



## **The Plan: Creating a Constitution**

A Play in Three Acts

Adapted from *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* by Jean Fritz

*Note to teachers:* This three act play chronicles the creation of the Constitution from the problems with the Articles of Confederation to the ratification process. If time is a factor, teachers can use Act II only to teach students about the actual Constitutional Convention.

### **Characters:**

James (Jemmy) Madison; Narrator

Citizen One

European Businessman

Citizen Two

George Washington

Alexander Hamilton

Ben Franklin

Edmund Randolph

Pierce Butler

John Dickinson

Elbridge Gerry

William Paterson

Luther Martin

Gouverneur Morris

Patrick Henry

George Mason

**ACT I:** The Call for Unity

**Scene I:** Montpelier, VA 1786- James Madison's Office

**Jemmy Madison:** (He is sitting in a chair at a desk writing in his journal about the condition of the United States following the Revolutionary War. He stops writing and begins to talk to the audience.)

Americans, they are glad they aren't British but they aren't sure what to make of themselves. Following the Revolution the sense of unity and teamwork that helped us to defeat the British has vanished and has been replaced by a feeling of allegiance not to a nation but to a state.

Virginians consider themselves citizens of Virginia not citizens of the United States. Shouts of “no account Yankees” and “lousy Buckskins” echoed from the mouths of northerners and southerners alike with little account for the idea of a unified nation.

I recall General Washington during the war, trying to create unity among his troops.

**General George Washington:** I decided it would be a good idea if my troops swore allegiance to the United States. I lined up a group of men from New Jersey and asked them to pledge their loyalty to the new nation, they looked at me as though I had taken leave of my senses. I had to drop the idea although I never gave up on it.

**Jemmy Madison:** Now, in 1786 we are in a real pickle. Just listen to the public describing the problems facing the United States under our current ruling document – the Articles of Confederation.

**Citizen 1:** Prior to the war I borrowed money to start my business, now I have to pay the money back but my customers don’t use the same currency as I do. The paper money issued by each state is worthless, making it impossible to do business. I am facing bankruptcy.

**French Merchant:** I sell wine to the colonies. I must make trade agreements with each of the states to do so. This is inefficient! I will sell my wines elsewhere and not in America. Vive la France!

**Resident of New York:** The pigs are running the streets! People are throwing their garbage into the alleys creating a real mess. This city is a sty! We need order and someone to pick up all this garbage.

**Congressman:** We have to pay back our debts from the war - especially to France - but we can’t since the states can’t be bothered to pay their taxes. At our last meeting only several states sent members to help make new laws. It doesn’t matter, they won’t follow them anyway.

**Citizen 1:** I hear the criticisms of the Articles of Confederation but who cares. I fought the British so that I wouldn’t have to answer to another king in the form of a federal government.

**Jemmy Madison:** The problems continued to mount growing more and more troublesome throughout time bringing us to 1786. Luckily, there are a bunch of us here who have some ideas about how this problem can be solved.

**Scene II:** Philadelphia, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Outside of Constitution Hall.

**Jemmy Madison:** I am so excited! I just arrived in Philadelphia for an important event. The trip from Virginia was long, but I am here and ready to go. Eleven days early! Why so early? I didn’t want to miss a minute of such an important event.

If you recall, when we last spoke the nation was breaking apart due to the fact that the federal government had no power over the states.

**(Aside) Madison, Washington and Adams are assembled together discussing the state of the country and what should be done.**

**George Washington:** I have felt strongly that the United States will not survive if something is not done to give power to the national government. Something must be done - and fast!

**Alexander Hamilton:** I agree. My upbringing in the Caribbean and experience in business has taught me that a disunified nation is not efficient in turning a profit. Loyalty to a state over a nation is folly and foolishness.

**Jemmy Madison:** Although smaller in stature than the two of you, I am big in ideas and I agree with you, Hamilton. What can we do to create this national government?

**(Return to Constitution Hall.)**

**Jemmy Madison continues:** The three of us- Hamilton, Washington, myself and a handful of others suggested to the Congress that all the states send delegates to a Grand Convention in Annapolis, Maryland. The first Convention was a complete flop. Hardly any delegates attended- including the delegate from Maryland who merely had to walk down the street.

**(Aside) Delegates comment to the audience:**

**Rhode Island Delegate:** I will not have anything to do with revising the Articles of Confederation. They are fine as they are. Rhode Island won't be bossed about by its larger, more populous neighbors.

**Patrick Henry:** I smell a rat! I smell a rat that is out to steal cheese from the sovereignty of the states. I will not attend.

**Willie Jones, North Carolina:** I will not say what I smell, but I won't go either.

**(Return to Madison outside of the Hall.)**

**Jemmy Madison:** The call went out again to revise the Articles of Confederation. Perhaps violent events like Shay's Rebellion were signals to many that a unified central government was needed to protect citizens and their property.

So here I am, ready to see what the delegates can come up with to solve these problems.

**Doorman enters and hands Madison a message:** For you, sir.

**Madison:** It's from Washington.

**George Washington:** I have been ill with a headache and upset stomach for several days, but nothing- I mean nothing- will keep me from Philadelphia. Leaving Mount Vernon, see you soon.  
G. Washington

**(Outside Constitution Hall.)**

**Madison:** Well, my early arrival wasn't necessary. It took until May 25<sup>th</sup> for enough delegates to arrive to make sure that a majority of the states were represented. I heard all of the excuses – bad roads, personal business that had to be attended to, lack of money, wet weather – all rubbish!

**Citizen 3:** Look out! Here comes our most famous citizen Ben Franklin.

**Citizen 4:** What's he doing?

**Citizen 3:** He is riding in a sedan chair, being carried by four prisoners from the jail.

**Citizen 4:** Is that necessary?

**Citizen 3:** Well, he is 81 though you would hardly believe it by the way he acts. Always out having fun - but his back hurts on the cobblestones if he rides in a carriage. Mr. Franklin, look over here! Hooray!

**Citizen 4:** Hooray for Franklin! Let the convention begin.

**Jemmy Madison:** With enough delegates, the convention started on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 1787. The process to rewrite the Articles of Confederation was underway. Let's enter the hall and see what is going on.

**ACT II.** The Convention

**Scene I.** Summer, 1787. Philadelphia, Inside Constitution Hall.

**James Madison:** Well, by the end of May there were enough delegates to begin trying to revise the Articles of Confederation. It is hot here in Philadelphia. Really hot. And to make matters worse, the windows have been shut to prevent newspaper reporters and the public from listening to the discussions. Delegates were advised not to write letters about the proceedings to their families and special attention was paid to Benjamin Franklin, since it was hard for him to keep a secret.

**(Crowd is huddled outside one of the windows of the hall.)**

**Citizen 1:** What are they saying? Can you hear what is going on?

**Citizen 2:** Shhh. I'm trying to listen, but I can't hear a thing.

**Newspaper Reporter:** If I knew what was going on in there, I would have the scoop of the eighteenth century!

**James Madison:** The first thing that we delegates did was to elect George Washington as the president of the Convention. He was then directed to sit in an official chair on a raised platform so that he could direct the proceedings. I sat in the front of the room so that I could keep detailed notes of all the proceedings. The remaining members sat at long tables draped with green cloth. Little did I know that I would be writing for four months!

Meanwhile, rumors abound outside of the hall.

**Citizen 1:** I heard something about installing a king- perhaps the second son of George the Third.

**Citizen 2:** No way, I didn't fight one king to install his son as another.

**Newspaper Reporter:** I have it on good authority that this won't happen; Washington knows a king is not the answer for our country.

**James Madison:** Luckily, the delegates were inside working hard on "A Plan" to replace the inefficient Articles of Confederation. I use the term "Plan" because if I mention the word "Constitution" the convention will erupt with fear. Men with ideas stepped forward to present their thoughts to the Convention. One such man was Edmund Randolph, a fellow Virginian.

**Edmund Randolph:** I would like to present an idea for a "federal" style of government. What I propose would include three branches of government that would share power. First, the executive branch would be responsible for running the government; the legislative branch would consist of two houses and would make the laws. The House of Representatives would be elected directly by the people; the Senate would be smaller and would be elected by members of the House. Together they will be called Congress. The third branch would be headed by a Supreme

Court that would make sure that laws were legal and properly obeyed. As I am Governor of Virginia, I refer to this plan for a federal government as the “Virginia Plan.”

**Pierce Butler:** Randolph is a likable man, we should consider his plan.

**Edmund Randolph:** With a final note, I would like to very clearly state that this resolution is for a federal government that would be national in nature and would be supreme over the states.

**(DEAD SILENCE in the room.)**

**Pierce Butler:** As a South Carolinian, I take offense at the idea that the states must answer to a federal government! I am angered that you are considering a national government!

**John Dickinson:** Mr. Butler, there isn’t anything wrong with such an idea. We *are* a nation after all! I think I speak for the state of Delaware when I say that I would consider such a government. We are a nation!

**Elbridge Gerry:** No! I don’t want to hear of it. I did not travel from Massachusetts to create a new government. I came here to rework the old one which did not include a national government at all. I am here to protect the sovereignty or rights of the states.

**(Two delegates talking to each other in a whisper.)**

**Delegate 1:** Who let old “Grumbletonian” speak?

**Delegate 2:** I don’t know but he does bring up some good points. We must consider whether or not to throw out the Articles of Confederation and write something new, or merely revise them.

**James Madison:** All kinds of fears surfaced as the delegates debated the idea of creating a federal government. Small states feared that they would have little power, larger states feared that the sharing of power would take away some of their advantage in the Congress. Many were afraid that only the rich, educated aristocratic class would be able to participate and benefit from such a government. Others felt as though allowing the common folk to participate would result in mob rule.

**James Madison:** It took a while but eventually the convention did agree on a national legislature with two houses, but the word “national” had to be removed.

**Alexander Hamilton:** Now that we have decided on a legislature, we still have much to decide. I would like to discuss the executive. In my business experience I have found it to be a good thing to let a leader remain in power for a long duration so that he may perfect his role and offer the most good to the public. I think that an elected president should serve a long term, perhaps a life term.

**Ben Franklin:** I don’t know if that’s a good idea.

**Alexander Hamilton:** If they finish a term and are wandering around, what good will it be. They will have nothing to do and it will be embarrassing to see them floating around like ghosts.

**Ben Franklin:** But what if the person chosen doesn't know how to be a leader? Or what if he is a bad president? Shouldn't there be a way to get rid of him?

**John Dickinson:** That's a good point.

**Ben Franklin:** Otherwise, the only thing we could do would be to shoot him.

**(Laughter from the delegates.)**

**George Washington:** After much discussion and debate, it has been decided that there will be a single executive in the form of a president who will be paid out of the Treasury of the new government. He will be chosen by electors from each state, for a term of four years. If he cannot serve or breaks his promise to the people he will be impeached, or removed from office.

**Pierce Butler:** But what if he dies in office? Or is removed from office? Who will take his place? Would there be an emergency election? If the vice president's role is to take over in these instances, what would he do while the president was in office?

**James Madison:** It was decided that the vice president would assume the role of president if the executive died in office or was impeached. Until that time the vice president would be given the job of presiding over the Senate.

**John Randolph:** I would like to thank the delegates for debating the Virginia Plan for the past four days. I hope that you will continue to debate and refine the ideas and create a federal government....

**William Paterson interrupts by standing and stating:** I don't approve of a single idea presented by Mr. Randolph. I would like to offer the convention a different perspective that I like to call the "New Jersey Plan." My plan is practical, less expensive, legal and will not limit the power of the states. Might I present my plan, Mr. Washington?

**George Washington:** Let's take a break and when we return Mr. Paterson will present his New Jersey Plan.

**Scene II:** The New Jersey Plan, Constitution Hall.

**George Washington (addressing the Convention that has reassembled after a break):** Please be seated. Delegates, please be seated so we may get started.

**(The delegates find their seats and give Washington their attention.)**

**George Washington:** I believe that when we left we said that Mr. Paterson of New Jersey would have the floor to present his ideas and responses to the Virginia plan. Please give Mr. Paterson your attention.

**William Paterson:** Thank you. As I said earlier, I am opposed to every idea presented in the Virginia Plan as presented by Mr. Randolph. New Jersey - a small state - should have the same vote as a large state.

**James Madison:** I object to that. Small states will have less representation in the House but will have equal footing in the Senate....

**William Paterson:** Before I was interrupted, I was also saying that a unitary system of government with one legislative body with several executives will better represent the rights of the states- particularly the small ones.

**James Madison:** Will it? Did the unitary system of England represent us well? No, but you are proposing a similar model for the United States; one that does not account for balancing the power between small and large states.

**William Paterson:** Well, yes- but also, it will cost a lot of money for delegates to travel to Congress with so many representatives. How could they afford it?

**James Madison:** We could hold Congress in a newly created Capital and delegates would only have to travel there several times a year or live there during those sessions.

**William Paterson (forcibly):** I still say this plan won't work. (Sits down angrily.)

**George Washington:** At this point I think we should vote on one of the two plans. Those in favor of Mr. Randolph's Virginia plan for a federal government say "Aye." Madison, record seven "Ayes" for the Virginia Plan. Those in favor of Mr. Paterson's New Jersey plan say "Aye." Madison, record three "Ayes" for the New Jersey Plan.

The Virginia Plan carries with a split decision put forward by the state of Maryland. Therefore, we will scrap the idea of a federation and move ahead with creating a new document that will outline and organize a new constitution and create a federal government.

**(Shouts and Hoorays from the delegates as they get up to leave the hall.)**

**James Madison:** Although much had been decided, a huge burden lay ahead for the delegates. Delegates sent for their families and brought them to Philadelphia since they knew it would take most of the summer for them to draft this document that would be called the Constitution.

**Scene III.** Drafting the Constitution  
Independence Hall, Philadelphia.



**James Madison:** The summer dragged on. It is a wonder that we all didn't quit and go home. What inspired most of us was that we knew we were deciding the future of our country.

**Pierce Butler:** I sometimes worry that the people won't like certain provisions of this Constitution. Does that concern you?

**John Dickinson:** Yes, it does concern me. We have to appease the people in order to get them to believe in this Constitution.

**James Madison:** I have had enough of "will the people like this" or "will the people like that." Our job is to create the best government possible without regards to pleasing certain factions of American society. If we create a solid, working government then the people will approve and get behind it!

**George Washington:** It's now or never! We must persevere and continue on with the project at hand.

**Luther Martin:** I think, blah blah blah.... **(Drones on and on, delegates yawn and put their heads on the table. Madison stops taking notes. Franklin snores.)**

**Delegate 1:** I need to leave, I can't stand his talking anymore!

**Delegate 2:** You can't, you heard Washington, we need to press on.

**Delegate 1:** I will stay for Washington's sake and for the sake of the country, but my goodness, putting up with this is a real sacrifice.

**Delegate 2:** I hear you!

**Washington:** The next question we will discuss is whether or not the states should be represented in Congress according to the population of each state. I open the floor to debate.

**Edmund Randolph:** Of course. States such as Virginia with large populations should have more representation than small states.

**John Dickinson, William Paterson, Pierce Butler:** That's not fair to the small states! The large states will gang up on us and prevent us from having any power.

**James Madison:** Friends, this is not so. There is no evidence to believe that the larger states would ally themselves. If anything they are rivals!

**William Paterson:** I am not convinced.

**Ben Franklin:** There is too much tension in this room. To help, I believe that it would help to cut the tension if we started each morning session with a daily prayer.

**North Carolina Delegate:** Who will pay for a minister? We can't afford that.

**Alexander Hamilton:** Rumors will start that the convention is in real trouble if the people see a minister being summoned to the hall.

**James Madison:** It was resolved that no minister would be called and the states went back to discussing the representation of the states in the Congress. Washington put a vote to the floor which called for each state to be represented equally, regardless of population, in the Senate.

**George Washington:** Those for equal representation in the Senate say, "Aye."

**Delegates:** Aye.

**George Washington:** I count five "Ayes." Madison, please record the vote.

**George Washington:** Those opposed to equal representation in the Senate say, "Nay."

**Delegates:** Nay.

**George Washington:** Madison, record five "Nays". A tie vote with Georgia's votes split down the middle.

**John Dickinson:** I think I speak for the small states when I say that we are outraged that our power is being depleted. I suggest that the small states break off and make our own treaties with foreign nations.

**Delegates:** (Mixture of "yeas" and "nays." Loud discussions.)

**Luther Martin:** This convention is held together by no more than the strength of a hair!

**George Washington (With a disappointed look):** I have almost despaired of the task of writing this Constitution. In the last week we have made so little progress.

**A while later...**

**James Madison:** I am not sure what happened, but the week of July 14<sup>th</sup> both the heat wave and the stalemate over representation broke.

**George Washington:** A Great Compromise has been reached! Every state will have two members in the Senate and the House of Representatives will have one representative for every forty thousand inhabitants.

**Delegates:** Hooray!

**James Madison:** Now the question of dealing with the trouble between northern and southern states who had differences of opinion over the expansion of slavery and of taxation.

**Patrick Henry:** Since the north is more populated, won't it have more power than the south? And what about taxation on goods sent from the south to Europe such as tobacco, rice and indigo? Won't the north try to increase those taxes on southern farmers?

**Pierce Butler:** What about slaves brought into the south?

**Delegates:** Yes, what about slaves? Do they count towards total population?

**Elbridge Gerry:** We should get rid of slavery altogether!

**Half of the delegates:** Hear! Hear!

**Edmund Randolph:** Virginia won't belong to a government that dictates about private business ventures! That is a violation of state sovereignty.

**Alexander Hamilton:** If we want a Constitution, we will have to strike some kind of bargain. Any ideas?

**James Madison:** A bargain was reached by which the northern states agreed to continue the slave trade until 1808 while the southern states agreed to give up their demand that commercial regulations had to be passed by two-thirds vote of both houses. It was also decided that a slave would count as 3/5 of a person towards representation in Congress. This Three Fifths Compromise meant that slave populations would count towards Congressional representation in the house but not so much as to overtake the northern states.

Although progress was made, the debate and discussion continued on.

**Gouverneur Morris:** Can anyone be a Congressman? There are many people just arriving on these shores, are they fit to represent those of us who have been here longer? I say, if it takes seven years to learn how to be a shoemaker, a foreigner ought to spend fourteen years to learn how to become an American legislator.

**James Madison:** In the end, it was decided that a senator was required to be a citizen for nine years; a representative for seven years; and the chief executive, or president, had to be native born.

**George Washington:** It is agreed also that states seeking to enter the union will follow specific provisions for such.

**Delegates:** Aye, Aye.

**George Washington:** Changes can be made to this Constitution as future demands require. These changes will be referred to as amendments and under NO circumstances may there be any changes that will alter the type of government created by this convention.

**James Madison:** The ability to amend the Constitution would make the document flexible and responsive to the needs of citizens in the future. By not allowing the structure of government to be altered, it guaranteed that the government would be in the hands of the people.

**Alexander Hamilton:** Now that this document is drafted, how do we get the states to approve or ratify it?

**Gouverneur Morris:** What about allowing the state legislatures to vote on it?

**James Madison:** I don't think this is a good idea. The states will want to keep power in their own hands and will vote, "No." I propose holding state conventions in which citizens will have more say in approving the Constitution.

**Gouverneur Morris:** That's not a bad idea.

**Delegates:** Aye, Aye.

**George Washington:** Then it is decided, each state will hold a ratification convention and discuss and vote on the Constitution. It will take nine states to ratify, or agree to this Constitution, to make it the law of the land.

**James Madison:** Once the details were finalized, the document was sent to be revised and copied out neatly. It was presented to the Congress four days later and began with the statement, "We the People."

**George Washington:** This is little short of a miracle!

**James Madison:** There were still issues to be resolved such as the addition of a Bill of Rights. I don't think it is necessary but many of the delegates believe that the rights of the individual must be protected from government interference.

But at least a governing document has been drafted and put to the states for ratification. I wonder what will happen at the state conventions?

**Crowd (shouting):** Hooray! Hooray!

### **ACT III:** Ratification

**Scene I:** The Federalists represented here by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay are sitting in a room together looking over articles they have written in support of the Constitution.

***James Madison (to the audience):*** Well, it didn't take long for the citizens to weigh in on their thoughts about the Constitution. Those who are for it call themselves Federalists. Those who are against it are called Anti-Federalists although the "antis" said they were the true Federalists and those in favor of the Constitution should be called Nationalists.

Over the six months following the drafting of the Constitution, the states met and debated the document and voted either to ratify, or approve, the Constitution or to reject it. There was a lot at stake for the Constitution, so my friends and I joined together to create support for ratification.

Join us in my office as we review our work.

***Alexander Hamilton:*** Thanks for reviewing my essay. I am trying to address the concern that this federal government will be too powerful.

***John Jay:*** I see that, I like how you have explained the system of checks and balances found within the Constitution. We know from history that human nature is tempted to abuse power, it is fortunate that the Constitution prevents all of the decision making power from being in the hands of a few.

***James Madison:*** I have tried to explain it in my writings as a sort of obstacle game. It isn't that we have created a government free from all tyranny, but we have created a system by which the branches are constantly on each other's backs, making sure they don't abuse their powers.

***Alexander Hamilton:*** I would describe the game as such; each bill the House passes has to go to the Senate for approval. After the Senate approved it, the president has to sign it. He can refuse, or veto, the bill. If he chooses to veto the bill, the Congress can still pass it if two-thirds of their members approved.

***John Jay:*** Yes, and then the "Big Check" lies with the Supreme Court which can, in the course of legal proceedings decide if a law, even a state law, is Constitutional or not.

***Alexander Hamilton:*** The obstacle game goes even further than that.

***James Madison:*** The President can appoint ambassadors and judges but only with the approval of the Senate.

***John Jay:*** And any amendment proposed to the Constitution first must be submitted to the states for their approval. The states have not been forgotten.

***Alexander Hamilton:*** I ask you, how can tyranny slip through a well-ordered system?

**James Madison:** It can't, I say. The people have the controlling power over the Constitution and the government. With so many factions it will be impossible for any one group or interest to reign supreme over the nation.

**John Jay:** That is so. Every four years the people elect their president and more often than that they will vote for their congressional and local representatives.

**Alexander Hamilton:** So you see, my paper addresses those key issues that concern many Americans. I believe that our Federalist Papers are making a difference and turning the tide towards ratification of the Constitution. We must continue.

**James Madison:** I agree that we must continue because there are still a number of significant individuals who feel differently and may persuade the public that the Constitution isn't the way to go.

## **Scene II:** The Anti-Federalists

Patrick Henry's house in Virginia. James Monroe is sitting with Patrick Henry discussing the Constitution.

**Patrick Henry:** Give me liberty, or give me death! I laid my life on the line for this country and this is how I am repaid? My rights aren't guaranteed by this document, I am at the mercy of the mob!

**James Monroe:** The Federalists say that our rights are protected, that the balance of powers and system of checks and balances will protect the rights of the minority but I don't believe that.

**Patrick Henry:** I am sure that many states- not just Virginia- are discussing the possibility of adding a Bill of Rights to this document. The Bill of Rights would ensure the freedom of speech, protect the accused and guarantee religious choice.

**James Monroe:** They are! The addition of a Bill of Rights will guarantee that the rights of the citizen will not be impugned by the government. I won't approve the document without the addition of amendments guaranteeing personal freedoms.

**Patrick Henry:** I am still not certain about this Constitution. I just received this letter from Noah Webster; let's see what he says.

**James Monroe:** He has been up to his ears in work with his new dictionary, I wonder what he thinks?

**Patrick Henry (reading from the letter):** He begins by describing his work, but here's what is interesting.

"...The inclusion of a Bill of Rights is nonsense. How can the government guarantee all of the rights a person has? Must the document guarantee the right to fresh air? To fish in good weather? To turn over in bed at night?"

**James Monroe** (*chuckling*): Now that would be something, having the government protect your right to snore when sleeping!

**Patrick Henry**: Yeah. I also read that many proponents of the Constitution are asking us to ratify and approve the Constitution prior to adding a Bill of Rights.

**James Monroe**: That's not a bad idea. Allow the Constitution to go into effect and then allow the states to add amendments based on what happens. I will definitely think about that.

**Patrick Henry**: Me too, but I am still not convinced that this Constitution is the way to go.

### **Scene III:** The States

#### **(James Madison addresses the audience from Philadelphia.)**

**James Madison**: Well discussions took place in all of the thirteen states with the Federalists and Anti-Federalists debating the Constitution. Delaware started off the state conventions and was the first to ratify, or accept, the Constitution on December 7, 1787. The vote there was unanimous as it was in New Jersey and Georgia who ratified soon after.

For other states, it was more difficult but Pennsylvania ratified by a vote of 46-23 followed by Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland and South Carolina. On June 21, 1788 New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution. This meant that the Constitution was now the law of the land and the United States was officially a nation.

But the citizens were anxious for the big states to join so that the nation would seem more impressive. New York, Virginia, and North Carolina were still at odds over the Constitution.

**Patrick Henry**: I am against this Constitution. I have spoken against it for two weeks including one entire day and will continue until I feel I have made my point. Eight speeches in one day is nothing for the cause of our nation!

**James Madison**: Despite his persuasive speeches, Virginia ratified the Constitution on June 26<sup>th</sup> by a vote of 89 to 79 with New York following a month later with an even smaller margin of 30-27.

North Carolina voted against ratification (32 for, 34 against) and Rhode Island didn't even bother to hold a convention. They accused the other states of seceding from them! Eventually they changed their minds and North Carolina joined the union in November of 1789 with Rhode Island following in May of 1790.

**James Madison**: With the arduous process of creating a governing document over with, the country could now celebrate. All of the debate, compromise and deliberation had created a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Little did the writers know that this document would become a model for other nations seeking to create working democracies.