

Constitution Day Play

Written and Performed by Charline Brown and the 6th grade students of Mont Vernon Village School on 9/17/2015.

Cast:

Production Assistant

Host

George Washington	Student 1
Ben Franklin	Student 2
James Madison	Student 3
Thomas Jefferson	Student 4
John Adams	Student 5
Charles Sumner	Student 6
Susan B. Anthony	Student 7
Carrie Chapman Catt	Student 8

As the play begins, the host and panel of founding fathers and mothers will be getting ready on the stage.

Production Assistant will be quickly walking around making sure things are ready for show-time.

Production Assistant: Make-up. We need make-up, people. George Washington is looking a little washed out and Susan B. Anthony has some hair out of place. Come on, people. And for goodness sakes, will someone please wake up Benjamin Franklin. Five Minutes to air.

Production Assistant comes down into the audience.

Production Assistant: Ok, friends. Thanks for joining us today on set. We are so excited to have you as a live studio audience for our award winning show, "In Their Own Words." Our program today

is brought to you by endowment from the Constitution Center of the United States and by generous donation from the students at Mont Vernon Village School. Are you excited for today's program? I sure am! You know what happens today? YOU get to meet a founding father! YOU get to meet a founding mother! YOU get to meet a founding father! (**Production Assistant** joins the audience and points to many members in the same manner.)

Production Assistant: Ok, people. We go live in 5-4-3-2-1.

Host: Good Morning, and welcome to our show, "In Their Own Words". I am your host, Barbara Wilcox. Today, we have the wonderful privilege of welcoming some of our Founding Fathers and Founding Mothers to the show.

Production Assistant: Don't forget our Founding Mothers also! History sometimes forgets about the mothers...

Host: (Acting Annoyed) Welcome George Washington. You are famous for your transmittal letter of the new Constitution to Congress on September 17, 1787. Our audience wants to know your thoughts.

George Washington:

"In all our deliberations on this subject, we kept steadily in our view, that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true American, the consolidation of our Union, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety, perhaps our national existence. This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed on our minds, led each state in the Convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude, than might have been otherwise expected; and thus the Constitution, which we now present, is the result of a spirit of amity."

Student 1: Wow, George! What big words you use. What George is really trying to tell you is that the whole time the founding fathers

were writing the Constitution, they always kept their focus on providing a strong, unified government of the people, for the people and by the people. Even though all of the states' delegates had different priorities, and had trouble agreeing, they all were willing to compromise for the good of the country.

Host: Now onto the beloved Benjamin Franklin. You were known for your many speeches, especially for when you addresses the Constitutional Convention. Your thoughts.

Benjamin Franklin:

“In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such. I doubt too whether any other Convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an Assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does.”

Student 2: Now, Ben, you always did have a flair for over dramatizing. We'll put up with you being such a drama king because we have you to thank for bifocals and the Franklin Stove. You need to stop trying to confuse these wonderful people. I'll translate for ya, Ben. When you get a group of people together from different backgrounds, they all will bring their different opinions, experiences and ideas to the project. In those conditions can we expect a perfect outcome? No way. But, we were close. Really close.

Host: No wonder you are a natural treasure. James Madison, I know you have an opinion about the Constitution. On June 8th, 1789 you presented your case to the House of Representatives for amending the new Constitution. Would you elaborate on your comments?

James Madison:

“That there be prefixed to the constitution a declaration – That all power is originally vested in, and consequently derived from the people. That government is instituted, and ought to be exercised for the benefit of the people; which consists in the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the right of acquiring and using property, and generally of pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. That the people have an indubitable, unalienable, and indefeasible right to reform their government, whenever it be found adverse or inadequate to the purposes of its institution.”

Student 3: Really people, that deserves some applause. He’s not known as the “Father of the Constitution” for nothing! Leave it to Madison to remind us of the purpose of government. It is meant to serve the people. The people have rights, and the government should always support and recognize those rights. And, if our government no longer serves us, the people...well, CHECK YA LATER!

Host: Now, Thomas Jefferson had some ideas about our new government. What were your thoughts on the Constitution?

Thomas Jefferson:

“I am captivated by the compromise of the opposite claims of the great and little states, of the latter to equal, and the former to proportional influence. I am much pleased, too, with the substitution of the method of voting by persons, instead of that of voting by states;”

Student 4: Tom, you always were the kindly sort! We appreciate your support, especially since you are such an important guy. Thomas Jefferson really liked that the constitutional convention delegates were able to compromise about the two houses in

congress – the House of Representatives and the Senate. He also appreciated that the people had the ultimate say in government. Someone should elect that guy president! Oh, wait. They already did!

Host: (Said in response to a very restless John Adams) Now, settle down, John Adams. You've been chomping at the bit to have your say.

John Adams:

The science of government, it is my duty to study, more than all other sciences; the arts of legislation and administration and negotiation ought to take the place of, indeed exclude, in a manner, all other arts. I must study politics and war, that our sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. Our sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, tapestry and porcelain.

Student 5: What a thoughtful quote from a man who was known for his fiery temper and impulsiveness! John Adams knew that the Founding Fathers were assuming a BIG responsibility. They needed to study the Constitution – inside and out, backwards and forwards. Government officials needed to be a community of planners so that our new government would stand the test of time. In that way, the future would be secure enough for generations to follow to live a life of prosperity and happiness.

Host: There are some people who would argue that the Constitution was flawed. Our next panel members have a few things to say about that. I'll start with you Charles Sumner. In your address to the

Senate on April 8, 1864 you argued for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Charles Sumner:

“Shameful and irrational as is slavery, it is not more shameful or irrational that unsupported interpretation which undertakes to make your Constitution the final guardian and conservator of this terrible, unpardonable denial of human rights. Human rights cannot be taken away by any indirection or any vain imagining of something that was intended but was not said, and, as a natural consequence, that slavery can exist- if exist at all- only by virtue of a positive text, and that what is true of slavery is true also of all its incidents; that in all interpretation of the Constitution, that cardinal principal must never for a moment be out of mind, but must be kept ever forward as guide and master, that slavery cannot stand on inference.”

Student 6: Charles was one sympathetic guy! He knew that the Constitution was meant to protect the liberties of all citizens of our United States. Almost 80 years later, he spoke in favor of a Constitutional Amendment that would get rid of slavery once and for all. HAZZAH! For, you see, Chuck didn't imagine that any human being could accept that the Constitution should just stand by while a group of people were treated like property. Thanks to him, and many others, we have a thirteenth amendment to the Constitution.

Host: Our next guest is a passionate speaker, a soldier, so-to-speak, in the fight for women's rights. I know that Susan B. Anthony has a few comments to make.

Susan B. Anthony:

“The preamble of the Federal Constitution says: “We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to

ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people — women as well as men. And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government — the ballot.

Production Assistant (Said from off stage): Amen, Sista!

Student 7: Go get ‘em, Sue! You really know how to fire up the people! Here we are, a near decade after the Constitutional Amendment to abolish slavery. And women still do not have the same rights that are afforded to men by the Constitution. Now Sue was a woman who stood up to her principles. She gave this speech after being convicted of voting in the presidential election of 1872, which, of course, she wasn’t allowed to do because she was female. Plus, you see that face? It’s on a coin. Can you say that?

Host: And last, but certainly not least, we have the wonderful Carrie Chapman Catt joining us with her remarks about the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Carrie Chapman Catt:

The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America, the guarantee of your liberty. That vote of yours has cost millions of dollars and the lives of thousands of women. Money to carry on this work has been given usually as a sacrifice, and thousands of women have gone without things they wanted and could have had in order that they might help get the vote for you. Women

have suffered agony of soul which you can never comprehend, that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. *That vote has been costly. Prize it!*

Student 8: I feel you, Carrie! You were such an inspirational thinker and speaker. And your message – well we could all learn to be a little more thankful and appreciate what others do for us. It is good to be reminded that many, many, many people worked hard to make sure that a Constitutional Amendment was made that afforded women the right to vote. It only took until 1920! This was well after the invention of the telephone, automobile and airplane! I guess better late than never.

Host: And that's about all we have time for on today's program, "In Their Own Words". Thanks for joining us. We hope you've enjoyed our panel discussion today. Don't forget Constitution Day on September 17th each year.

Production Assistant: Thank you so much for being the best studio audience ever! We hope you enjoyed our presentation!