

CONSTITUTION DAY LESSON

* GETTING TO KNOW THE SIGNERS THROUGH ROLE PLAY *

(Print this document front to back)

NEEDED SUPPLIES:

Printed Cards (included below – print back to front)

Poster board

Markers

Optional – prizes such as stickers or candy (check with school if bringing food)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Introduce the game. Here's a sample script:

Do you all have classroom rules? Adults might not be in classrooms anymore, but we also have rules. One set of rules comes from the United States Constitution which was written in 1787. On September 17th of that year, 39 men of various backgrounds came together in Philadelphia to sign our constitution.

Do you want to play a game and learn about these people?

How about we step in their shoes and sign our own constitution?

- Take 6-8 volunteers at a time.
 - If lots of hands go up, pick a random month and ask only for volunteers who have birthdays in that month.
- The child reads the card and then writes the signer's name on the poster board, as if they are signing the Constitution.
 - There are three cards with a star on them. Have the kids guess the connection at the end of the game for a prize. (ANSWER: All three appear on paper currency: Washington (\$1); Jackson (\$20); and Franklin (\$100)).
- Kids get bored sitting. That's why there are 7 *action item* cards. Before this card is read, ask everyone to stand. After the card is read, ask the question on the back, and instruct them to sit if the answer does not pertain to them.
 - The reason you are doing this is: 1) it helps the antsy kids pay attention; and 2) it demonstrates real connections between the signers and the students.
 - As much as possible, remind the students that our constitutional signers were normal people just like them. They too can do amazing things.

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 nancy.collins@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, who is responsible for managing the country's money.
- *I was an attorney and had 8 children.
- *I was killed in a gunfight with Aaron Burr.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Virginia 1732-1799 (died at age 67)



- *I was born in Virginia.
- *I led the Continental Army during the war.
- *I served two terms as President of the United States.
- *My nickname was "Father of His Country."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
**Massachusetts 1706-1790
(died at age 84)**



- *I was the 10th son of a candle and soap maker and had 7 sisters.
- *I had only two years of formal education.
- *I invented the lightning rod and bifocals.
- *I signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

JAMES MADISON
Virginia 1751-1836 (died at age 85)

- *I was the oldest of 10 children.
- *I was the 4th President of the United States.
- *One of my slaves, Paul Jennings, wrote my White House memoir.
- *My picture is on the \$5,000 bill, which was last printed in 1969.

ABRAHAM BALDWIN
Georgia 1754-1807 (died at age 52)

- *My dad was a blacksmith, and I was a minister.
- *I graduated from Yale University at the age of 18.
- *I founded the University of Georgia.

RICHARD BASSETT
Delaware 1745-1815 (died at age 70)

- *My father owned a bar.
- *I was a lawyer and married two times.
- *I attended the convention on a regular basis 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 7 children in my family.
- *I graduated from Princeton, and my classmate was James Madison.
- *I was a federal district judge and fought hard for the rights of small states.

JAMES BROOM
Delaware 1752-1810 (died at age 52)

- *My family farmed, and my father was a blacksmith.
- *I made maps for General George Washington during some of his battles.
- *I was the Mayor of Wilmington and became the first post office manager there.

JOHN BLAIR
Virginia 1732-1800 (died at age 68)

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

WILLIAM BLOUNT
North Carolina 1749-1800 (died at age 50)

- *I was the oldest child in my family.
- *My father operated a farm and a mill and sold tar and turpentine, which is a type of oil.
- *I operated a horse racing track with my father.
- *I only signed the Constitution to make it complete.

DAVID BREARLEY
New Jersey 1745-1790 (died at age 45)

- *I attended Princeton University and became a Supreme Court Chief Justice in New Jersey.
- *As a soldier, I was cool, determined, and brave.
- *I was captured by the British in the war, but some Patriots snuck me out of prison.

PIERCE BUTLER
South Carolina 1744-1822 (died at age 77)

- *I was born in Ireland and became a wealthy planter.
- *I was an immigrant who came to the United States as a British soldier.
- *I attended almost every meeting at the Constitutional Convention.

Who has been to Europe?

Who has been to London?

DANIEL CARROLL

Maryland 1730-1796 (died at age 65)

*My family's motto was "Strong in Faith and War."

*I was a gentleman planter, which is a wealthy person who managed land.

*I owned most of the land that became Washington, D.C.

*I arrived late to the Convention because I was sick.

GEORGE CLYMER

Pennsylvania 1739-1813 (died at age 73)

*My parents died when I was 7 years old and was raised by my rich uncle.

**I owned a store and supported the war because it was good for business.

*I arranged one of the first agreements 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.

*Dayton, Ohio, was named after me.

*My father was the appointed representative, but I went to the Convention because he refused to go.

JOHN DICKINSON

Delaware 1732-1808 (died at age 75)

*I was an author.

*I funded Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

*My friend, George Read, actually signed my name to the Constitution because I was sick.

*I was against the war and refused to sign the Declaration of Independence.

WILLIAM FEW

Georgia 1748-1828 (died at age 80)

*I received a small amount of schooling but mostly educated myself.

*I had three daughters.

*I was one of six representatives from Georgia, but two of them never attended.

*I was one of Georgia's first Senators.

THOMAS FITZSIMONS

Pennsylvania 1741-1811 (died at age 69)

*I was born in Ireland.

*I owned a ship to transport merchandise.

*I gave a lot of money to the war effort and established one of the country's first banks.

Who has been to Washington, D.C.?

Who has been to the White House?

NATHANIEL GORHAM

Massachusetts 1738-1796 (died at age 58)

- *My father was a boat captain.
- *My family were descendants of one of the pilgrims who traveled on the Mayflower.
- *I made bad real estate investments and died without any money.

NICHOLAS GILMAN

New Hampshire 1755-1814 (died at age 58)

- *I worked at my father's general store.
- *I served in the Continental Army and became a captain.
- *At 32, I was one of the youngest members at the Convention, where founders met to draft the Constitution.

JARED INGERSOLL

Pennsylvania 1749-1822 (died at age 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, which is the highest Court in the United States.

DANIEL of ST. THOMAS JENIFER

Maryland 1723-1790 (died at age 67)

- *George Washington and I were buddies.
- *I was the president of the Maryland Military Service.
- *I died only 3 years after the Constitution was signed.

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON

Connecticut 1727-1819 (died at age 92)

- *My parents wanted me to be a minister, but instead I went to Yale and Harvard Universities and became a lawyer.
- *I had 11 children.
- *I was a U.S. Senator and President of Columbia College in New York City.

RUFUS KING

Massachusetts 1755-1827 (died at age 72)

- *My parents were wealthy farmers and business people.
- *At 32, I was one of the youngest representatives.
- *I was one of the wealthiest men in New York by the end of the 18th century.

Who has a parent in the military?

Who has a family member
who is an attorney?

Who has a parent who is
an attorney?

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>JOHN LANGDON</u> New Hampshire 1741-1819 (died at age 78)</p> <p>*I spent time at sea and was a merchant, which is a person who sells merchandise to people.</p> <p>*I was nominated for Vice-President in 1812.</p> <p>*New Hampshire, where I later served as Governor, was too poor to pay my expenses to attend the Convention.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>WILLIAM LIVINGSTON</u> New Jersey 1723-1790 (died at age 67)</p> <p>*I lived with my grandmother but when I was 13, I lived in a Mohawk Indian camp for a year.</p> <p>*I had 13 children.</p> <p>*I was the first Governor of New Jersey.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>GOVERNEUR MORRIS</u> Pennsylvania 1752-1816 (died at age 64)</p> <p>*I married late in life and had a son when I was 60.</p> <p>*I was the most frequent speaker at the Constitutional Convention, where I gave 173 speeches.</p> <p>*I died after trying to perform surgery on myself.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>JAMES McHENRY</u> Maryland 1753-1816 (died at age 62)</p> <p>*I was born in Ireland.</p> <p>*I had 3 children.</p> <p>*I was a military surgeon in the War and was captured by the British.</p> <p>*I kept a diary during the Convention.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>THOMAS MIFFLIN</u> Pennsylvania 1744-1780 (died at age 56)</p> <p>*I was a Quaker, which is a person who follows a religion called the Religious Society of Friends.</p> <p>*I became the Governor of Pennsylvania.</p> <p>*I died so poor that my burial fees were paid by the State of Pennsylvania.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>ROBERT MORRIS</u> Pennsylvania 1754-1806 (died at age 73)</p> <p>*I owned a very successful shipping company.</p> <p>*I also signed the Declaration of Independence.</p> <p>*I was a banker and helped the war by supplying thousands of barrels of flour and lead for bullets.</p> <p>*I died poor, because I used all my money to support the soldiers.</p> |

Who has siblings?

Who has 2 children in their family?

3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, ...

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 ruled on cases of treason, which are crimes of disloyalty to one's own country.

CHARLES PINCKNEY
South Carolina 1757-1824 (died at age 67)

*My life was dedicated to public service, which addresses the needs of people.

***I am a cousin to the other Charles Pinckney who signed the Constitution.**

*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 owned a rice business.

*I wanted a strong Federal government, which is a system of dividing up power.

*I argued that Senators should not be paid.

GEORGE READ
Delaware 1733-1798 (died at age 65)

*During the war, I barely escaped being captured by the British.

*I was a lawyer and then a Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court.

*I signed the Constitution twice – once for myself and once for John Dickinson, who was sick.

JOHN RUTLEDGE
South Carolina 1739-1800 (died at age 60)

*My father was a doctor, and I was home-schooled.

*I was the father of 10 children.

*My younger brother, Edward, signed the Declaration of Independence.

*I was Governor in South Carolina and served briefly as a United States Supreme Court Justice.

ROGER SHERMAN
Connecticut 1721-1793 (died at age 72)

*I was from Connecticut and was a cobbler, which is a shoemaker.

*I enjoyed reading and owned two stores.

*I helped to come up with a solution when people couldn't agree on the government structure – also known as the Great Compromise.

Who has a cousin who attends
this school?

Who has more than one cousin
attending this school?

Who has a December birthday?
Who was born on December 24?

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 returned to the United States when I was 20 years old.
- *My son was the North Carolina Governor.
- *I died when I was 44 years old in a gunfight against the man who defeated me in a Congressional election.

HUGH WILLIAMSON
North Carolina 1735-1819 (died at age 83)

- *I studied the planets Venus and Mercury.
- *I didn't marry until I was 54 years old.
- *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 roadblocks.

JAMES WILSON
Pennsylvania 1742-1798 (died at age 55)

- *I was born in Scotland and was a Latin tutor before studying law.
- *I was one of the first U.S. Supreme Court Justices.
- *I went to debtor's prison, which is a prison for people who are unable to pay their bills, several times and moved often in my later years to avoid bill collectors.