

The United States Constitution

by Susan LaBella



The United States Constitution is the highest law in the nation. It is the set of rules that Americans live by.

In 1787, a group of Americans did not like how their new country's government worked. They sat down to write new rules for the government. Among those men were Ben Franklin and George Washington.

The men met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during a hot summer. Sometimes they had disagreements. They had to work hard to solve those disagreements. When they finished, they had written the country's Constitution. Next, the Constitution had to be approved by the states. After a few years, the states voted in favor of the Constitution. It was now the law of the land.

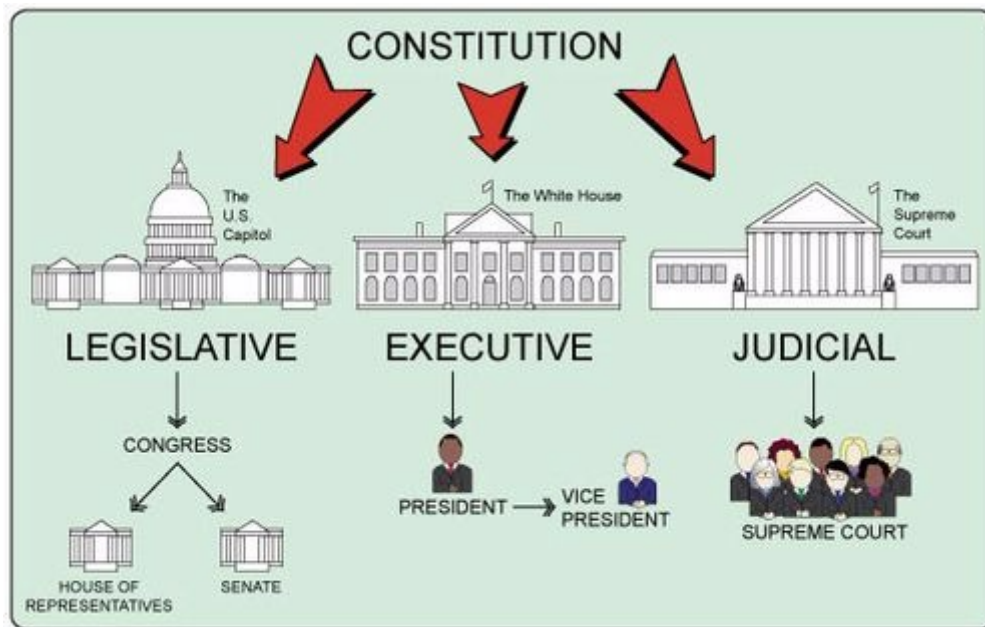
According to the Constitution, an election for president must be held every

four years. The Constitution also says that the United States must have a Congress and a Supreme Court. Congress makes laws. The Supreme Court decides if laws are correctly written and followed.

The Constitution promises important rights to the American people. These include the right to believe what you wish and the right to say what you believe. These promises are listed in the part of the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights.

The Three Branches of Government

by ReadWorks



The United States Constitution was written over two hundred years ago. It explains how the United States government should work. The people who wrote the Constitution did not want one person or group to have too much power. That was why they divided the government into three parts, known as branches.

The branches are the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. Each branch has its own responsibilities. The branches work together, but they also check each other to make sure no branch has too much power.

The legislative branch includes the United States Congress. Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Voters in each state elect their representation in the House and their senators. Those men and women go to Washington, D.C., to make laws.

The executive branch has the power to carry out the laws. It includes the president, the vice president, and their group of advisers called the Cabinet.

Every four years, Americans vote to elect a president and a vice president.

The judicial branch decides on the meanings of the laws and whether laws break the rules of the Constitution. This branch includes the United States Supreme Court. Nine justices serve on the Supreme Court. The president appoints the justices, and the Senate approves them. The justices' job is to decide if the country's laws go against the Constitution.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the article "The United States Constitution" to answer questions 1 to 2.

1. According to this text, why did a group of Americans write new rules for the government in 1787?
2. What is the Bill of Rights?

Use the article "The Three Branches of Government" to answer questions 3 to 4.

3. Why did the people who wrote the Constitution divide the government into three parts?
4. Give an example from the text of how one branch of government can affect another branch.

Use the articles "The Three Branches of Government" and "The United States Constitution" to answer questions 5 to 6.

5. Based on the information in these two texts, describe what was most important in a government to the writers of the Constitution. Make sure to include information from both texts in your answer.
6. Think about the rules and rights that Americans put into the Constitution for their new government. Based on those rules and rights, make an inference about the government that controlled America before the Constitution was written.