

Lesson 2: Debate in Philadelphia

Vocabulary

delegate a person who represents other people at a meeting

Constitutional Convention a meeting where delegates came up with the Constitution

Virginia Plan a plan giving states with more people more representatives

New Jersey Plan a plan giving each state the same number of representatives

compromise an agreement reached after each side gives up something

Great Compromise a plan that split Congress into the House of Representatives and the Senate

Three-Fifths Compromise counting only some enslaved people as part of a state's population

Preamble the beginning part of the Constitution

reserved powers powers that are “reserved,” or left, for the states

separation of powers dividing a government into branches with separate powers

checks and balances a system to make sure that no branch of government becomes too powerful

veto to refuse to sign into law

The Constitutional Convention

In May 1787 **delegates** from the states met. They wanted to change the Articles of Confederation. This meeting was later called the **Constitutional Convention**.

Competing Plans

James Madison and a few other delegates wanted a new constitution. They worked to write the **Virginia Plan**. This plan created executive and judicial branches of government. It gave larger states more delegates in Congress than smaller states. Delegates from smaller states were upset. They came up with the **New Jersey Plan**. This plan gave every state the same number of delegates in Congress.

A Compromise Plan

Delegates finally agreed to a **compromise**, or agreement. They came up with the **Great Compromise**. This plan split Congress into two parts, the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the Senate, every state would have two delegates. In the House of Representatives, states with more people would have more delegates than states with fewer

people. The delegates also agreed to the **Three-Fifths Compromise**. It said that only three out of every five enslaved people could be counted as part of a state's population.


Our Constitution

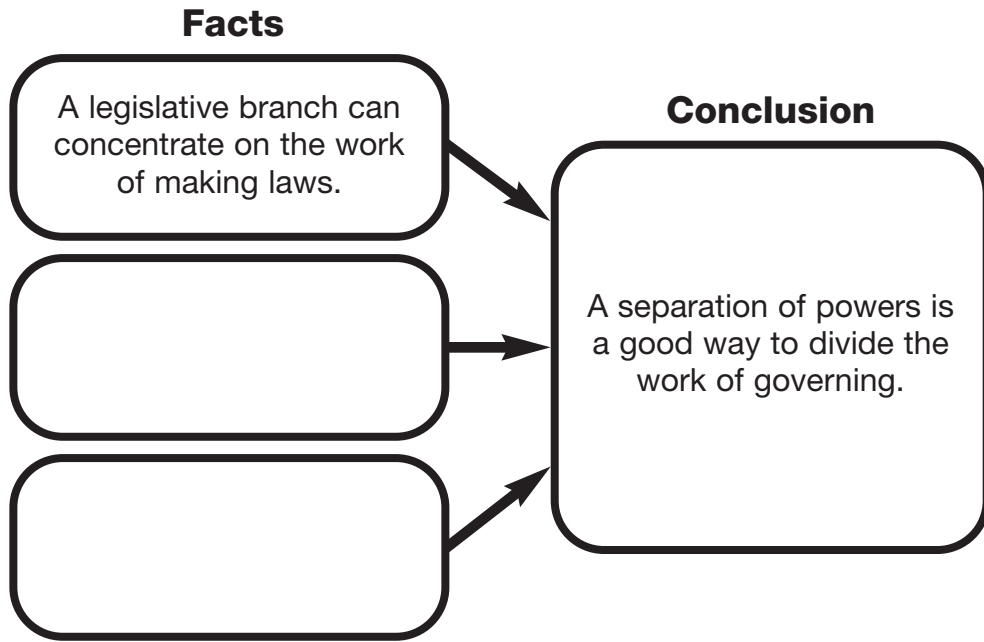
The **Preamble** tells the Constitution's goals: to protect the country and the people. The Constitution gives some powers to the national government and some to the states. The states' powers are called **reserved powers**. The Constitution divides the country's government into three parts, or branches. Congress makes up the Legislative Branch. The President leads the Executive Branch. The Supreme Court is part of the Judicial Branch. Dividing a government into parts is called a **separation of powers**. The Constitution has a system of **checks and balances**. Even though Congress may pass laws, the President can **veto** a law Congress wants.

The Work Still Ahead

The Constitution was ratified on September 17, 1787. Yet nine of the states still had to agree to it before it could become law.

Lesson 2: Review

1.  **Draw Conclusions** Add two more facts on which the conclusion given below might be based.



2. Did James Madison play an important role in creating the Constitution? Explain.

3. What was the Great Compromise? The Three-Fifths Compromise?

4. What did the delegates to the Constitutional Convention expect to accomplish?

5. **Critical Thinking: Evaluate** Why did the writers of the Constitution create a system of checks and balances?
