

## Constitution Fun Facts

These are some fun and interesting facts you may like to share with students when talking about the Constitution. Some of the facts may provide ideas for lessons. The PBA is always looking for your lesson ideas to share with others. Please consider submitting your ideas!

The Constitution was stored in various cities until 1952, when it was placed in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. During the daytime, pages one and four of the document are displayed in a bullet-proof case. The case contains helium and water vapor to preserve the paper's quality. At night, the pages are lowered into a vault behind five-ton doors that are designed to withstand a nuclear explosion. The entire Constitution is displayed only one day a year—September 17, the anniversary of the day the framers signed the document.

The U.S. Constitution has 4,440 words. It is the oldest and the shortest written constitution of any government in the world.

Of the typographical errors in the Constitution, the misspelling of the word "Pensylvania" above the signers' names is probably the most glaring.

Thomas Jefferson did not sign the Constitution. He was in France during the Constitutional Convention, where he served as the U.S. minister. John Adams was serving as the U.S. minister to Great Britain during the Constitutional Convention and did not attend either.

The oldest person to sign the Constitution was Benjamin Franklin (81). The youngest was Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey (26).

The Constitution does not set forth requirements for the right to vote. As a result, at the outset of the Union, only male property-owners could vote. African Americans were not considered citizens, and women were excluded from the electoral process. Native Americans were not given the right to vote until 1924.

The word "democracy" does not appear once in the Constitution.

James Madison, "the father of the Constitution," was the first to arrive in Philadelphia for the Constitutional Convention. He arrived in February, three months before the convention began, bearing the blueprint for the new Constitution.

When the Constitution was signed, the United States' population was 4 million. It is now more than 300 million. Philadelphia was the nation's largest city with 40,000 inhabitants.

"My political curiosity, exclusive of my anxious solicitude for the public welfare, leads me to ask who authorized them (the framers of the Constitution) to speak the language of 'We, the People,' instead of 'We, the States'?"  
Patrick Henry, 1788 (Orations of American Orators)

George Washington and James Madison were the only presidents who signed the Constitution.

James Madison was the only delegate to attend every meeting. He took detailed notes of the various discussions and debates that took place during the convention. The journal that he kept during the Constitutional Convention was kept secret until after he died. It (along with other papers) was purchased by the government in 1837 at a price of \$30,000 (that would be \$503,675.99 today). The journal was published in 1840.

Jacob Shallus (1750-1796) was the Engrosser or Penman of the United States Constitution. His hand-written copy of the Constitution hangs in the U.S. National Archives.

Jacob Shallus served as Assistant Clerk to the Pennsylvania General Assembly at the time of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Although his name appears nowhere on the official document, the investigation into the identity of the Penman in 1937 for the 150th anniversary of the Constitution revealed the identity of the transcriber and that \$30 (\$325.29 today) was paid for "clerks employed to transcribe & engross."

Shallus is also credited as Assistant Secretary in the 1790 re-authoring of the state Constitution of Pennsylvania.

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Submit your lesson ideas to the Pennsylvania Bar Association to share with other teachers, lawyers and judges on our Web site. Please telephone or email Susan Etter, PBA Education and Special Projects Coordinator, at 1-800-932-0311 ext. 2256; [susan.etter@pabar.org](mailto:susan.etter@pabar.org)