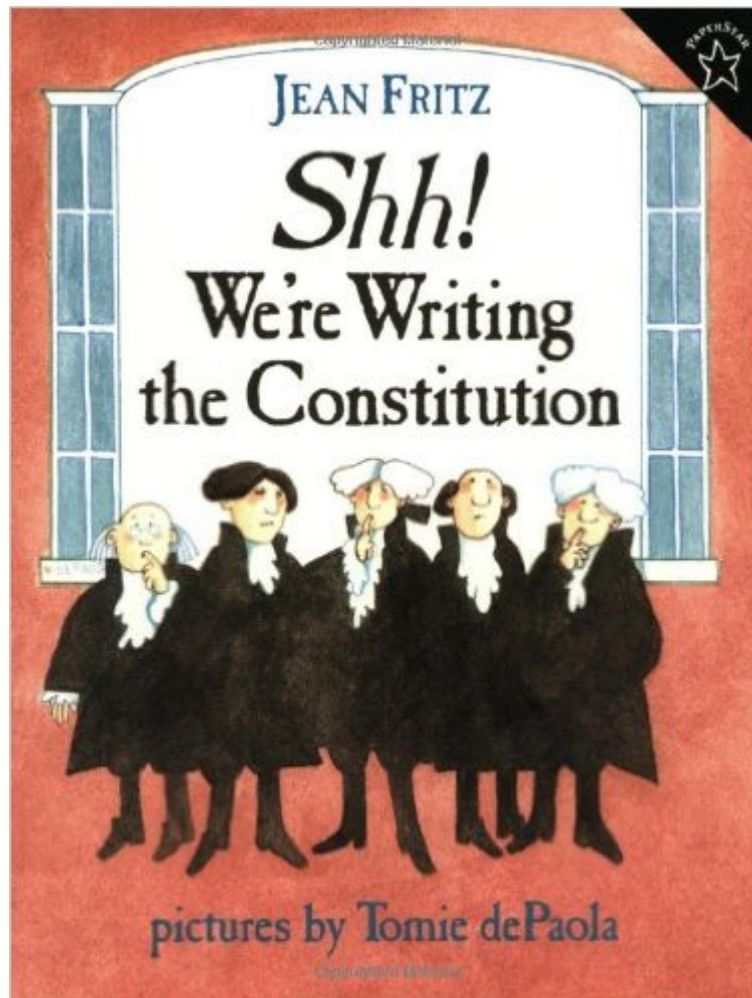


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# Shh! We're Writing The Constitution



## Synopsis

Go behind the scenes at the Constitutional Convention, thanks to award-winning author Jean Fritz's words and illustrations by the incomparable Tomie dePaola! This factual gem that's written with Jean Fritz's humorous touch chronicles the hot summer of 1787 where fifty-five delegates from thirteen states huddled together in the strictest secrecy in Philadelphia to draw up the constitution of the United States! Includes a copy of the Constitution and those who signed it! "An informative, interesting, and immensely readable account of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 . . . An excellent choice for introducing young readers to the complexities of the constitution." "School Library Journal

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (32 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #12,625 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in Â Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Law & Crime #6 in Â Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary #9 in Â Books > Children's Books > Biographies > U. S. Presidents & First Ladies

Age Range: 7 - 9 years

Grade Level: 2 - 4

## Customer Reviews

The point of Jean Fritz's "Shh! We're Writing the Constitution" is that contrary to popular opinion, America had to be dragged kicking and screaming into becoming a new nation. While it is true that Americans were happy to be independent of Great Britain, the colonies that were now states had become used to being sovereign and many of them wanted to keep it that way. Illustrated by Tomie de Paola,, this engaging juvenile history tells how fifty-five delegates gathered in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 to attempt to draw up a plan for the future of the United States. The result was the

writing of the Constitution, despite the fact that initially no one agreed to either what should be in it or even if a constitution should be drawn up in the first place. Fritz makes it clear that there were Founding Fathers, such as Patrick Henry who refused to attend the convention, who did not want a strong federal government, as well as those like Alexander Hamilton who dismissed the current confederation as "nothing but a monster with thirteen heads." The "Shh!" in the title has to do with the agreement of the delegates to keep the proceedings a secret. One of the great things about this book is that young students who already know about George Washington and Benjamin Franklin will learn about other Founding Fathers who were important in framing the Constitution, such as Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, William Paterson of New Jersey, Luther Martin of Maryland, and Edmund Randolph of Virginia. Again, not all of these men would sign their names to the finished document, but they were important during the debate. They will also learn why James Madison is called the "Father of the Constitution," and how Hamilton and another stronger Federalist, John Jay, played important roles, along with Madison, in getting the public to support the Constitution. In telling the story of how the Constitution came to be written Fritz focuses on why certain points were adopted. So students will not only get to hear about the shouting matches and emotional outbursts, but also the political divisions and complex issues of the convention from which emerged the basis of the American government. Even at the end of the story students will be surprised to learn that the vote to adopt the Constitution was closer in Massachusetts (187 to 168) and Virginia (89-79) than it was in South Carolina (149-73) and that North Carolina voted against ratification and Rhode Island did not even bother to hold a convention (i.e., political divisions were just as strong back then as they are today). In addition to reprinting the Constitution of the United States based on the engrossed parchment sent by the Federal Convention to Congress on September 18, 1787, the back of the book also has four pages of informative notes on details from the Annapolis Convention, the debates over how the president should be addressed and how slaves should be counted, and what became the "Federalist Papers." "Shh! We're Writing the Constitution" is an informative book that is well presented by Fritz, who served on the National Education Advisory Committee to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, which is a pretty good credential. This is one in a series of interesting biographies of the American Revolution such as "And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?", "Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?", and "Will You Sign Here, John Hancock?" There is little question that the title of Fritz's books fit a definite pattern.

Hi! I am a twelve year old girl from California and I was very nervous about the constitution test. This book helped me a lot on the test. I was so worried and nervous, but once I read this book,

along with If You Were There When They Wrote The Constitution, I knew I had studied to my full capability! I was so overloaded with information I didn't even need for the test! But all of that studying paid off because, with the help from this book, I got\*\*\*\*\*100%\*\*\*\*\*! My family was so proud of me. Well I didn't just write this review to brag I wrote it to tell you that this book was a great investment for me! Also if you are anything like me you will still think you need to study more so you should also buy if you were there when they wrote the Constitution. Good Luck!

Jean Fritz has been writing books about U.S. history for decades, and SHH! WE'RE WRITING THE CONSTITUTION, originally published in 1987, is another fine addition to her collection. The first 44 pages (minus a few - the story actually starts on page 7) are a history of how the Constitution came to be written and ratified, followed by four interesting pages of notes, and then the Constitution itself (excluding any amendments), for a total of 64 pages. I am surprised to see that AR has this listed at a reading level of RL 7.1, but I am assuming that this reading level includes the actual Constitution at the end of the book, which would certainly drive up the overall reading level - the earlier parts of the book seem somewhat lower to me. I had never read the Constitution in its entirety, so was glad it was included in the book. And though I'm a bit of a history buff, I did learn several new things about our Constitution and how it came to be. We often take our country and its beliefs for granted, but this book does a nice job of showing that there was plenty of disagreement during the hot summer of 1787 while delegates from the Colonies wrote this founding document, our blueprint for a Republican government. Fritz does a nice job showing the different personalities of some of these delegates and how this factored into the proceedings, mentioning things like some delegates falling asleep during the presentations of one boring speaker. While the temperatures boiled, so did some of the tempers, with some members even storming out in anger at times. Nothing about our founding was cut and dried, nor could anyone take for granted how things would turn out, and this book makes that fact come alive. The Colonies had already drafted the Articles of Confederation years earlier, and these had largely turned out to be a failure - Colonies followed them when they felt like it and didn't follow them when they didn't feel so inclined. Tomie dePaola's illustrations complement the story (as with other books in this series by Fritz), with pictures on most of the first 44 pages, none afterward. I would rate this book an 8 on a scale of 1-10.

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