



Delaware Day 4th Grade Competition

Lesson Three

What was Delaware's Role?

Students will be able to:

- Identify the five Delawareans who attended the federal convention which resulted in the Constitution and explain why these particular men might have been chosen. (Panel 2:1)
- Explain when and where Delaware ratified the proposed Constitution (Panel 2:2)
- Identify how many Delawareans were involved in voting to ratify the Constitution, where they were from and whether the vote was unanimous. (Panel 2:3)
- Express an opinion regarding why Delawareans should be proud that we were the first state to ratify the Constitution. (Panel 2:4)

This lesson contains information, resources and ideas to help students understand Delaware's role in the creation and ratification of the U.S. Constitution. Teachers will determine best practices and methods for instruction.

1. Introductory Activity for “The Delaware Five” (a phrase coined by students from Brader Elementary School in Newark)
 - a. Distribute Document 1: *What Makes A Good Leader?* and give students time to write their answers. On the board, list their answers. (If you wish, you can make two columns – one for positive qualities and one for negative qualities.)
 - b. Write the following names on the board: Richard Bassett, Gunning Bedford, Jr., Jacob Broom, John Dickinson and George Read. Explain that these five men from Delaware were chosen to go to Philadelphia to help write the Constitution. Documents 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e: *The Delaware Five* include one signer per page. Create groups and distribute one document per group. Ask the students to make a list of reasons why their leader might have been chosen to attend such an important convention.
 - c. Ask each group to share their reasons.

2. Background Information

These five men were elected by their peers in the General Assembly because they were well respected for their work and their integrity. They were all interested in protecting the rights of the small states. Some were religious, some wanted to end slavery, and some had served in the military. They were all highly educated and landowners (which was considered important in those days). In the end, some were more distinguished and actively involved in the proceedings than others, but they each agreed with the final product and the Constitution was completed on September 17, 1787. It was then sent to the states for ratification.

3. Activity for The Ratification: Document Analysis

- a. Distribute Document 3: *Ratification Document (cursive)*. If print is preferred, use Document 4: *Ratification Document (print)*. Also distribute Document 5: *Analyzing a Primary Source Document*.
- b. Go over the answers.

4. Background Information

The 30 **“Deputies of Delaware”** cast their votes at The Golden Fleece Tavern in Dover owned and operated by Elizabeth Battell. (There was no statehouse yet.) Important meetings were often done in taverns because people would travel far and needed a place to sleep and eat. These 30 men debated for 5 days in this tavern. (Sadly, no notes from these 5 days survived – only a bill from the Golden Fleece!) These deputies (today we use the term “representative”) were considering whether to agree to this new federal constitution that had been written and agreed to by **“Deputies of the United States.”** (Richard Bassett of Kent County and Gunning Bedford, Jr. of New Castle County attended both conventions – the one in Dover and the one in Philadelphia.)

The second paragraph says “in the Year of the Independence of the United States of America **the twelfth.**” They could have just said “the twelfth year of independence!” (They declared independence in early 1776 and ratified the Constitution late 1787 – so... they were in their twelfth year.) After 1776, the 13 colonies experimented with a different form of government - a confederation – outlined in The Articles of Confederation, where each colony was its own “country” and had its own president, military and currency. They wanted nothing to do with a King anymore. Unfortunately, this confederation ended up being pretty messy. By 1787, the 13 states were ready for more unity (the Preamble to the Constitution outlines what they now wanted). The ultimate result was a federal system which allowed states to retain some of their individual power, protected in part by the Bill of Rights while the federal government handled currency, the military, and many other important activities that helped create “a more perfect union.”

The 4th grade Delaware Day Competition is held in order to help children understand and appreciate why we, as Delawareans, should celebrate being “The First State” to approve of, assent to, ratify and confirm the U.S. Constitution.

What Makes A Good Leader?

1. If you were voting for a class leader, what qualities would you want him or her to have?
2. If you were voting for a leader for the State of Delaware, what qualities would you want him or her to have?
3. If you were voting for the President of the United States, what qualities would you want him or her to have?
4. What might be some qualities that you would NOT want to see in a leader?



Jacob Broom

1752 - 1810

Delaware Delegate to
the Philadelphia Convention

Occupations: Farmer, surveyor, shipper, importer, real estate speculator, and merchant.

Political Accomplishments: Elected by New Castle Countians to serve as a member of Delaware's House of Assembly during the 1780s. Selected by Delaware's General Assembly to serve as a delegate to the federal convention in Philadelphia in 1787. He was among the first of the representatives from the nine states to arrive in Philadelphia and participated in the opening session on May 25, 1787. Mr. Broom was active in Wilmington politics. He served as a ferry commissioner, director of the Wilmington Bridge Company, postmaster of the City of Wilmington in 1790, and chairman of the board of directors for the Delaware Bank. Mr. Broom built the first cotton mill on the Brandywine River in 1794.

References:

Berkin, Carol. A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

Bushman, Claudia L., Harold B. Hancock, and Elizabeth Moyne Homsey. Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Delaware State 1781 - 1792 and the Constitutional Convention of 1792. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988.

Madison, James. Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987.



Richard Bassett

1745 - 1815

Delaware Delegate to
the Philadelphia Convention

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Occupation: Lawyer, planter, and landowner of property in Delaware and Maryland.

Education: Read law with Judge Robert Goldsborough of Dorchester County, Maryland.

Political Accomplishments: During the American Revolution he served as a captain in the state's cavalry unit and functioned as a member of Kent County's Committee of Correspondence and the Council of Safety. Though he opposed proposals to reorganize state government in 1776, Bassett served as a member of Delaware's state constitutional conventions of 1776 and 1791. He was elected to serve as a member of Delaware's House of Assembly during the 1780s. Delaware's General Assembly selected Mr. Bassett to serve as one of the state's delegates at the federal convention in 1787 and was among the representatives from the first seven states who assembled in Philadelphia on Friday, May 25, 1787. Kent Countians elected Mr. Bassett as a deputy to attend the state's Ratification Convention in 1787. Following the ratification of the Constitution, Delaware's General Assembly selected Mr. Bassett to serve as one of the state's first U.S. Senators in 1788. He continued a political career by serving as Governor of Delaware in 1799, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas between 1793 and 1799, and was appointed U. S. Circuit Court Judge by President John Adams.

References:

Berkin, Carol. *A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution*. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

Bushman, Claudia L., Harold B. Hancock, and Elizabeth Moyne Homsey. *Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Delaware State 1781 - 1792 and the Constitutional Convention of 1792*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988.

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John Dickinson

1732 - 1808

Delaware Delegate to the
Philadelphia Convention

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Occupation: Landowner and lawyer in Delaware and Pennsylvania.

Education: Educated by private tutors; studied law in Philadelphia and London.

Political Accomplishments: Served in Delaware and Pennsylvania colonial assemblies during the 1760s, wrote essays about colonial grievances against Great Britain prior to the American Revolution, and wrote the original draft of the Articles of Confederation. Though the General Assembly selected Dickinson as President of Delaware in 1781, he resigned in order to become President of Pennsylvania in 1782. Dickinson served as chairman of the Annapolis Convention in 1786 and was elected by Delaware's General Assembly as one of the state's five delegates to attend the federal convention in Philadelphia in 1787 where he served on a variety of committees, supported the interests of small states, and proposed several ideas which were incorporated into the Constitution. As a supporter of ratification, he authored a series of letters signed "Fabius" which urged states to ratify the Constitution in 1788. In 1791, Dickinson was selected to preside over the rewriting of Delaware's State Constitution.

References:

Berkin, Carol. A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

Bushman, Claudia L., Harold B. Hancock, and Elizabeth Moyne Homsey. Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Delaware State 1781 - 1792 and the Constitutional Convention of 1792. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988.

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Gunning Bedford, Jr.

1747 - 1812

Delaware Delegate to
the Philadelphia Convention

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Occupation: Landowner, lawyer, and served as a major in the Continental Army in 1775 and became a lieutenant-colonel in 1776.

Education: Graduate of the College of New Jersey (later known as Princeton) and was a former classmate of James Madison (known as the "Father of the Constitution").

Political Accomplishments: Served in the Continental Congress from 1783 to 1785. Selected by Delaware's General Assembly as one of the state's delegates to attend the federal convention in 1787 where he expressed great interest in the rights of small states, served on several committees, and supported abolition of slavery. Mr. Bedford was elected as a New Castle County deputy to attend Delaware's Ratification Convention in 1787. He continued a political career by serving as Delaware's Attorney General during the late 1780s and accepting an appointment by President George Washington as the first judge of the U.S. District Court of Delaware in 1789.

References:

Berkin, Carol. *A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution*. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

Bushman, Claudia L., Harold B. Hancock, and Elizabeth Moyne Homsey. *Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Delaware State 1781 - 1792 and the Constitutional Convention of 1792*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988.

Madison, James. *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987.



George Read

1733 - 1798

Delaware Delegate to
the Philadelphia Convention

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Occupation: Lawyer and landowner.

Education: A law degree graduate from Alison's Academy in New London, Pennsylvania.

Political Accomplishments: Served in Delaware's Colonial Assembly between 1770 and 1775. Between 1774 and 1777 he represented Delaware in the Continental Congress and with the capture of President John McKinley by the British in 1777, he became Acting Governor. In 1776, Mr. Read signed the Declaration of Independence, assisted with the writing of Delaware's first state constitution, was elected to the Legislative Council and served as Speaker. In 1787, the Delaware General Assembly selected Mr. Read to serve as one of the state's delegates at the federal convention where he participated in discussions supporting interests of small states and served on several committees. In 1788, Delaware's General Assembly selected George Read to serve as one of Delaware's first two U.S. Senators, a position from which he resigned in order to become Chief Justice of Delaware.

References:

Berkin, Carol. A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

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We, the Deputies of the People of the Delaware State, in Convention met, having taken into our serious consideration the Federal Constitution proposed and agreed upon by the Deputies of the United States in a General Convention held at the City of Philadelphia on the seventeenth day of September in the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven. Have approved, assented to, ratified, and confirmed, and by these Presents, Do, in virtue of the Power and Authority to us given for that purpose, for and in behalf of ourselves and our Constituents, fully, freely and entirely approve of, assent to, ratify and confirm the said Constitution.

Done in Convention at Dover this seventh day of December in the Year aforesaid and in the Year of the Independence of the United States of America the twelfth. In Testimony whereof We have hereunto Subscribed our Names.

Sussex County

*John Ingram
John Jones
Will Moore
William Hall
Thomas Laws
Isaac Cooper
Woodman Stockley
John Laws
Thomas Evans
Israel Holland*

Kent County

*Nicholas Ridgely
Richard Smith
George Truitt
Richard Bassett
James Sykes
A. McLane
Danl. Cummins, Senr.
Jos. Barker
Edwd. White
George Manlove*

New Castle County

*Jas. Latimer, Pres.
James Black
Jno. James
Gunning Bedford, Senr.
Kensey Johns
Thos. Watton
Solomon Maxwell
Nicholas Way
Thomas Duff
Gunn'g Bedford, Junr.*

Copy of Delaware's Resolution which ratified the United States Constitution, thereby making Delaware THE FIRST STATE. Produced and distributed by Department of State with approval of the Division of Delaware Public Archives

Delaware's Ratification Document

We, the Deputies of the People of the Delaware State, in Convention met, having taken in our serious consideration the Federal Constitution proposed and agreed upon by the Deputies of the United States in a General Convention held at the City of Philadelphia, on the seventeenth day of September, in the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven. Have approved, assented to, ratified, and confirmed, and by these Presents, Do, in virtue of the Power and Authority to us given for that purpose, for and in behalf of ourselves and our Constituents, fully, freely, and entirely approve of, assent to, ratify, and confirm the said Constitution.

Done in Convention, at Dover this seventh day of December, in the Year aforesaid, and in the Year of the Independence of the United States of America the twelfth. In testimony whereof, We have hereunto Subscribed our Names.

Sussex County

- John Ingram,
- John Jones,
- William Moore,
- William Hall,
- Thomas Laws,
- Isaac Cooper,
- Woodman Stockley,
- John Laws,
- Thomas Evans,
- Israel Holland.

Kent County

- Nicholas Ridgely,
- Richard Smith,
- George Fruitt,
- Richard Bassett,
- James Sykes,
- Allen M'Lean,
- Daniel Cummins, Sen.
- Joseph Barker,
- Edward White,
- George Manlove.

New Castle County

- James Latimer, President,
- James Black,
- John James,
- Gunning Bedford, Sen.
- Kensey Johns,
- Thomas Watson,
- Solomon Maxwell,
- Nicholas Way,
- Thomas Duff,
- Gunning Bedford, Jun.

Analyzing a Primary Source Document
Delaware's Ratification of the U.S. Constitution

Take a few minutes to try to read as much of this document as you can. Even if you cannot read cursive, you will see that some words jump out at you. A dictionary might be helpful for question #4.

1. Two dates are listed. What are they?
2. What two cities are mentioned?
3. Why might there be three columns of signatures?
4. The words *approve of*, *assent to*, *ratify* and *confirm* show up twice. Define these words.
5. What are these signers “approving of, assenting to, ratifying and confirming”?
6. Why might they have used so many words that are all synonyms of each other?
7. What is a constitution?
8. Do you have any idea what makes the U.S. Constitution so special? If not, make some guesses.

Analyzing a Primary Source Document Delaware's Ratification of the U.S. Constitution

Take a few minutes to try to read as much of this document as you can. Even if you cannot read cursive, you will see that some words jump out at you. A dictionary might be helpful for question #4.

1. What two dates are listed in this document?

September 17, 1787

December 7, "in the year aforesaid" = 1787

2. What two cities are mentioned?

Philadelphia

Dover

3. Why might there be three columns of signatures?

Each column is identified as one of Delaware's three counties: Sussex, Kent and New Castle. Ten people from each county (30 total) approved of the Constitution. They were "deputies" of the people. They were chosen to attend this state convention.

4. The words *approve of*, *assent to*, *ratify* and *confirm* show up twice. Define these words.

Approve of = to like, to agree to

Assent to = agree to

Ratify = to sign, to officially agree to

Confirm = to officially say something is true or correct

5. What are these signers "approving of, assenting to, ratifying and confirming"?

The Federal Constitution (not to be confused with a state constitution)

6. Why might they have used so many words that are all synonyms of each other?

Maybe to show that they really meant it! It is also how people wrote in those days.

7. What is a constitution?

A constitution is a document which outlines the structure of a government (for example, whether they will have a president, a congress, a court system) and usually describes some rules, responsibilities and rights. It is not a list of the country's laws.

8. Do you have any idea what makes the U.S. Constitution so special? If not, make some guesses.

An opinion question which most will not be able to answer. Some special facts about the U.S.

Constitution is that it is the oldest living (still in use) Constitution, many countries use it as a model for when they write theirs, and it has worked pretty well in making sure our leaders do not get too much power. We vote them out if we do not like them. In some countries, people use violence to get rid of their leaders and that usually makes a country less stable. Our Constitution establishes the "Rule of Law" as the guiding framework as opposed to the "Rule of Men (Women too)."