

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Constitution: Many Compromises

After the Revolutionary War, the leaders of the new nation met to write a constitution. Although slavery was illegal in the Northern states, slavery was not abolished in the Constitution. If that had been part of the Constitution, delegates from the Southern states would have refused to sign, and the Southern states would have refused to ratify it.

The writers of the Constitution decided it was more important to put together a strong new nation than to deal with the difficult and controversial issue of slavery.

The Constitution stated that the federal government could not abolish the importation of new slaves for 20 years and gave slave owners the right to capture runaway slaves, even in states where slavery was illegal.

There were other issues besides slavery that needed to be solved. Many compromises were made before the final draft of the Constitution was approved.

Large states wanted more representatives in Congress, based on population. Small states wanted equal representation. In the Constitution, all states received equal representation in the Senate. The number of members of the House of Representatives was based on population. Although the Southern states refused to consider slaves as people, they wanted them included in their total population. This made another compromise necessary: for representation, each slave was counted as  $\frac{3}{5}$  of a person.

States' rights were a major concern, primarily to Southerners who considered belonging to the United States as a voluntary agreement. They wanted to limit the powers of the federal government. They claimed each state could determine if a federal law was constitutional and could refuse to carry out federal laws if that law infringed on the state's rights.



1. Use a thesaurus. List five synonyms for *infringe*. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your opinion of the compromise of making each slave count for  $\frac{3}{5}$  of a person?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you agree or disagree with the decision of the writers of the Constitution in not dealing with the issue of slavery? Explain your answer on your own paper.