63)

- *I graduated from Princeton University when I was just 16 years old.
- *My father was the appointed delegate, but I went because he refused to go to the Convention.
- *Dayton, Ohio, is named after me.

JOHN DICKINSON

Delaware 1732-1808 (died at age 75)

- *I was a Quaker.
- *My friend, George Read, actually signed my name to the Constitution.
- *I was against the war and refused to sign the Declaration of Independence.

WILLIAM FEW
Georgia 1748-1828 (died at 80)

- *I was one of six delegates from Georgia.
- *Two of the Georgia delegates never attended.
- *I was one of Georgia's first Senators.

THOMAS FITZSIMONS
Pennsylvania 1741-1811 (died at 69)

- *I was born in Ireland.
- *I owned a ship to transport goods.
- *I gave a lot of money to the war effort and founded one of the country's first banks.

NATHANIEL GORHAM
Massachusetts 1738-1796 (died at 58)

- *My father was a boat captain.
- *I had 9 children.
- *I made bad real estate investments and died broke.

NICHOLAS GILMAN
New Hampshire 1755-1814 (died at 58)

- *I did not participate much at the Convention but worked hard in New Hampshire to get ratification.
- *At 32, I was one of the youngest members at the Convention.

JARED INGERSOLL
Pennsylvania 1749-1822 (died at 72)

- *My father was a British soldier and sent me to London to avoid the Revolutionary War.
- *I graduated from Yale University.
- *I became a well-known lawyer and argued a lot in the Supreme Court.

DANIEL of ST. THOMAS JENIFER
Maryland 1723-1790 (died at 67)

- *George Washington and I were buddies.
- *I died only 3 years after the Constitution was signed.
- *In my will, I said my slaves could be freed six years after my death.

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON
Connecticut 1727-1819 (died at 92)

- *My parents wanted me to be a minister.
- *Instead, I went to Yale University and Harvard University and became a lawyer.
- *I was a U.S. Senator and President of Columbia College in New York City.

RUFUS KING
Massachusetts 1755-1827 (died at 72)

- *At 32, I was one of the youngest delegates.
- *I thought we should keep the Articles of Confederation but changed my mind.
- *I was one of the wealthiest men in New York by the end of the 18th century.

JOHN LANGDON

New Hampshire 1741-1819 (died at age 78)

- *I came from New Hampshire.
- *I spent time at sea and was a merchant.
- *New Hampshire, where I later served as Governor, was too poor to pay my expenses to attend the convention.

WILLIAM LIVINGSTON

New Jersey 1723-1790 (died at age 67)

- *Initially home schooled, I lived with a missionary in a Mohawk Indian camp for a year when I was 13.
- *I was the first Governor of New Jersey.
- *I had 13 children.

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

Pennsylvania 1752-1816 (died at age 64)

- *I was the most frequent speaker at the Constitutional Convention and made 173 speeches.
- *I married late in life and had a son when I was 60.
- *I belonged to one of the wealthiest families in the colonies.

JAMES MCHENRY

Maryland 1753-1816 (died at age 62)

- *I was born in Ireland.
- *I was a military surgeon in the War.
- *I kept a journal during the Convention.

THOMAS MIFFLIN

Pennsylvania 1744-1780 (died at age 56)

- *I was a Quaker.
- *I became Governor of Pennsylvania.
- *I died so poor that my burial fees were paid by the State of Pennsylvania.

ROBERT MORRIS *

Pennsylvania 1754-1806 (died at age 73)

- *I was born in Liverpool, England.
- *I was a banker and helped finance the war by supplying thousands of barrels of flour and lead for bullets.
- *I died bankrupt because I used all my money to support the troops.

WILLIAM PATERSON

New Jersey 1745-1806 (died at age 60)

- *I was born in Ireland on Christmas Eve.
- *I enrolled in Princeton at the age of 14.
- *I became a judge who presided over treason cases.

CHARLES PINCKNEY

South Carolina 1757-1824 (died at age 67)

- *I am a cousin to the other Charles Pinckney who signed the Constitution.
- *I was Governor of South Carolina and also a diplomat to Spain.
- *I thought every man should have the right to vote even if he didn't own property.

CHARLES COTESWORTH PINCKNEY
South Carolina 1746-1825 (died at age 79)

- *I was born in South Carolina but moved to Europe at age 7.
- *I wanted a strong Federal government.
- *I argued that Senators should not be paid.

GEORGE READ *

Delaware 1733-1798 (died at age 65)

- *I grew up in Delaware. During the war, I narrowly escaped being captured by the British.
- *I signed the Constitution twice – once for John Dickinson, who became ill.
- *I was Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court.

JOHN RUTLEDGE

South Carolina 1739-1800 (died at age 60)

- *My younger brother, Edward, signed the Declaration of Independence.
- *I was the father of 10 children.
- *I served briefly as a Supreme Court Judge.

ROGER SHERMAN *

Connecticut 1721-1793 (died at age 72)

- *I was a cobbler (shoemaker) from Connecticut.
- *I was a lawyer and a judge.
- *I helped write the compromise that broke the deadlock.

RICHARD DOBBS SPAIGHT, SR.
North Carolina 1758-1802 (died at age 44)

- *My parents died when I was 8 years old, and I was then sent to Ireland.
- *I came back to the United States when I was 20 years old.
- *I died when I was 44 years old in a duel against the man who defeated me in a Congressional election.

HUGH WILLIAMSON

North Carolina 1735-1819 (died at age 83)

- *I was Surgeon General of the troops in North Carolina during the war.
- *I smuggled medicine through the West Indies during the war to avoid British blockades.
- *I didn't marry until I was 54 years old.

JAMES WILSON *

Pennsylvania 1742-1798 (died at age 55)

- *I was born in Scotland.
- *I was one of the first U.S. Supreme Court judges.
- *I went to debtor's prison several times and moved about often in my later years to avoid debt collectors.

JAMES BROOM

Delaware 1752-1810 (died at age 52)

- *My family farmed, and my father was a blacksmith.
- *I was a farmer and a surveyor of the land.
- *I made maps for General George Washington during some of the battles.
- *I became the first Postmaster in Wilmington.