



# SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION: The Constitution and You

► **NCSS STANDARD**  
Power, authority, & governance

*Constitution Day is September 17. In 2004, Congress established Constitution Day (formerly known as Citizenship Day) as a time for all federally funded schools to commemorate the signing of the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787. This special section will help you and your students recognize and discuss what the Constitution is, why it is important, and the impact it can have on our everyday lives.*

## ■ Constitution Basics

As your students read the articles in this special section, go over these basic facts about the Constitution.

- The Constitution is the document that establishes the structure of the U.S. government and the fundamental (basic) laws of the land.
- After independence in 1776, Congress wrote the Articles of Confederation, setting up a loose alliance of the 13 original states. Adopted in 1781, the articles held the states together during the American Revolution, but soon proved ineffective for running a country.
- Leaders proposed holding a convention with delegates (representatives) from each of the states to improve the Articles. That proved so difficult, however, that they decided to start over—with what became the Constitution.
- The Constitutional Convention of 1787 began on May 25 and ended on September 17, when the document was signed.
- The Constitution was written at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia. The original document is now part of the Charters of Freedom exhibit at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., which also includes the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.
- Fifty-five delegates, representing 12 of the 13 states, participated in the Constitution's creation. (Rhode Island did not send a delegation.) Thirty-nine of the 55 signed the final document. Among the signatories were future Presidents George Washington and James Madison; renowned statesman Benjamin Franklin; Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the U.S. Treasury; and James McHenry, the Secretary of War for whom historic Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland, was named.

## ■ Content-Area Questions

### CULTURE/SOCIAL STUDIES

- The Constitution itself is just a document, a piece of paper. What gives it its power?
- How might life in the U.S. be different if no one accepted the Constitution as law?

### GEOGRAPHY

- **Look it up:** How many capitals did the U.S. have before Washington, D.C., was established in 1800? Name it/them. (two: New York, 1785-1790; Philadelphia, 1791-1800)

### LANGUAGE ARTS

- **Look it up:** What other meanings does the word *constitution* have? Do they connect in any way?

### MATH

- As of September 17, 2008, how many years has it been since the signing of the Constitution? (2008 minus 1787)

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## Cover Story: Mexico: Defying the Odds (pp. 6-10)

### ► NCSS STANDARD

Individual development & identity

*JS marks Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15) with an article that introduces readers to a Mexican teen and his family—including an older sister who lives in the U.S. and sends money home to help support the family.*

### ■ Facts & Figures\*

- Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15 each year because that is Independence Day in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Mexico's is September 16 and Chile's is September 18.
- Hispanic Heritage Month grew out of Hispanic Heritage Week, created by a resolution of Con-

gress and declared by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968. It was expanded to a month in 1988.

- Mexico and the U.S. rank first and second in countries with the largest Spanish-speaking populations. Spain, where the language began, comes in third. (*Mexico*: 110 million; *U.S.*: 46 million; *Spain*: 40 million)
- An estimated 64 percent of the Hispanic (of Latin American descent) population of the U.S. are of Mexican heritage.

### ■ Did You Know?

Cuernavaca, the name of César's hometown, is Spanish for "cow

horn." The city was founded in 1521 by Hernán Cortés, the conquistador who wrested Mexico from the Aztec and claimed it for Spain.

\*SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

### WEB LINKS

- For the "About Mexico" area of the Mexican government's kid-friendly site, go to [elbalero.gob.mx/kids/about/html/home.html](http://elbalero.gob.mx/kids/about/html/home.html).
- For a Scholastic Student Reporter's interview with U.S. Treasurer Anna Cabral about celebrating one's heritage, go to [scholastic.com/js/HispanicHeritage](http://scholastic.com/js/HispanicHeritage).
- For other links, go to [scholastic.com/juniorscholastic/urls](http://scholastic.com/juniorscholastic/urls).



## American History Play: Puritan Protester (pp. 19-21)

### ► NCSS STANDARD

Individuals, groups, & institutions

*Anne Hutchinson's 1637 trial was just one in a long line of struggles for freedom of religion that contributed to the ideals expressed in the First Amendment.*

### ■ A Growing Right

**1620:** A group of English Puritans found Plymouth, the first permanent European settlement in New England. They seek freedom of religion—but faiths other than their own are not welcome.

**1636:** Roger Williams, a religious dissenter banished by the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony, founds Providence Plantations. The settlement is the first to guarantee its people freedom of religion.

**1649:** Maryland, founded as a Catholic colony, grants religious freedom to all Christians.

**1663:** The colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations is granted a charter. It states that "no person within the said colony . . . shall be in any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question in matters of religion."

**1776:** The Virginia Declaration of Rights, drafted by George Mason, calls for "the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience." • The 13 Colonies adopt the Declaration of Independence.

**1779:** Thomas Jefferson writes the Virginia Statute (law) for Religious Freedom.

**1789:** The U.S. Constitution is adopted.

**1791:** The Bill of Rights is adopted.

### ■ Discussion Cue

Have students read the text of the First Amendment, then compare its guarantees with Hutchinson's experience.

### WEB LINKS

- For "The Trial of Anne Hutchinson," go to [pbskids.org/wayback/civilrights/features\\_hutchison.html](http://pbskids.org/wayback/civilrights/features_hutchison.html) [note incorrect spelling of Hutchinson]
- For other relevant links, go to [scholastic.com/juniorscholastic/urls](http://scholastic.com/juniorscholastic/urls).