# Inside the Convention

How different leaders helped shape the Constitution

**SS24.6.11a** "Describe the role of Founding Fathers at the Constitutional Convention and explain how they contributed to the development of the Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline each founder's name and circle the action or idea that shows how that person helped create the Constitution.

### Different Jobs, One Constitution

1. In May 1787, delegates gathered in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation, the nation's first plan of government. They soon decided to write a new plan instead. George Washington, who had led the army during the Revolutionary War, was chosen to preside over the Constitutional Convention. He did not write the whole Constitution or settle every dispute. He ran meetings while delegates argued over how the new government should work. His respected leadership helped the group continue its difficult work, even when members strongly disagreed.

2. James Madison came prepared with ideas about giving the national government more power. He helped shape the Virginia Plan, which called for a Congress with two houses. Under that plan, a state's number of lawmakers in both houses would depend on its population. Delegates from small states worried that large states would control Congress. Madison also took detailed notes during the meetings. Because the delegates met behind closed doors, his notes later became an important record of their debates. His ideas pushed the delegates to consider a stronger national government.

3. Roger Sherman offered a way through the fight over representation. His plan gave each state the same number of senators, while a state's number of representatives in the House would depend on its population. This arrangement became part of the Great Compromise and helped large and small states reach an agreement. Near the end, Gouverneur Morris helped write the Constitution's final wording, including the opening phrase, 'We the People.' The finished Constitution reflected different kinds of work: leading meetings, proposing plans, finding compromises, and putting decisions into clear words.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What was George Washington's role at the convention, and how did it help the delegates?

2. How did Madison's work on the Virginia Plan shape the debate about Congress?

3. How did Sherman's proposal help large and small states reach an agreement?

4. What did Gouverneur Morris do near the end of the convention, and how did that contribute to the Constitution?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine the delegates had kept the Virginia Plan's rule for both houses of Congress instead of accepting Sherman's proposal. In 3 to 4 sentences, explain one likely effect on small states, why Sherman's compromise mattered, and how one other founder helped the convention produce the Constitution.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 6 · SS24.6.11a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each founder's name and circle the action or idea that shows how that person helped create the Constitution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What was George Washington's role at the convention, and how did it help the delegates? | **Washington presided over the meetings. His leadership helped delegates continue working despite disagreements.** |
| 2 | How did Madison's work on the Virginia Plan shape the debate about Congress? | **The plan proposed two houses with representation based on population in both. Small states worried that large states would control Congress.** |
| 3 | How did Sherman's proposal help large and small states reach an agreement? | **It gave states equal representation in the Senate and representation based on population in the House.** |
| 4 | What did Gouverneur Morris do near the end of the convention, and how did that contribute to the Constitution? | **Morris helped write the Constitution's final wording, putting the delegates' decisions into words.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If both houses had based seats on population, small states would have had fewer lawmakers than large states in each house. Sherman's compromise gave every state an equal voice in the Senate, helping small states agree to the plan. Gouverneur Morris then helped write the final wording that expressed the delegates' decisions.

Accept responses that accurately connect each founder's action to the Constitution's development. For Your Turn, the other founder may be Washington, Madison, or Morris if the student explains that person's contribution.