

Lesson Plan: Constitution Day Background

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons_plans/lesson-plan-constitution-day/

Background Information on the Constitutional Convention

The Constitutional Convention took place from May 25 to September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to address problems in governing the United States of America, which had been operating under the Articles of Confederation following independence from Great Britain. Although the Convention was intended to revise the Articles of Confederation, the intention from the outset of many of its proponents, chief among them James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, was to create a new government rather than fix the existing one. The delegates elected George Washington to preside over the Convention. The result of the Convention was the creation of the United States Constitution, placing the Convention among the most significant events in the history of the United States.

The most contentious disputes revolved around:

- the composition and election of the Senate
- how "proportional representation" was to be defined (whether to include slaves or other property)
- whether to divide the executive power between three persons or invest the power into a single president,
- how to elect the president
- how long his term was to be and whether he could stand for reelection
- what offenses should be impeachable
- the nature of a fugitive slave clause and whether to allow the abolition of the slave trade
- whether judges should be chosen by the legislature or executive.

Most of the time during the Convention was spent on deciding these issues, while the powers of legislature, executive, and judiciary were not heavily disputed. Once the Convention began, the delegates first agreed on the principles of the Convention, then they agreed on Madison's Virginia Plan and began to modify it. A Committee of Detail assembled during the July 4 recess and produced a rough draft. Most of this rough draft remained in place, and can be found in the final version of the constitution. After the final issues were resolved, the Committee on Style produced the final version, and it was voted on and sent to the states.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Convention_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Convention_(United_States))