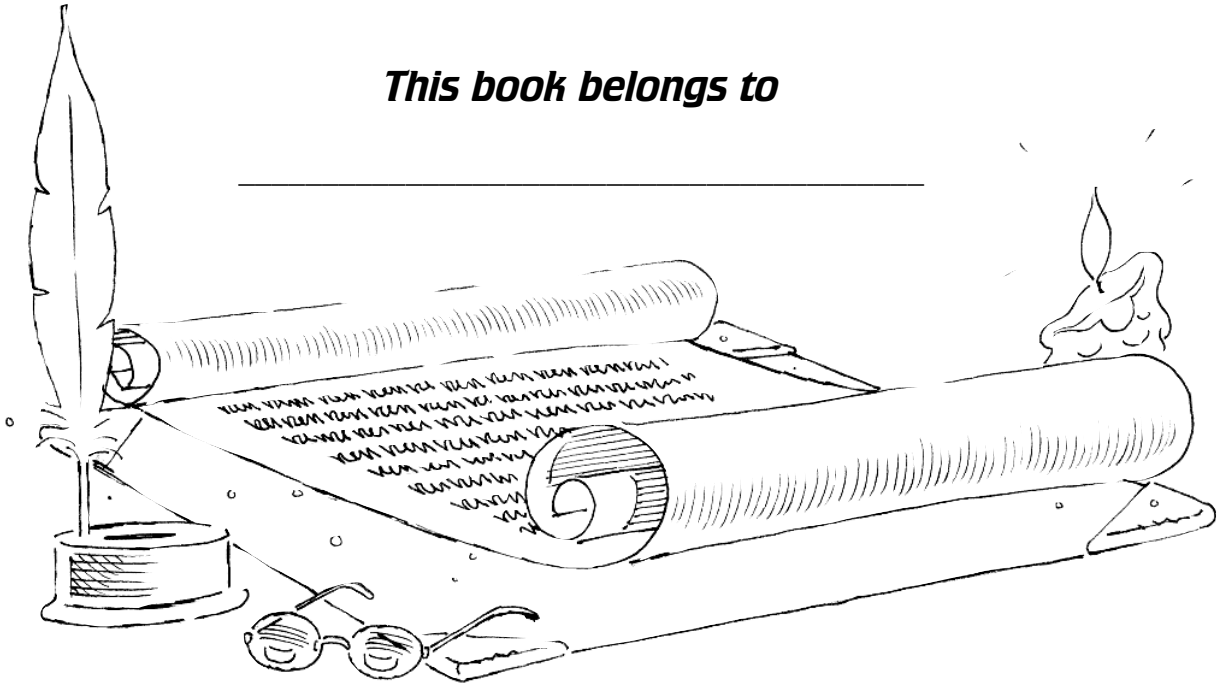


This book belongs to



Dedication

To Huma, who has made all my dreams come true.

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Constitutional Convention Time Line



1774

The First Continental Congress met at Congress Hall in Philadelphia to consider what action to take against what they considered unfair treatment by the British government. Every colony sent representatives but Georgia.

October 14, the Congress adopted a Declaration of Rights and Grievances.

1775

On April 19, on the Lexington Common, eight Americans lay dead from gun wounds inflicted by British soldiers. The first shots of the war were fired. The British fired at Americans again later that day at Concord, Massachusetts.

May 10, the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania State House. All 13 colonies sent representatives to discuss what action to take against the British.

1776

On July 4, the Second Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia adopted the Declaration of Independence.

1777

November 15, after long debate, the delegates to the Second Continental Congress approved the Articles of Confederation. The Articles were a set of laws for governing the loose federation of states. The Congress sent the Articles of Confederation to the states for ratification.

1781

March 1, the states ratified the Articles of Confederation. Even though the Articles gave Congress the power to pass legislation, the central government had no way to enforce laws to take effect. The new government had no executive and no provision to levy taxes or tariffs.

October, the last battle of the Revolution took place at Yorktown, Virginia. The British surrendered to General George Washington.

1783

John Jay, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin negotiated the Treaty of Paris, which officially ended the war between the United States and the British.

1786

Representatives from five states held a convention in Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss problems between the states. Delegates adjourned the meeting deciding little except to plan a convention in Philadelphia the following May to take up the issues with all of the states.

1787

The Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia began in May of 1787. Originally the plan was for the delegates to amend the Articles of Confederation, not to propose a new constitution. But on May 25, the delegates voted to write a new constitution. Edmund Randolph of Virginia presented the Virginia Plan. It called for a government with three branches—executive, legislative and judicial. The legislative branch was to be made up of two houses, both of which would have its number of seats determined by population. The Virginia Plan also proposed that the legislative branch would elect the executive and judicial branches.

The delegates from the smaller states objected to this plan because they believed that the heavily populated states would have too much power. William Paterson of New Jersey offered a nine-point proposal to amend the Articles of Confederation. The New Jersey Plan would have one legislative body, every state having an equal vote. The office of the executive was to be led by several people chosen by Congress. Congress would be granted the power to tax and regulate trade. Both proposals were hotly debated at the convention.

Roger Sherman of Connecticut presented the Connecticut Plan. That plan was a compromise between the two plans and became known as the Great Compromise. It proposed a legislature with two houses, the upper house would have two seats per state, and the lower house representation would be based on population.

After the debates, the document was given to Gouverneur Morris to style. September 17, 1787, the 39 delegates approved the Constitution. Copies of the Constitution were then sent to each of the 13 states for their ratification. Each of the 13 states held conventions to decide on ratification of the Constitution. Delegates in each state were sent to conventions to vote on whether or not their state would ratify or vote for the Constitution to be the new law of the land, replacing the Articles of Confederation. The Constitution is completed and signed in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania State House and sent to the states for ratification. The framers had debated how amendments could be added to the new Constitution during the May to September convention. There had also been debate about adding a Bill of Rights even before the Constitution was finished.

George Mason of Virginia offered to write a bill of rights. He deeply distrusted powerful centralized and autocratic government and believed that individual rights had to be protected. Though Mason had authored the Virginia Bill of Rights, the delegates voted down his proposal. Mason was so upset that the document did not include a bill of rights that he refused to sign the completed Constitution.



Below is a chart that shows the dates of ratification, when the vote was taken and what the tallies were for and against for each of the original 13 states.

| State | Date | For | Against |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----|---------|
| 1. Delaware | December 7, 1787 | 30 | 0 |
| 2. Pennsylvania | December 12, 1787 | 46 | 23 |
| 3. New Jersey | December 18, 1787 | 38 | 0 |
| 4. Georgia | January 2, 1788 | 26 | 0 |
| 5. Connecticut | January 4, 1788 | 128 | 40 |
| 6. Massachusetts | February 6, 1788 | 187 | 168 |
| 7. Maryland | April 28, 1788 | 63 | 11 |
| 8. South Carolina | May 23, 1788 | 149 | 73 |
| 9. New Hampshire | June 21, 1788* | 57 | 47 |
| 10. Virginia | June 25, 1788 | 89 | 79 |
| 11. New York | July 26, 1788 | 30 | 27 |
| 12. North Carolina | November 21, 1789 | 195 | 77 |
| 13. Rhode Island | May 29, 1790 | 34 | 32 |



1788

June 21, the ninth state, New Hampshire ratified the Constitution. The Constitution went into effect. The new government began to take shape.

1789

April 1, the first House of Representatives was organized.

April 6, George Washington was elected President. He was greeted by cheering crowds from Virginia to New York. Washington was the most celebrated American of his time.

April 30, George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States of America. He took the oath of office, required by the Constitution, on the balcony of the Federal Building in New York City.

*Constitution took affect.