

Forging a Framework

Trace the choices that shaped the United States Constitution.

SS.8.A.3.10 "Examine the course and consequences of the Constitutional Convention (e.g., New Jersey Plan, Virginia Plan, Great Compromise, Three-Fifths Compromise, compromises regarding taxation and slave trade, Electoral College, state vs..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each plan or compromise named in the passage. Circle the words that tell what each decision changed, then number three decisions that shaped the new government.

Choices at Philadelphia

- ① In 1787, delegates met in Philadelphia because the Articles of Confederation had left the national government too weak to solve major problems. They had to design a new government while protecting the interests of very different states. Large states supported the Virginia Plan, which called for representation based on population. Small states preferred the New Jersey Plan, which gave every state equal representation. The disagreement showed a larger question: how could a new nation share power fairly among states and the national government?
- ② The Great Compromise combined parts of both plans. Congress would have two houses: the House of Representatives based on population and the Senate with two senators from each state. Delegates also made painful compromises about slavery. For representation and direct taxes, three-fifths of each state's enslaved population would be counted. Congress could tax imports but not exports. It could not ban the international slave trade before 1808, although it could ban that trade after that date.
- ③ The Convention also created a stronger federal system, but it did not erase state power. The Constitution listed important national powers, such as regulating interstate commerce and raising an army, while states kept powers neither delegated to the federal government nor prohibited to the states by the Constitution. Delegates established an executive branch led by one president, rather than several leaders. To choose that president, they created the Electoral College. Each state's number of electors would reflect its total number of senators and representatives, linking state roles to national elections. These choices helped create the Constitution that delegates signed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan differ? How did the Great Compromise respond to their disagreement?

2 What did the Three-Fifths Compromise decide, and what issue did it affect?

3 Describe one limit and one power Congress received in the compromise about taxes and the international slave trade.

4 How did the Constitution divide power between the federal government and the states? Use one example from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write 5 or 6 sentences explaining how two Convention decisions tried to balance competing interests. Include one decision about representation and one decision about power or leadership, and explain a consequence of each.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each plan or compromise named in the passage. Circle the words that tell what each decision changed, then number three decisions that shaped the new government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan differ? How did the Great Compromise respond to their disagreement?	The Virginia Plan wanted representation based on population, while the New Jersey Plan wanted equal representation for every state. The Great Compromise created a House based on population and a Senate with two senators per state.
2	What did the Three-Fifths Compromise decide, and what issue did it affect?	It counted three-fifths of each state's enslaved population for representation and direct taxes.
3	Describe one limit and one power Congress received in the compromise about taxes and the international slave trade.	Congress could tax imports but not exports. It could not ban the international slave trade before 1808, but could ban it after that date.
4	How did the Constitution divide power between the federal government and the states? Use one example from the passage.	The federal government received listed powers, such as regulating interstate commerce or raising an army. States kept powers neither delegated federally nor prohibited to them by the Constitution.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Great Compromise balanced the needs of large and small states. The House gave large states more influence because representation followed population. The Senate protected small states by giving every state two senators. The Constitution also balanced state and federal power. The federal government received powers such as raising an army, while states kept powers neither delegated federally nor prohibited to them by the Constitution. Creating one president and the Electoral College gave the nation an executive leader while keeping states involved in choosing that leader.

Accept accurate explanations that connect a Convention decision to the competing interests it addressed and to a result in the new government. For the open response, students may use other accurate decisions from the passage if they explain both balance and consequence.