

# U.S. Constitution Literacy Lessons



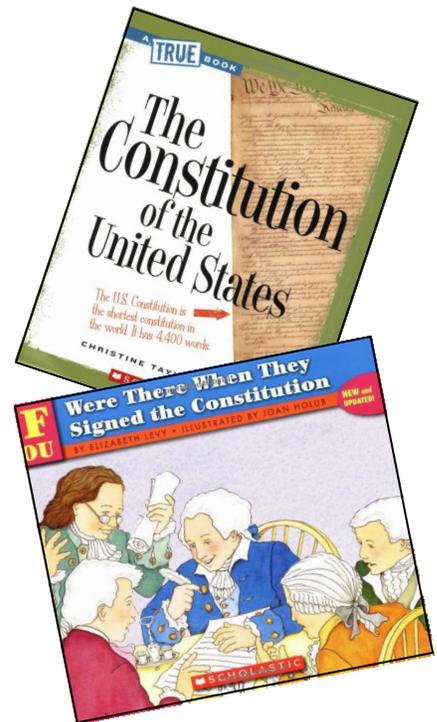
**Free!**

Laura Candler  
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# U.S. Constitution Literacy Lessons

by Laura Candler

September 17th is Constitution Day, and it's a great time to integrate social studies into your literacy lessons. I discovered two outstanding informational text books to read and discuss with your students, and I created a freebie for each one. Both books are perfect for upper elementary students, and if you only have one copy of each book, you can read it aloud and show the pages so your students can follow along. The first one, [\*The Constitution of the United States\*](#), is much shorter and can probably be read aloud in one or two lessons. [\*If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution\*](#) is quite a bit longer and may take up to a week to read and discuss with students. These two literacy activities will work well later in the year, too, because they aren't specifically written for Constitution Day.



## What's the Truth?

Featured Book: *The United States Constitution*  
by Christine Taylor-Butler

[\*The Constitution of the United States\*](#) is a part of the Scholastic "True Book" series, and it's an excellent informational text for upper elementary students. **What's the Truth?** is a hands-on sorting activity to stimulate thinking prior to reading the read the book to your students. The activity works best with teams or pairs of students. Print one set of cards per team, and ask team members to cut the cards apart and stack them in the middle of the team. Ask them to take turns picking up a card, reading it aloud, and discussing whether or not they

| The Constitution of the United States<br><b>What's the Truth?</b>                      |  |
|--|--|
| The United States Government is made up of 3 separate branches.                        | Benjamin Franklin was the first president.   |
| The United States Constitution was signed in 1776.                                     | The United States was originally formed from 13 colonies.                                    |
| The Bill of Rights was an important part of the Constitution when it was first signed. | The Revolutionary War was fought between the northern and southern states.                   |
| According to the Great Compromise, each state would have 3 senators.                   | Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.                          |
| The 13th Amendment ended slavery in the United States.                                 | The Constitution was written over 10 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed. |

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think the statement is true or false. The cards should be separated into two piles accordingly. You may also want them to write a T or an F on the back of each card for future reference. As you read and discuss the book together, ask them to try to determine which statements are true and which are false. You'll find a color-coded answer key on page 5.

### Constitution Discussion Questions

Featured Book: *If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy

[\*If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution\*](#) is organized around a series of questions about the American Revolution and the writing of the Constitution. I've created a set of Constitution Discussion Questions that you can use when you finish reading the book or where appropriate during the book. Because the questions are quite challenging, I suggest using the **Talking Sticks discussion strategy** in small guided reading groups or as a whole class. The book is most appropriate for upper elementary students, but you may be able to use with middle school students as well. You'll need to preview the book to decide. The discussion questions are fairly generic and can be used with any in-depth discussion or study of the Constitution. After you've discussed all of them as a class, you may want to have your students choose one to write about in a journal entry.



For additional resources for studying the Constitution, visit the Social Studies page on Teaching Resources. (<http://www.lauracandler.com/filecabinet/socialstudies.php>)

You'll find a sorting activity for the Branches of Government, a cooperative learning lesson to learn the meaning of the Preamble, and a printable you can use to create your own Classroom Bill of Rights.

With limited time in the school day, it's important to be able to sneak in a little social studies with your literacy lessons. These activities can be used on Constitution Day or any time when your class is studying U.S. Government or the Constitution.

The Constitution of the United States  
**'What's the Truth?'**  
Answer Key: True blue and False red

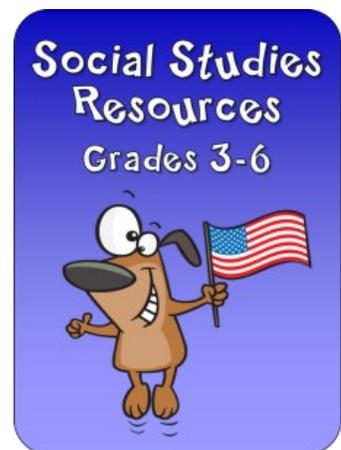
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**If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution**  
Discussion Questions

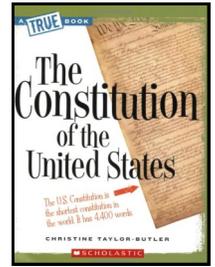
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|--|---|
| What is the Constitution, and why was it written?  | What challenges were faced by the men who wrote the Constitution?   |
| Compare and contrast the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. How are they alike and different?       | What disagreement arose between the large states and the small states? How was it resolved?                         |
| How does a bill become a law? When responding, be sure to explain the importance of our system of "checks and balances." | Were all people treated equally in the original Constitution? Explain.  |
| Why is the Constitution considered to be a "miracle" by many historians?   | What character traits describe the men who signed the Constitution? Support your answer with details from the book. |

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# The Constitution of the United States

## What's the Truth?



The United States Government is made up of 3 separate branches.

Benjamin Franklin was the first president.

The United States Constitution was signed in 1776.

The United States was originally formed from 13 colonies.

The Bill of Rights was an important part of the Constitution when it was first signed.

The Revolutionary War was fought between the northern and southern states.

According to the Great Compromise, each state would have 3 senators.

Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

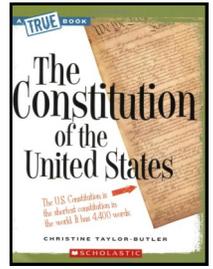
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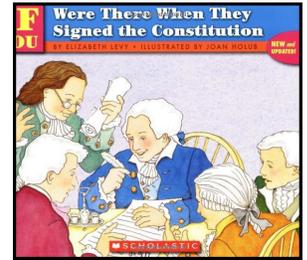
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# If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution

## Discussion Questions



What is the Constitution, and why was it written?

What challenges were faced by the men who wrote the Constitution?

Compare and contrast the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. How are they alike and different?

What disagreement arose between the large states and the small states? How was it resolved?

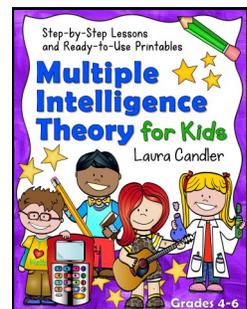
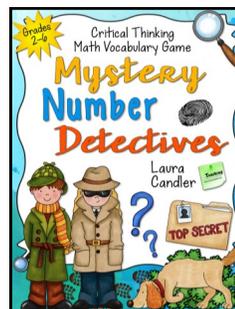
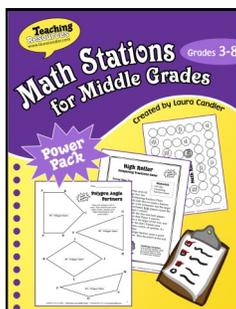
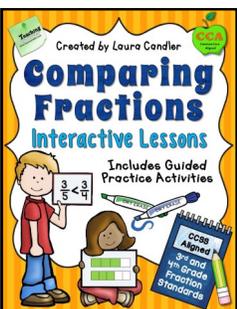
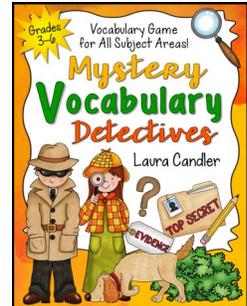
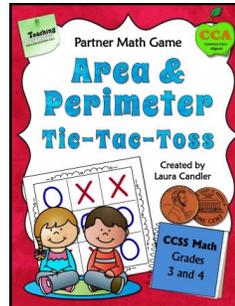
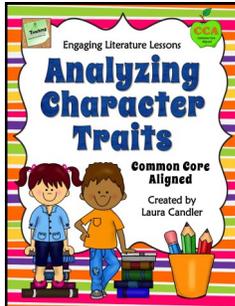
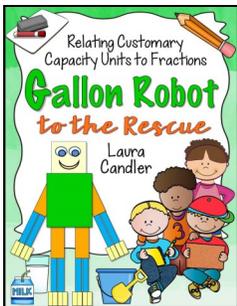
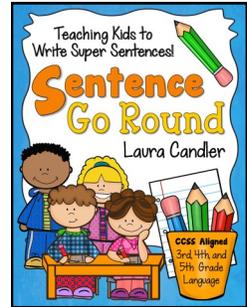
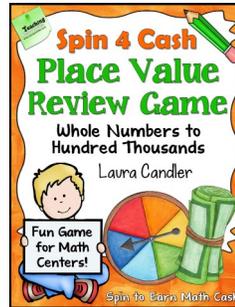
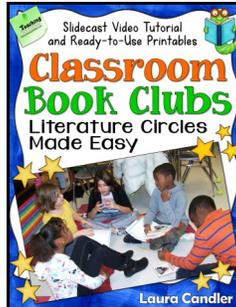
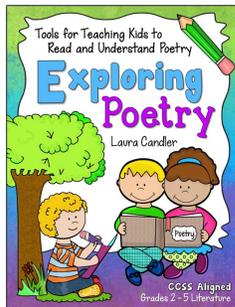
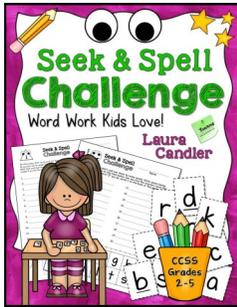
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What character traits describe the men who signed the Constitution? Support your answer with details from the book.

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