The Constitution

Creating a State Government
After the United States declared independence, the new country and its states needed plans for government. In 1777, New Yorkers met in Kingston to create a new constitution for their state. The state constitution was approved on April 20, 1777. After the American Revolution, the 13 states created a plan for a federal government. They called the document the Articles of Confederation. The new national government chose New York City as its capital. In 1787, state delegates met in Philadelphia to create a new plan for a stronger government. They argued about how much power large and small states should have. They finally came to an agreement and created the United States Constitution.

A New Government
The Constitution created a democracy. Under the Constitution, the national government was divided into three branches. Each branch could limit the power of the other two. In addition, the national government would share power with the states. After the Constitution was written, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison wrote the Federalist Papers—essays that helped convince others to approve the Constitution. In 1788, New York became the eleventh state to ratify the Constitution. The following year, George Washington was elected as the first President of the nation.

1787 State delegates meet to create a plan for a stronger government.

1788 New York ratifies the United States Constitution.

1789 George Washington is elected the first President.

Find and underline a form of each vocabulary word.

constitution noun, a plan for running a government

defederal adjective, a type of government in which states and the central government share power
delegate noun, someone chosen to speak or act for others
democracy noun, a system in which the people hold the power of government

What did New Yorkers do after the United States declared independence? Highlight the sentence that tells the answer.

What were the essays written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison called? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

SKILL Reading Charts
Which happened first—New York’s ratifying of the Constitution or George Washington’s election as President? Circle the correct box.