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Date _____

What Is the Constitution?

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Britain owned 13 colonies in the New World that is, America. King George III was in charge of these colonies, even though he lived across the ocean from them. But in 1776, the United States declared its independence. Years of Revolutionary War followed; Britain didn't want to give the colonies up. However, the United States won the war in 1783. It was its own country at last.

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Now the new country needed a government. The revolutionary leaders didn't want to have a system like England's, with a king or queen holding all the power. Instead, they thought people should govern themselves. This type of government is called a democracy.

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2. b'

In 1787, a group of American leaders came together to craft a set of rules for the new government. These leaders are known as America's Founding Fathers. The set of rules they created is called the Constitution.

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The Founding Fathers believed that having too much power could be dangerous. It could tempt some leaders to use all that power to help themselves instead of helping the country. But they also knew that the government had to have some clout. Otherwise, nothing would get done!

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They decided that the best solution was to spread out the power so that no one has too much. So the Constitution divides the government's power among three different branches.

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3. b''

The Founding Fathers created the Constitution in 1787. But they couldn't predict the future. They knew life would change in ways they couldn't even imagine. Rules made in 1787 might not work so well in 1887, 1987, or 2087. So the Founding Fathers made rules for amending, or changing, the Constitution. By 1992, the Constitution had been amended 27 times. The 13th Amendment, which was added in 1865, outlawed slavery. The 19th Amendment, added in 1920, gave women the right to vote.

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