RATIFYING THE CONSTITUTION

Because the writers of the Constitution had not been given the authority by their states to write the document, it had to be sent to each state for approval. Before it could be sent to the states, it had to be written in good, easy-to-read form. The delegates asked Gouverneur Morris, an excellent writer, to write it. He did and in two days he completed its 4,300 words. On September 17, 1787, thirty-nine of the fifty-five delegates signed it and sent it to the states for ratification. Which Article in the Constitution provided the rules for its ratification? Special conventions were held in each state to approve it. How many states needed to approve the Constitution before it could become law?

People against the Constitution were afraid individual rights were not guaranteed. George Mason, Elbridge Gerry and Patrick Henry spoke out against it. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay wrote eighty-five letters supporting its passage. They claimed the check and balance system would create a strong central government and yet preserve states' rights.

Take one side or the other and fight for or against ratification of the Constitution.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The delegates of the Constitutional Convention had seen no need for a bill of rights because of the limitations set on the federal government by the constitution, and because most of the states had their own bill of rights. But the citizens felt differently. When the Constitution was sent to the states for ratification, some people would not approve it until there was a bill of rights specifically listing the individual rights of every citizen. Others ratified it with the promise there would be a bill of rights. When the first Congress met in 1789, it immediately took several amendments that had been suggested during the ratification process under consideration. James Madison wrote twelve of them which were again presented to the states for ratification. Ten were approved. They make up the Bill of Rights or the First Ten Amendments to the Constitution. Because they were written and adopted so soon after the original Constitution, they are considered a part of it.

The first amendment lists five freedoms. Circle them.

- RELIGION
- BREAKING THE LAW
- SPEECH
- HURTING OTHERS
- PRESS
- GATHERING PEACEFULLY IN A GROUP
- TREASON
- PETITION

Which Amendment states a search warrant is necessary before any citizen's possessions may be looked at and seized?

Amendments 5 and 6 deal with citizens' rights in courts. Check the ones below that are true.

- No person may be tried twice for the same crime if found not guilty.
- Anyone can be tried for a serious crime without a grand jury's indictment (a formal charge).
- No person must speak against himself.
- A person may be tried without a jury.
- Witnesses can be a part of a person's trial.
- Life, liberty and property can not be taken without due process of law.
MORE ABOUT THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Which other Amendment deals with jury trials? ________________

Which Amendment provides an army for defense and the right for people to own
guns for their protection? ________________

Soldiers can live in private homes in time of war if prescribed by Congress.
Otherwise they may only do so with permission of the owner. Which Amendment
states this? ________________

Read Amendment 8. What is bail? ________________

What three things does Amendment 8 forbid? ________________

The authors of the Bill of Rights could not list every individual right, so they put in the
9th and 10th Amendments to cover those not listed. What might some rights be
that were not specifically listed? ________________

Look at the pictures. Tell which amendment protects the pictured right. If it is not a
specific right listed write 9 and 10.

[Images of soldiers, church, newspaper, person in court, person playing soccer]

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AMENDMENTS

Nothing is perfect—and certainly not forever. The Founding Fathers realized this when they provided for changes in the Constitution. Amendments to the Constitution have either been additions to or changes of the original document. Since the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution in 1791, only sixteen amendments have been ratified.

Listed below on the left are the Amendments and the dates they became part of the Constitution. On the right are what the Amendments are about in a scrambled order. Read a copy of the Amendment section of the Constitution and write the Amendment's number on the line in front of its definition.

Amendment 11 (1795) Repealed 18th Amendment but allowed states that wanted, to keep it.
Amendment 12 (1804) Described rights of citizens, representation and voting, and defined the obligation of oath takers and Civil War debts.
Amendment 13 (1865) Says no one may be kept from voting because of non-payment of a tax.
Amendment 14 (1868) Did away with slavery.
Amendment 15 (1870) Gave vote to citizens eighteen and older.
Amendment 16 (1913) Gave women the right to vote.
Amendment 17 (1913) Limited length of presidential term.
Amendment 18 (1919) Changes who elects senators.
Amendment 19 (1920) Provided for succession to the presidency and presidential disability.
Amendment 20 (1933) Gave everyone the right to vote.
Amendment 21 (1933) Changed the dates of the President and Vice President's term in office
Amendment 22 (1951) Would not allow liquor to be made or sold.
Amendment 24 (1964) Explained what kind of cases federal courts could try.
Amendment 25 (1967) Established the income tax.
Amendment 26 (1971) Changed how the Electoral College voted.