

# America ~ A New Nation, 1783-1815

## George Washington

After the Revolutionary War, the United States needed a new government. The Constitution created an Executive Branch led by a president. George Washington was unanimously elected president twice. He easily could have served as president for the rest of his life but chose to retire to Mount Vernon after eight years (two terms). See why President Washington loved his home so much in this very brief video:

[George Washington's Mount Vernon](#) (You may need to hold the “Ctrl” key down as you click on the link.)



Washington set the example for future presidents in other ways too. Washington made sure to follow the duties of the president described in the Constitution and was careful not to overstep his role. Washington wanted to be a strong leader, but not a king. His example as the first president has earned him the name “Father of our Country.” Watch to learn more about [The Man Who Would Not Be King](#). (Remember to hold the “Ctrl” key down as you click on the link.)

## What Were the Articles of Confederation?

When the colonies declared independence from Great Britain, they did not immediately become one country. They were more like 13 independent nations that worked together to fight a common enemy. At that time, the Articles of Confederation became the first Constitution. This document listed rules on how the states would work together and deal with other countries. It was written very quickly due to the war. That meant there were many problems with the Articles. After the war, leaders quickly realized something else was needed to guide the new country.

## James Madison - The Father of the Constitution

In 1787, delegates (representatives) from every state were sent to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to hold a Constitutional Convention. The reason for this meeting was to revise the Articles of Confederation. One of the delegates who favored a new Constitution was James Madison. He played an important role in writing the new Constitution. He kept detailed notes during the Convention, which were used to help write the Constitution.



After the Constitution was written, it had to be ratified (agreed upon) by the states. Not all the states agreed with the new Constitution. Madison began writing a series of articles called the Federalist Papers. The Federalist Papers played an important role in getting the states to ratify the Constitution in 1788. The role James Madison played while the Constitution was being written and ratified earned him the title “Father of the Constitution.”

Visit with these historians to learn a little more about our 4<sup>th</sup> President: [James Madison](#) (Ctrl and click)

## Important Virginia Documents

### ***The Virginia Declaration of Rights***

George Mason was a British colonist who lived in Virginia. Mason favored independence from Great Britain. In May 1776, Mason wrote the *Virginia Declaration of Rights*. This very important document describes the rights all people living in Virginia should have. It says all Virginians have the right to freedom of religion and freedom of the press. Freedom of the press had to do with the right newspapers had to print any information without being punished. See some information here: [George Mason](#). (Ctrl & click)



### ***The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom***

Thomas Jefferson also lived in Virginia. Jefferson wrote the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* in 1777. This document said all the people of Virginia should be free to choose their own religion and worship as they please. Of all the things Jefferson did, the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* was one of his proudest accomplishments. Have some fun and meet Mr. Jefferson through the Muppets: [Mr. Jefferson Needs a Quill](#). (Ctrl & click)



### ***The Bill of Rights***

*The U.S. Constitution* was written in 1787. After it was written, it had to be approved by the states. Many states would not approve the *Constitution* because they thought it did not give the people enough freedom. Finally, an agreement was reached. If the states would approve the *Constitution*, Congress would add a *Bill of Rights* to the *Constitution*. *The Bill of Rights* would provide a list of freedoms all Americans have.

*The Bill of Rights* lists the first ten amendments to the *Constitution*. An amendment is a change or an addition to the *Constitution*. James Madison wrote most of the *Bill of Rights*. Madison took many ideas from the *Virginia Declaration of Rights* and the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*. Both freedom of religion and freedom of the press are a part of the First Amendment. Give some thought to how difficult it must have been to write these documents. Watch and listen carefully to [The Constitution and Bill of Rights](#). (Ctrl & click)



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Your Choice Board

<p>Crumble and soak a piece of paper in water and tea. When the paper has absorbed the color of the tea, let it dry. Using a marker, copy the Preamble of the Constitution onto the paper. <b>*The Preamble is written below.</b></p>	<p>Research Montpelier. Draw a detailed picture of the home. Label sections of the home if you can. Who lived there?</p>	<p>Create a poster that shows what you've learned in this part of the unit.</p>
<p>Research Monticello. Draw a detailed picture of the home. Label sections of the home if you can. Who lived there?</p>	<p>Create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Statute of Religious Freedom</p>	<p>Answer the following in paragraph form. Describe three rights you have and why they are important.</p>
<p>Create a model of Montpelier, Monticello, or Mount Vernon. Use your creativity and materials you can gather at home. Think about using cardboard, or creating a base and covering in paper mache', homemade playdough or clay (<b>recipes below</b>).</p>	<p>Fold a piece of paper into fourths, so you have 4 sections. Draw a picture showing one thing from the videos that you found interesting. Write a caption describing what you've drawn.</p>	<p>Research Mount Vernon. Draw a detailed picture of the home. Label sections of the home if you can. Who lived in that home?</p>

## PREAMBLE TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

**We the People** of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.



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Please take pictures of your projects and send them to me via email or text.  
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