Compromise

Without compromise in 1787, our government would have collapsed in infancy. Compromise is a settlement in which both sides give up something in order to reach an agreement. There were many different compromises made during the Constitutional Convention. The most important compromises dealt with how our government would be set up.

A major concern of the delegates was how to set up the lawmaking body of our government, the legislative branch. How should states be represented in the legislative body? Who would have control—the small states or the large states? This issue threatened to destroy the convention. Eventually, the delegates came to an agreement known as the Great Compromise, which combined the best of the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan.

The Virginia Plan was proposed by the states having the larger populations. First, they suggested that the lawmaking body be called Congress. This Congress was to be bicameral (having two houses). The first house would be elected by the people, and the second house would be elected by the first house. The number of Congressmen was to be determined by the population of the state. The larger states liked this plan because they had a larger population and as a result would be able to control the government. They favored a plan based on population.

An alternative was the New Jersey Plan supported by the smaller states. First, the small states proposed a Congress that was unicameral (having one house) with each state having the same number of representatives or votes. The smaller states would then be equal with the larger states. They favored a plan based on equality.

Eventually a compromise was reached. The compromise became known as the Great Compromise, because without this basic issue settled, the Convention would have failed.

The Great Compromise called for a bicameral Congress. The first house was to be called the House of Representatives, with representatives elected by the people for a two-year term. The number of representatives each state could elect would depend on the population of the state. This pleased the large states.

The second house was to be called the Senate, with senators elected by their state legislatures for a six-year term. Each state would have two senators. This pleased the small states. The Great Compromise had succeeded; both sides got what they wanted.
THE BIRTH OF THE CONSTITUTION

Compromise
≈ Challenges ≈

1. Define:
   Bicameral: ________________________________

   Unicameral: ________________________________

2. What question was resolved with the Great Compromise? ________________________________

3. What plan was supported by the large states? Why? ________________________________

4. What plan was supported by the small states? Why? ________________________________

5. Fill in the information:

   A. Virginia Plan:
      1. How many houses? ________________________________

      2. Number of congressmen determined by: ________________________________

   B. New Jersey Plan:
      1. How many houses? ________________________________

      2. Number of congressmen determined by: ________________________________

6. What was the Great Compromise, and how did it establish the legislative body? ________________________________

7. Circle the correct ending to each statement:
   A. Representatives in the House of Representatives are chosen by:
      POPULATION EQUALITY

   B. Senators in the Senate are chosen by:
      POPULATION EQUALITY
**Separation of Powers**

Another problem facing the Constitutional Convention was how to divide the powers of a government. Who will make the laws? Who will make sure the laws are obeyed? Who will make sure the laws are "good" laws? These questions were answered in the next set of compromises.

American government can be seen as a tree. The Constitution is the trunk, or base, with three branches extending from that trunk. Those three branches are the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. Each branch has different responsibilities and looks out for and checks the other two branches. These concepts, respectively, are called separation of powers and checks and balances.

The **legislative** branch was defined during the Great Compromise. Together, the House of Representatives and the Senate make the laws to govern our country. The legislative branch also checks the executive and judicial branches.

The second branch is the **executive** branch. Eventually, the delegates decided to create a chief executive. Under the Articles of Confederation, there was no national leader. The founding fathers had feared creating another "king." There was much discussion, even talk of having two equally powered leaders. The convention agreed to create one President, but only if the President would be checked or watched by the legislative and judicial branches. The job of the President and the executive branch is to carry out the laws passed by the legislative branch.

The third branch established the **judicial** system. The judicial branch was to be headed by the Supreme Court. It is the job of the Supreme Court to interpret or define the laws. The Supreme Court is chosen by the President and approved by the Senate. The judicial branch checks the executive and legislative branches.

Each branch has its own specific responsibilities. Each has a separate power. Part of the responsibility of a branch is to control or check the power of the other branches. That way, no one branch gets to be too powerful; each branch is balanced.
THE BIRTH OF THE CONSTITUTION

Separation of Powers
≈ Challenges ≈

1. Define:
   Separation of Powers: ________________________________
   Checks and Balances: ________________________________
   Legislative: ________________________________
   Executive: ________________________________
   Judicial: ________________________________

2. Name three ways in which the powers of the United States are divided.
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

3. Why are the powers separated?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

4. What is the job of the legislative branch?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

5. What is the job of the executive branch?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

6. What is the job of the judicial branch?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

7. What two branches are checked by the legislative branch?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

8. What two branches are checked by the executive branch?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

9. What two branches are checked by the judicial branch?
   ________________________________