

## Prompt 4.4 - The Preamble

**Warm-up:** Is it easier to make something or to break something?

**Reading:** As we read, highlight one important sentence to summarize each paragraph.



Shays' Rebellion shocked Congress into calling for a **convention** (meeting) to fix the Articles of Confederation. This meeting became known as **The Philadelphia Convention of 1787**. Philadelphia was already hot and sticky when delegates began drifting into the city that summer. The delegates met in the east room of Independence Hall, the same room that the Declaration of Independence was signed. During that summer, that room was so steamy that, as one visitor wrote, "the slightest movement is painful."

55 delegates from 12 states attended the convention, but many worried that a new government would be tyrannical. Leaders like Sam Adams, Thomas Paine, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, and the entire state of Rhode Island boycotted the convention for this reason. Some leaders, like John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, were also missing because they were busy in Great Britain and France as Ambassadors. However, many did come because a young delegate by the name of **James Madison** was able to convince George Washington to come out of retirement and lead the convention.

Madison was usually a shy and quiet politician, but in the convention "he evidently took the lead." When he was not speaking, he took notes. Sitting near the front of the room, Madison wrote down nearly every word. His notes covered more than 600 pages and he spoke nearly 200 times. For writing much of the Constitution he later became known as "The Father of the Constitution."

Many delegates were white men in their 40s but the oldest was the famed scientist, inventor, and reporter, **Benjamin Franklin**. At 81 years old, Franklin arrived each day in a chair carried by four prisoners from a nearby jail. Most of the delegates brought extensive political experience and were very wealthy. More than two thirds were lawyers and more than one third owned slaves.

All the delegates were committed to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." They agreed that power came from "the consent of the governed," or at least the consent of the wealthy. Many of them, however, did have disagreements on how much power this new government should have. We will learn about how the founding fathers came together to compromise on a new government, starting with the **Preamble** (introduction) to the Constitution.

**Build-a-Gov:** Imagine that you are in charge of creating a new government after Shays' Rebellion.

What would you want it to look like? Would everyone vote? Would they vote for people or for laws? Both? How should it help people? What rights should people have? How should people with power be limited?

Write down **4 values** you would like for your government to have (freedom, protection, healthcare, etc.)

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**Poem:** As a group, write a 5 line poem with the important values you wish to include in government

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**Preamble:** Read the Preamble with your group and put each line into your own words.

*We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union...*

*establish **Justice** (fairness), insure **domestic** (local) **Tranquility** (peace)...*

*provide for the common **defence** (protection), promote the general **Welfare** (happiness)...*

*and secure the Blessings of **Liberty** (freedom) to ourselves and our **Posterity** (children)...*

*do **ordain** (announce) and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

**Which line do you think is the most important? Why?**

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**Cooldown:** After the Preamble, the Constitution is divided into seven sections called “Articles”. The first three articles copied enlightenment philosopher, Montesquieu, and created three branches.

**Article I** is the **Legislative Branch**. It is in charge of making the laws.

**Article II** is the **Executive Branch**. It is in charge of enforcing the laws.

**Article III** is the **Judicial Branch**. It is in charge of interpreting the laws and their fairness.

Which branch do you think is the most powerful? Explain.