

Happy Birthday To Our Constitution!

On September 17, 1787 the delegates at the Philadelphia Convention signed the Constitution. The Constitution is the law of the land and the document that describes how our government should operate. Although the Constitution was not ratified (approved) by the necessary nine of 13 states until May 29, 1790, we celebrate every September 17th as Constitution Day in the United States. Certainly, the framers (the men who wrote and signed the Constitution) could never have imagined how enduring this document would be!

A terrific website about the history of our Constitution, the 39 men who signed the Constitution and the battle to ratify the Constitution is www.archives.gov. Other activities for this special day are:

Grades 4-6: Research other countries that have constitutions and see how old their documents are. (Examples: Canada, Japan, France, Venezuela, Brazil and Mexico). After sharing the information, students should discuss why the U.S. Constitution has survived so long compared to other countries or research some of the 39 framers and report on them to the entire class.

Grades 7-9: Read the Preamble to the Constitution. What do the various phrases mean? What provisions did the framers put in the Constitution to carry out the purposes they talked about in the Preamble? How is our current government striving to still carry out those purposes?

Grades 10-12: When we think of rights in this country, we usually look beyond the original Constitution and examine the Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments. However, there are some protections in the original Constitution that guarantee some of our rights. Define: *Writ of Habeas Corpus*, *Bill of Attainder*, and *Ex Post Facto Laws*. Why did the framers include these provisions? What has been the history of these provisions? How are they applicable today?

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We the
People

