

Inventing America: The Untold Story of the United States Constitution

Activity 1:

Directions: Watch Inventing America: Making a Government: The Untold Story of the United States Constitution. As you watch, answer the following questions.

1. What was the punishment for lying in 18th century Virginia? What were some other cruel and unusual punishments that came from “monarchical rule?”

2. What were some new laws that were implemented under the Virginia Declaration of Rights?

3. What were some issues with the Articles of Confederation?

4. Why was the Virginia Plan so radical in a world of 18th century monarchies?

5. What was Daniel Shays’ Rebellion? Why was it “a blessing in disguise?”

6. What was the Albany Plan of Union? Why was it rejected?

7. What were some models the founding fathers used when constructing the federal government?

8. On May 25, the founders finally had enough delegates for a quorum. What were the first two orders of business they had to conduct?

9. The Constitutional Convention split into two groups. What did the smaller states want? What did the larger states want?

10. Where did the founders get the word "senate" from? What did it mean?

11. What is the difference between a democracy and a republic?

12. What did William Patterson of New Jersey offer as an alternative to the Virginia Plan?

13. Why did Benjamin Franklin believe the executive should not be paid?

14. Hamilton stated that, "In my opinion the crucial question before the House was not how much the executive should be paid, but rather how he should be chosen. And what should be the limit of his power?" According to Hamilton, how long should the executive hold power?

15. What was the Great Compromise the delegates finally agreed upon?

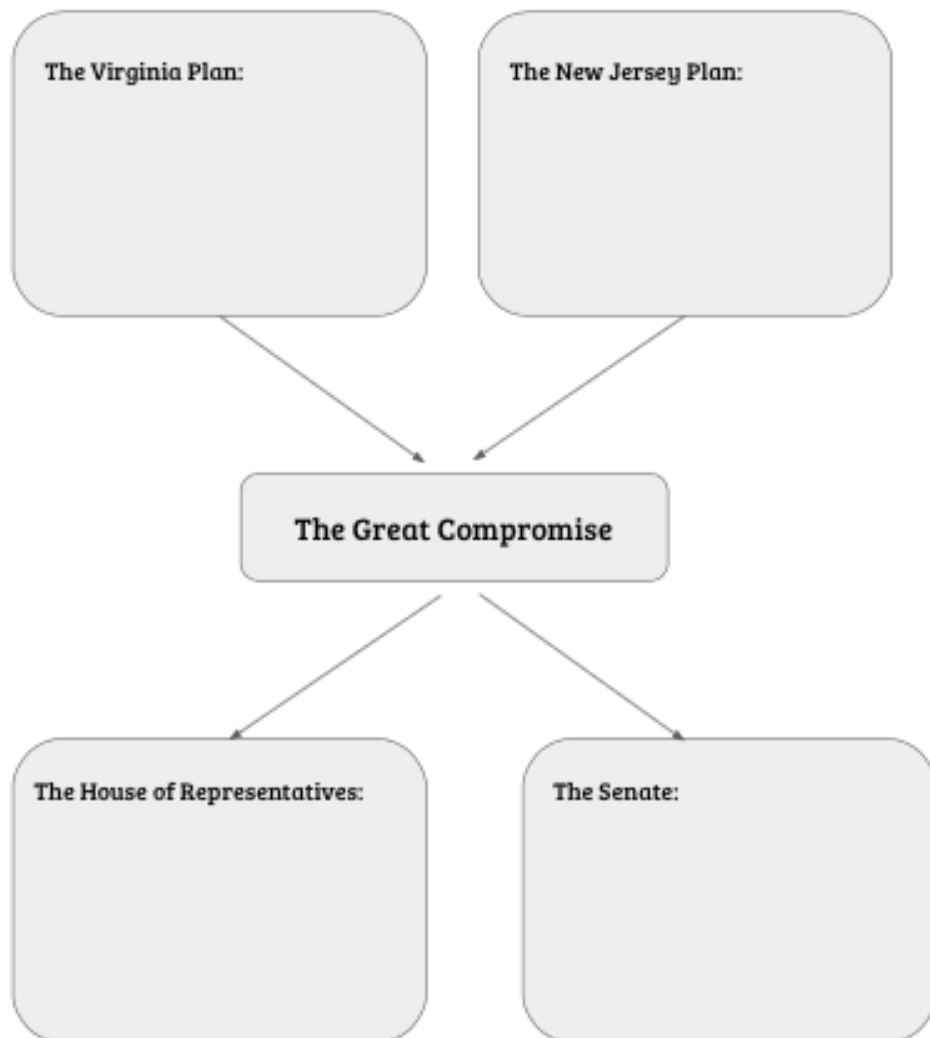
16. How was the issue of slavery resolved at the Convention?

17. How did they solve the problem of the power of the executive?

Activity 2: The Great Compromise

In this episode of Inventing America, the founding fathers discussed the different plans and ideas they had for determining representation in Congress. The larger states wanted the Virginia Plan while the smaller states wanted the New Jersey Plan. Ultimately, they compromised and created the Congress, which we have today. Fill out the following chart by:

1. Defining the Virginia Plan
2. Defining the New Jersey Plan
3. Defining the House of Representatives
4. Defining the Senate



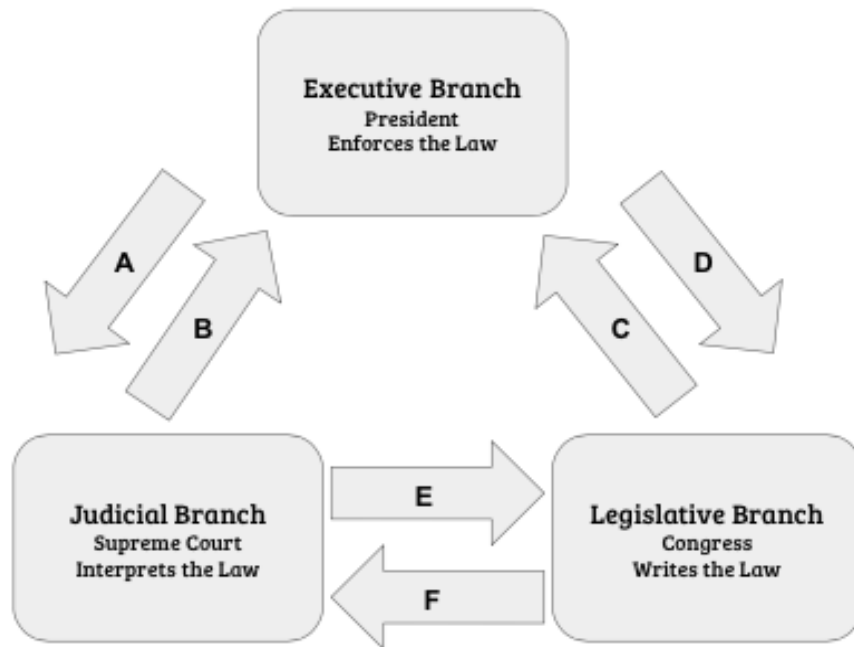
Activity 3: Checks and Balances

In this episode of Inventing America, Alexander Hamilton argued that “what it needs is a check, and that check is the monarch.” While Hamilton’s notion of a monarch was rejected, this idea of a check was not.

Madison stated “If men were angels, no government would be necessary... The reason we need government is that we’re men, not angels. The great difficulty in framing a government administered by men is this: First you must enable to government to control the governed, and then you must oblige it to control itself.”

What do you think Madison meant when he said this?

The founding fathers knew they had to create a government that would check itself. Therefore, they created three branches of government. Checks and balances were implemented within the Constitution to ensure that no branch could overpower another branch. Use the diagram below to determine which arrow is showing the correct check and balance among the three branches of government.



1. The President vetoed a bill written by Congress. Which arrow shows this check?
2. The Supreme Court found a law written by Congress and signed by the President to be unconstitutional. Which arrows show this check?
3. Congress wrote an amendment changing the US Constitution. Which arrow shows this check?
4. What check would show arrow A?
5. What check would show arrow C?