



Let's Study The U.S. Constitution – Part 1

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Our Constitution is continuously disregarded these days by both sides of the aisle. The truth of the matter is very few of us have actually read it, much less comprehend its intent. So let's embark on a journey together to discover one of the greatest documents ever penned.

Our Constitution changed the course of not only our country but of all humanity. If we cannot articulate or debate the document that is the foundation of our form of government, how can we knowledgeably defend its principles? If we do not understand our history and the Founders intent when they drafted the Constitution, how can we hold on to the gift of liberty they gave us?

So I invite you and your family to join in this journey as we study together, the Constitution of the United States of America and all the great stories behind it.

You will need three items to guide you on your journey: 1) A copy of [The U.S. Constitution](#) 2) A modern English translation of The Federalist Papers. ([“The Federalist Papers In Modern English”](#) by Mary E. Webster and [“The Original Argument”](#) are two good choices) 3) [Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

First, some background:

The original Constitution was only 4 pages long, about 4500 words, and consisted of seven Articles. Ours is the shortest and oldest written Constitution still in effect of any major government in the world.

The intent of [The Federalist Papers](#), written by Founding Fathers Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, were to explain to the public at large the purpose and intent of the Constitution and the unique new form of government created in 1787. Citizens in early America avidly read these articles and essays, which were published and distributed in the colonies, during the public debate and ratification process.

The delegates of the [Thirteen Colonies](#) met in Philadelphia during an unusually HOT, muggy summer. Huge flies flung themselves against the windows of [Independence Hall](#) and attacked the delegates when they went outside. Although the heat was sweltering, the delegates insisted they must wear suits as required

by the dress code for civilized gentlemen of the day. Alas, there was no air-conditioning in 1787!

The delegates decided to post guards at the doors and windows to keep eavesdroppers at bay. To further compound the misery, they nailed the windows shut and drew heavy drapes across to muffle their voices so their arguments would not be overheard and reported to newspapers prematurely, to be dissected and shot down before the process was even completed.

James Madison was known as “The Father of the Constitution”. As the only delegate to attend every meeting, Madison was chosen to document the extraordinary four-month event. Otherwise, we would have no idea of the extreme scrutiny each article endured during the deliberations. He took detailed notes of the various discussions and heated debates that took place that summer. The journal he kept during the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was kept secret until after he died, and was finally published in 1840. www.constitutionfacts.com

These were the rules: Debate was open and brisk. No one else could take notes but Madison. But the Framers were careful to cultivate an atmosphere of total freedom in their deliberations. A member could vote on a particular phrase or concept and then go back and change his vote with no repercussions or reprimand. It was crucial that the free flow of ideas must be unhindered. Nothing like this in the history of the world had ever been attempted before.

Many of the delegates, especially Thomas Jefferson, had studied the history of world governments in great detail and had an understanding of what had worked and what had not. They felt it was important to incorporate the best parts of various types of governments into their new system.

Every single word in our Constitution was chosen deliberately, with very specific intent. Interestingly, the word “*democracy*” does not appear ANYWHERE in the document, since we have a republican form of government, (i.e. “...and to the republic for which it stands”). According to their [writings](#), the Framers had flatly rejected the idea of a democracy as other nations had fallen violently under mob rule. And yet look at the number of Americans, including politicians, who refer to our form of government as a democracy and not a republic!

Now that we have some background, let’s begin with the Preamble.

This is the document’s “mission statement” and was actually added later, after the Constitution was written:

“We, the People of the United States of America, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defense, promote the General Welfare and secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

The fifty-four words in the one-sentence Preamble is concise and yet conveys precisely what our Constitution sets forth. Most every public school in America taught civics at one time, and each student was required to memorize the [Preamble](#). Many kids today have never even heard of it! It's up to us to teach them. Given some incentives, it can be fun!

Note that some words have a different meaning today than when our founding documents were penned. In an age when the English language is tortured by lawyers, judges, and politicians until it is unrecognizable, it is important to read your modern day [translation](#) of The Federalist Papers. For example, for the meaning of "[promote the General Welfare](#)", read Federalist#41, last 4 paragraphs. James Madison's [definition](#) had nothing to do with giving welfare to the poor as the court redefined it in 1937 to accommodate Roosevelt's "New Deal". Justice Owen Roberts later wrote about the ruling, "We voted against the Constitution to save the Court."

For a bonus assignment, look up the word "welfare" in Webster's 1828 Dictionary. It is absolutely essential to search out the original meaning and intent of our founding documents, according to the men who actually wrote them.

"*We, the People*" was a concept never before considered in all of civilized history and is still looked upon with awe by many in the world. It established a declaration of hope that men are capable of governing themselves. It was a leap of faith that set us apart from every other society that ever existed. Our Constitution was the first to put forth this basic philosophy, and with this effort, the Framers created the greatest ongoing experiment ever devised by man.

Next week we will study Article I.

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