

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF 1787

Time Allocated: Three 55-minute class periods

Correlation to the Alabama High School Graduation Exam:

Standard II, Objectives 1 & 2

Correlation to the Alabama Course of Study:

United States Studies: Beginnings to 1877 – Fifth Grade Standards: 9

Citizenship – Seventh Grade Standards: 4

United States Government — Twelfth Grade Standards: 2

Lesson Objectives:

The student will be able to:

1. Describe the Constitution as the plan of government for the United States.
2. Explain that the Constitution provides for three branches of government.
3. Explain why the framers of the Constitution met in secrecy.
4. Analyze the views of the delegates and explain how these impacted the decisions made at the Constitutional Convention.

Materials Needed:

1. Text
2. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention (see Constitution)
3. [The Constitution of the United States](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/)
4. Selected reference books
5. (Optional) Internet Access to the following web site:
<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/>

Introduction:

Have students name “well-known” delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

Question:

What qualities, views, and personalities do you think these delegates had?

Major Instructional Sequence:

1. Provide “handout” of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention and the states they represented.
2. Discuss the delegates’ personal experiences and involvement with their respective state governments and show how this influenced their ideas concerning the power of the national government.
3. List the reasons the delegates met in secrecy.
4. Small group activity: Each group should be assigned a delegate to research.

During the Research the Group Should:

1. Generate a list of views that the delegate had concerning the power of the national government.

2. Show how the delegate voted. If the delegate voted against the ratification of the Constitution, what were his reasons? Did the delegate make any compromises? If so, what were the compromises he made?
3. Explain why the delegates believed that a three-branched government was best.

Closure or Evaluation:

Results of the research may be shared through small group presentations, written reports, posters showing views in “outline form,” etc. After presentations and discussions of the delegates, ask the students to respond to the following:

If a constitutional convention were held today, what criteria would you use to select a group of people to draft a constitution? Are there any groups whose interests you feel should not be represented? If so, why?