

Constitutional Convention Simulation



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Background for Teachers

The Articles of Confederation were the first attempt at a form of government for the colonies once independence was established. There were many flaws in the Articles of Confederation, including no funding for a national army and limited ability to tax the citizens.

In 1787, leaders from 12 of the 13 colonies (Rhode Island boycotted the convention) agreed to meet and revise the Articles of Confederation. When they realized the document was so flawed it couldn't be fixed, they secretly decided to write an entirely new Constitution.

Disagreements focused on three main areas:

1. Representation
2. Slavery
3. Inclusion of the Bill of Rights

During these debates, George Washington presided over the meetings allowing delegates to voice their opinions and come to compromises. The Constitution is not a perfect document, and students will be able to understand why the framers did not address the rights of enslaved Americans. After the convention, George Washington wrote a letter to citizens explaining and "selling" the Constitution.

Before you begin this unit, be sure to cover the Articles of Confederation and Shays' Rebellion to underscore the necessity of coming to a compromise which could allow the fragile union to succeed.

In this unit, students will research a delegate at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. They will then learn about the different positions each colony took while hammering out a compromise to replace the failed Articles of Confederation. Most of the learning will take place in the debate as students will demonstrate their knowledge of their colony's interest and the issues facing the new nation.

Guided Simulation Instructions

Day One: Research

Set Up:

Organize your desks to look like the Constitutional Convention set up. Two desks or tables should be placed together for each state represented. One table/desk should be at the front for George Washington to preside over the proceedings. Print out the state and name placards and affix them to the desks.

1. Either assign or let students choose the delegate they would like to be at the Constitutional Convention. I've put a key for differentiated roles on the List of Delegates worksheet. If you have a student who demonstrates leadership ability enough to run the convention, assign that person to be George Washington. If you feel more comfortable orchestrating the class, reserve George Washington for you to play.
2. Review the Articles of Confederation and the problems which occurred. Be sure to remind students of the weak central government, inability to collect taxes, and citizen revolts. Tell students they will create a Delegate Biography to learn more about their person. You can choose to use the template I've provided for all students or use the differentiated templates for students with special needs.
3. Organize the students into their respective states. Tell them they are not actually at the convention yet, but rather are preparing to come to the convention.
4. Spend the rest of the period completing the Delegate Biography assignment.

Day 2: Introductions and Positions

1. Ask students to sit in their assigned seats next to the placard bearing their delegate's name.
2. Hand out the Pre-Convention handout to all students.
3. Have students introduce themselves to their fellow statesmen and sharing information about themselves. They should fill out the top section of the Pre-Convention handout. With a student, give an example of how introductions were made during this time period. People called each other "Sir" and used "Mr." before their last names. Example: "Greetings, my name is Mr. Franklin from Pennsylvania. I am pleased to make your acquaintance." The delegate introduces "himself" and the two shake hands after formal introductions.
4. Hand out the Census of 1790 worksheet. Students should work together in their state groups to complete the worksheet.
5. Once the Census worksheet is completed, ask students to fill out the rest of the Pre-Convention worksheet.

Day 3: The Convention

Set Up:

Write the following on a sheet of butcher paper or on the board so it is visible to all students.

Order and rules for the convention

- Delegates must be recognized by the convention president before speaking
 - Delegates can make a proposal by saying, "I propose we adopt Resolution #..."
 - Delegates must have a second on their proposals from another state.
 - The president will open the floor for discussion.
 - The president will call for a voice vote at the end of discussion period. (Aye or Nay)
 - The resolution is passed or defeated.
1. Tell students to sit in their delegations behind their name placards.
 2. George Washington should sit at the head of the classroom at a table alone.
 3. George Washington takes roll by calling out delegate names from a list. "He" addresses each delegate by their last name. Ex: Mr. Dickinson.
 4. Delegates respond with "Aye" or "Present, sir."
 5. Hand out copies of the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan to each delegate.
 6. Tell each state to read through the provisions (and their translations) and highlight resolutions from each plan on which you agree. Write notes to support your decision.
 7. In a different color, highlight resolutions you team absolutely cannot support. Write notes to support your decision.
 8. George Washington then calls the convention to order and the convention begins. Students should be reminded that majority rules and anyone can be removed from the convention hall if they are not following proper protocol.
 9. A student or the teacher should write down the resolutions which pass.
 10. Based on their level of discourse, the adoption of the resolutions could take 1-2 class periods.

LIST OF DELEGATES

----- Teacher Copy -----

Connecticut Ellsworth (Elsworth), Oliver* ^^ Johnson, William S. Sherman, Roger ^^	Delaware Bassett (Basset), Richard Bedford, Gunning, Jr. Broom, Jacob Dickinson, John ^^ Read, George ##
Georgia Baldwin, Abraham ^^ Few, William ^^ Houstoun, William* Pierce, William L.* ##	Maryland Carroll, Daniel Jenifer, Daniel of St. Thomas Martin, Luther* ^^ McHenry, James Mercer, John F.*
Massachusetts Gerry, Elbridge* ^^ Gorham, Nathaniel King, Rufus ^^ Strong, Caleb*	New Hampshire Gilman, Nicholas ^^ Langdon, John ^^
New Jersey Brearly (Brearley), David Dayton, Jonathan Houston, William C.* Livingston, William Paterson (Patterson), William ^^	New York Hamilton, Alexander ^^ Lansing, John, Jr.* ## Yates, Robert *
North Carolina Blount, William ^^ Davie, William R.* Martin, Alexander * ## Spaight, Richard D. Williamson, Hugh	Pennsylvania Clymer, George Fitzsimons, Thomas Franklin, Benjamin ^^ Ingersoll, Jared ## Mifflin, Thomas ## Morris, Gouverneur ^^ Morris, Robert ^^ Wilson, James ^^
South Carolina Butler, Pierce ## Pinckney, Charles ^^ Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth Rutledge, John ^^	Virginia Blair, John Madison, James^^ Mason, George * McClurg, James* ## Randolph, Edmund J.* Washington, George^^ (Strong Leader Needs this role) Wythe, George*

Rhode Island













Rhode Island did not send any delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

KEY:

- * Did not sign the Constitution.
- ^^ Delegate who should speak often as a leader of their state.
- ## Minor delegate who can be substituted for a note-taker or a bailiff for George Washington during convention.

LIST OF DELEGATES

----- Student Copy -----

Connecticut Ellsworth (Elsworth), Oliver* Johnson, William S. Sherman, Roger 	Delaware Bassett (Basset), Richard Bedford, Gunning, Jr. Broom, Jacob Dickinson, John Read, George 
Georgia Baldwin, Abraham Few, William Houstoun, William* Pierce, William L.* 	Maryland Carroll, Daniel Jenifer, Daniel of St. Thomas Martin, Luther* McHenry, James Mercer, John F.* 
Massachusetts Gerry, Elbridge* Gorham, Nathaniel King, Rufus Strong, Caleb* 	New Hampshire Gilman, Nicholas Langdon, John 
New Jersey Brearly (Brearley), David Dayton, Jonathan Houston, William C.* Livingston, William Paterson (Patterson), William 	New York Hamilton, Alexander Lansing, John, Jr.* Yates, Robert * 
North Carolina Blount, William Davie, William R.* Martin, Alexander * Spaight, Richard D. Williamson, Hugh 	Pennsylvania Clymer, George Fitzsimons, Thomas Franklin, Benjamin Ingersoll, Jared Mifflin, Thomas Morris, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Wilson, James 
South Carolina Butler, Pierce Pinckney, Charles Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth Rutledge, John 	Virginia Blair, John Madison, James Mason, George * McClurg, James* Randolph, Edmund J.* Washington, George Wythe, George* 

Rhode Island

Rhode Island did not send any delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

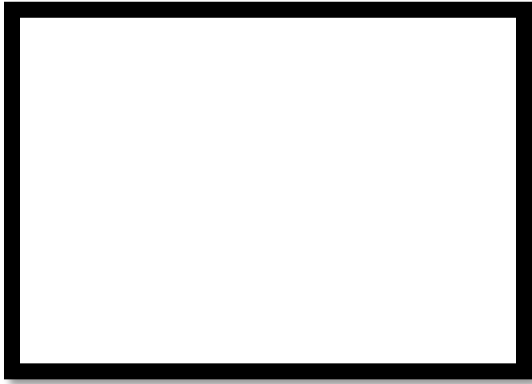
KEY:

* Did not sign the Constitution.



Delegate Biography

Directions: Using the website: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/delegates/> complete the biography of your delegate.



Delegate Name: _____

State Represented: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age at Convention: _____

Occupation(s): _____

Copy and paste a photo of your delegate here

Contribution to the Constitutional Convention:

Did your delegate sign the Constitution? Yes No (Circle one)

Three interesting facts from his biography:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Bonus Questions:

1. What was the average age of delegates to the convention?
2. Who was the youngest member?
3. Who was the oldest member?
4. Who signed BOTH the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution?



Census of 1780*

Your Name: _____ Delegate Name _____

State	Total Population	Enslaved Persons	Percent of Enslaved Persons
New York	340,102	21,324	
New Jersey	184,139	11,423	
Pennsylvania	434,373	3,737	
Connecticut	237,946	2,764	
Rhode Island	68,825	948	1.4%
New Hampshire	141,855	158	
Massachusetts	378,787	None	
Vermont	85,539	16	
Virginia	747,610	292,627	
South Carolina	249,073	107,094	
Maryland	319,728	103,036	
North Carolina	393,751	100,572	
Georgia	82,548	29,264	
Delaware	59,094	8,887	

1. What is your state's total population? _____
2. Using your math skills, determine the percent of enslaved persons from each colony. Fill in the third column with the percentage to the tenth place. Rhode Island is completed for you.
3. What three states held the most people? The highest populated state should be listed first.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
4. Where are the states with the highest enslaved population located?
5. Why would there be more enslaved people in this location?

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1790/number_of_persons/1790a-02.pdf#

Census of 1780* **ANSWER KEY**

Your Name: _____ Delegate Name _____

State	Total Population	Enslaved Persons	Percent of Enslaved Persons
New York	340,102	21,324	6.3%
New Jersey	184,139	11,423	6.2%
Pennsylvania	434,373	3,737	.9%
Connecticut	237,946	2,764	1.2%
Rhode Island	68,825	948	1.4%
New Hampshire	141,855	158	.1%
Massachusetts	378,787	None	0%
Vermont	85,539	16	.01%
Virginia	747,610	292,627	39.1%
South Carolina	249,073	107,094	43.0%
Maryland	319,728	103,036	32.2%
North Carolina	393,751	100,572	25.5%
Georgia	82,548	29,264	35.5%
Delaware	59,094	8,887	15.0%

- What is your state's total population? _____ (Answers will vary – see chart)
- Using your math skills, determine the percent of enslaved persons from each colony. Fill in the third column with the percentage. Rhode Island is completed for you.
- What three states held the most people? List the most populated state first. Write the total population.
 - Virginia, 747,610**
 - Pennsylvania, 434,373**
 - North Carolina, 393,751**
- Where are the states with the highest enslaved population located?
In the South
- Why would there be more enslaved people in this location?
Answers will vary, but students should note that southerners depended on free labor for their economy.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1790/number_of_persons/1790a-02.pdf#

Pre-Convention Worksheet

Your Name: _____ Delegate Name _____

Directions: Answer the following questions to prepare for the convention. Be sure that all of the delegates from your team agree. Your job is to represent the interests of your state based on the information and attitudes of the late 1770s. Remember that your personal beliefs may conflict with the role you are playing.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce yourself to your fellow delegates. Remember to address a fellow delegate by their last name and shake hands when you introduce yourself. Write the names of two of your fellow delegates in the table below and one thing which interested you from their biographies. Then introduce yourself to two other people from other states and write their information as well. **Note:* If you don't have any fellow delegates, interview 4 people from other states.

Delegate Name	Delegate Age	Interesting Information

CENSUS INFORMATION

Complete the Census Worksheet first. Then, based on your answers, decide as a team the answers to the questions below:

1. Should representation be based on total population (more people = more representatives) or should representation be equal for each state (same number of representatives for every state).
2. Should enslaved people be counted in the total population? Why or why not? Be prepared to share your answers in the convention.
3. Based on who you know and have met at the convention, who would you recommend to be the executive in charge of the 1st government? Why him?



The Virginia Plan “The Large State Plan”

Instructions: Highlight in YELLOW the resolutions your team would like to propose to be adopted into the new constitution. Write notes on notecards to support your reasoning. If there are any resolutions with which your team does not agree should be included, highlight those in BLUE. Make notecards with reasons to support your decision.

Resolution 1:	The articles of the confederation ought to be corrected and enlarged <i>(Translation: We should change the Articles of Confederation and make them bigger and bolder).</i>
Resolution 2:	The right vote in the national legislature, ought to be proportioned to the share of contribution, or to the number of free inhabitants <i>(Translation: Number of representatives to the government should be based on the state's population. The bigger the state, the more representatives; the smaller the state, the fewer representatives).</i>
Resolution 3:	The national legislature ought to consist of two branches (bicameral) <i>(Translation: Congress should have two branches).</i>
Resolution 4:	The people of each State should elect the First Branch of the National Legislature. <i>(Translation: First branch representatives should be elected by a direct vote of the people in that state).</i>
Resolution 5:	The Second Branch of the National Legislature should be elected by the first <i>(Translation: Those representatives then get to choose people of the second branch—not elected by the citizens).</i>
Resolution 6:	The national legislature shall have power "to legislate in all cases to which the separate States are incompetent" and to void any state laws that contravene the [Constitution] <i>(Translation: Congress decides on all laws if states can't decide. National Congress laws are higher than any state law—Federal Government is superior!).</i>
Resolution 7:	The National Legislature shall elect a National Executive with the authority to execute the national laws and taxes <i>(Translation: Congress elects the president)</i>
Resolution 8:	A Council of Revision should be formed by the Executive and members of the judiciary with the authority to examine, and reject, every act of the national legislature <i>(Translation: The President gets to choose a group of people along with some judges and they can reject any laws Congress wants to pass).</i>
Resolution 9:	A national judiciary should be established consisting of one or more supreme tribunals and inferior tribunals. Judges will be appointed for life <i>(Translation: The U.S. should have a system of lower courts and one supreme court. Judges can be judges for life.)</i>
Resolution 10:	Provision should be made for admission of States to the union <i>(Translation: New states can join the U.S.)</i>
Resolution 11:	The territory and government of each state ought to be guaranteed by the United States <i>(Translation: No one can take away land from any state.)</i>
Resolution 12:	Provision should be made for Congress to continue until the new articles of union are adopted <i>(Translation: Until we can finalize the Constitution, Congress should decide what to do).</i>
Resolution 13:	Provision should be made for amendments of the articles of union <i>(Translation: The government should have a way of fixing any bad parts of this Constitution just in case something happens.)</i>
Resolution 14:	State Legislatures, Executives, and the judiciary should be bound by oath to support the Articles of Union <i>(Translation: All branches of government must swear to support the Constitution).</i>
Resolution 15:	The new plan for government should be ratified (approved) by the people, through assemblies of representatives chosen by the people <i>(Translation: The representatives must vote on this Constitution)</i>

The New Jersey Plan “The Small State Plan”

Instructions: Highlight in YELLOW the resolutions your team would like to propose to be adopted into the new constitution. Write notes on notecards to support your reasoning. If there are any resolutions with which your team does not agree should be included, highlight those in BLUE. Make notecards with reasons to support your decision.

Resolution 1:	Called for "a union of the States merely federal" reflecting beliefs that the states should have more power than the National government (for more info refer to Federalists and Anti-Federalists) <i>(Translation: States should have more power than the federal government. Think of the European Union---France, Germany, Italy, etc. are all in the European Union and share the same money, but they are independent nations).</i>
Resolution 2:	The articles of the confederation ought to be revised, corrected and enlarged <i>(Translation: We should change the Articles of Confederation and make them bigger and bolder).</i>
Resolution 3:	The federal Government ought to consist of a Supreme Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary <i>(Translation: The U.S. should have three branches of government: Legislative, Executive and Judicial).</i>
Resolution 4:	The Powers of Legislation (meaning authority to make, alter and repeal laws) ought to be vested in Congress <i>(Translation: Congress is the branch that gets to make the laws).</i>
Resolution 5:	Additional powers given to congress to pass laws applying duties (taxes) on foreign goods and regulation of trade and interstate commerce <i>(Translation: Congress can also tax citizens and they get to control trade and make laws about trade from state to state).</i>
Resolution 6:	Congress should be given the authority to collect taxes from states based on the number of free citizens and 3/5ths of slaves in that state. <i>(Translation: Congress can collect taxes from the states based on the number of free citizens and every slave counts as 3/5 of a person).</i>
Resolution 7:	Congress should elect a federal executive (rules of election and recall also stated) <i>(Translation: Congress chooses the president. They also make rules of how that president can lose his job).</i>
Resolution 8:	The federal judiciary is represented by a Supreme Tribunal appointed by the executive (powers and terms stated - The judiciary would be appointed by the executive and would serve for life) <i>(Translation: Courts should be tiered. The highest court is the supreme court. The judges will be appointed by the President and serve on the bench for life.)</i>
Resolution 9:	The Articles of Confederation and treaties are the supreme law of the land <i>(Translation: Articles of Confederation are the highest law of the land).</i>
Resolution 10:	The federal executive is authorized to use force to compel non-compliant states to observe the law <i>(Translation: President can use the military to enforce any laws in the states.)</i>
Resolution 11:	A procedure for the admission of new states should be established <i>(Translation: New states can be added to the union following certain requirements)</i>
Resolution 12:	A procedure relating to Naturalization should be established (meaning the acquisition of citizenship and nationality by somebody who was not a citizen of that country) <i>(Translation: Foreigners can apply to become Americans.)</i>
Resolution 13:	A citizen of one state can be prosecuted under the laws of another state in which the crime was committed <i>(Translation: If someone travels to another state and commits a crime, they can be tried in that state for their crime)</i>
Resolution 14:	State Legislatures, Executives, and the judiciary should be bound by oath to support the Articles of Union <i>(Translation: All branches recognize that the Articles of Confederation is the highest law of the land.)</i>

Determining Population:

- Southern states wanted slaves to count in the population.
- Northern states did not want slaves to count in the population because they were not citizens.