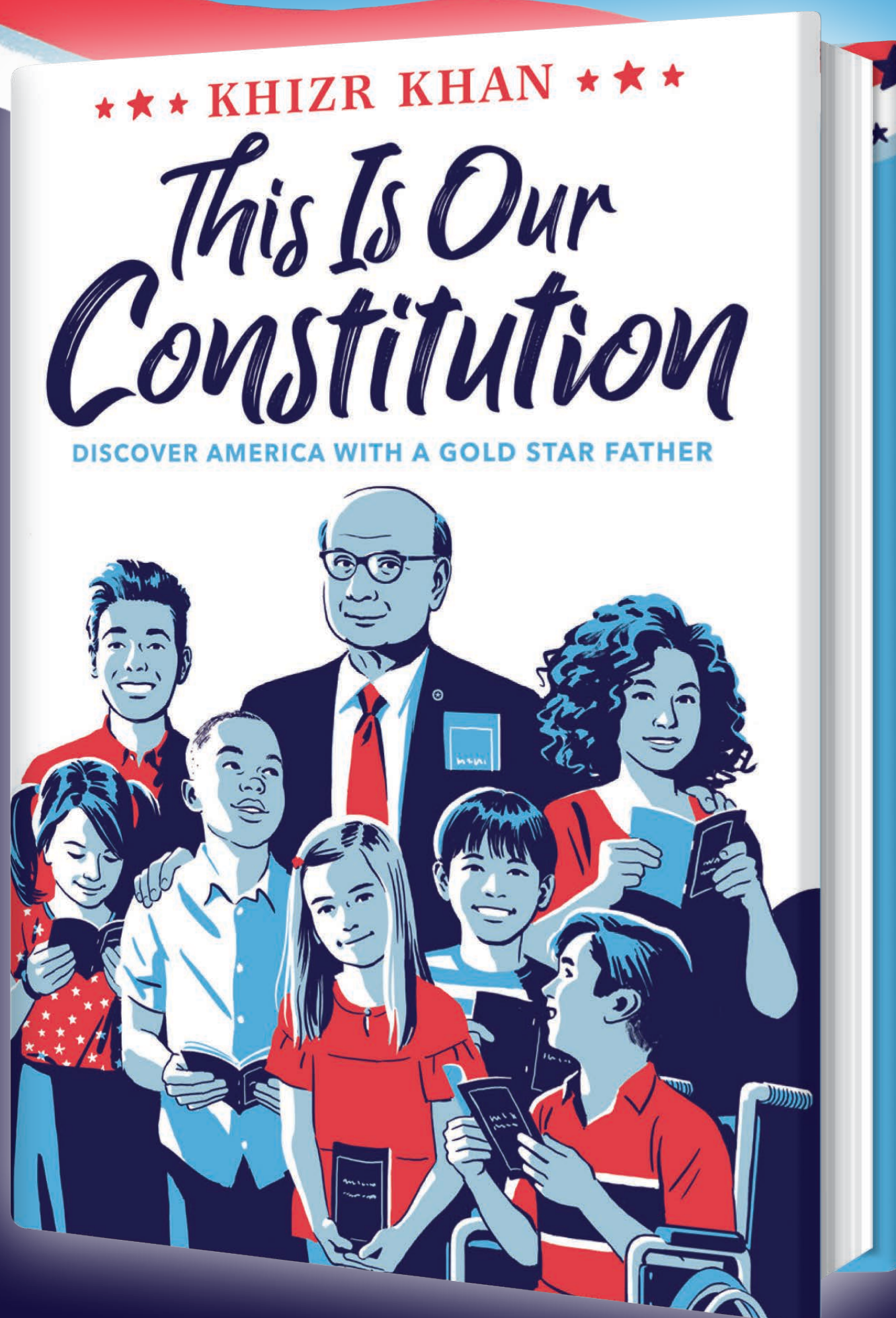




*'The Constitution is America's beating heart.
The Constitution is yours. You bring it to life.
You defend it. Without that, it's just words on parchment.'*
—KHIZR KHAN

Here are a few ways that **you** can—
right now—defend and support the
ideals of the United States:

- ★ **Read newspapers**, watch the news, ask questions. Form opinions about important public policy issues.
- ★ **Introduce yourself** to newcomers in your school or neighborhood. Let them know they are welcome.
- ★ **Speak out** when you see injustice. Listen carefully when others speak out.
- ★ Tell someone who is speaking up on behalf of others or whom you see being mistreated that you stand with them. **Small gestures can make a big difference** in making someone feel supported.
- ★ **Find common ground** between people.
- ★ Research your state's voting laws. **Register** as soon as you're eligible.
- ★ Talk to military officers, police officers, and other public servants. **Explore a career** in one of these fields.
- ★ **Keep a copy of the Constitution handy.**



This Is Our Constitution

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

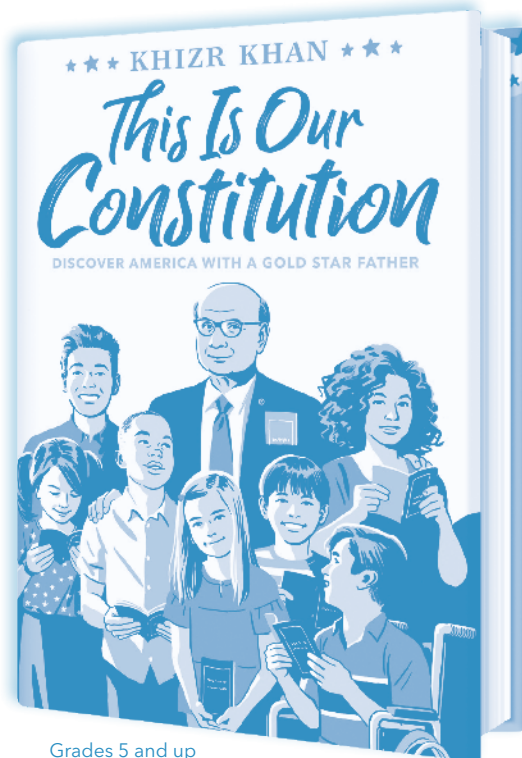
About the Book

WHAT DOES OUR CONSTITUTION SAY? WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Khizr Khan, the Gold Star father and Pakistani immigrant whose speech electrified the 2016 Democratic National Convention and inspired Americans of every age to turn to our Constitution, shares his passion for our nation's founding documents in this timely and deeply felt book.

This Is Our Constitution includes:

- ★ A highly personal introduction and conclusion
- ★ Notes throughout that share Khizr Khan's reflections on and connections to the U.S. Constitution
- ★ The fascinating history of why and how the Constitution was written
- ★ Article by article and section by section, an easy-to-follow explanation of what the Constitution means
- ★ A closer look at key amendments, including the Bill of Rights, and pivotal Supreme Court decisions
- ★ The complete texts of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution



Grades 5 and up
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About the Author



Photo © 2017 by Edwin Tse Photography

KHIZR KHAN was born in 1950, the eldest of ten children, in rural Pakistan. He moved to the United States with his wife, Ghazala, in 1980. The couple became American citizens and raised their three sons in Silver Spring, Maryland. Their middle son, U.S. Army captain Humayun Khan, a graduate of the University of Virginia and its Army ROTC program, was killed in 2004 while stopping a suicide attack near Baqubah, Iraq. He was posthumously awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. Khizr Khan holds a BA degree from Punjab University, an LLB from Punjab University Law College, and an LLM from Harvard Law School. He is a member of the bar of the United States Supreme Court; the Washington, D.C., State Bar; the New York State Bar; and the American Bar Association. The focus of Khan's legal practice is on complex civil litigation, electronic discovery, health privacy compliance law, and civil rights and veterans' rights advocacy. He and Ghazala live in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Khan is also the author of *An American Family: A Memoir of Hope and Sacrifice*.

★ Getting Started ★

Use the following questions as discussion starters or writing prompts before reading *This Is Our Constitution*.

- ★ How does life in a democracy like the United States compare to life under a dictatorship?
- ★ What freedoms exist in the U.S. that are lacking under authoritarian governments?
- ★ Do you exercise or encounter any of those freedoms in your everyday life? What difference do they make to you?

★ Questions for Group Discussion ★

1. Analyze the author's voice and its effect on you as a reader. Where in the text does Khizr Khan use a conversational tone? How does he make the book personal? Which parts of the book are primarily analytical, and why?
2. What qualifies Khizr Khan to write a book about the Constitution and its impact? What makes the Constitution central to his life and history? Discuss how he came to be a public figure and what he represents to people who admire him.
3. How does the author use his experiences in Pakistan to make points throughout the book? Give specific examples and discuss their impact. ★
4. The author's son, who died while serving in the U.S. Army in Iraq, wrote in a college essay that "sacrifice and vigilance are crucial to liberty and democracy." Talk about what this means and how Captain Humayun Khan's actions exemplified these ideals. What other forms of sacrifice and vigilance protect liberty?
5. Think about the different parts of this book: What purpose does the introduction serve? Why does the author emphasize the First and Fourteenth Amendments early on? How is the rest of the book organized, and why? Why does he include the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? Discuss the role of sidebars and visual components.
6. In what ways does the Constitution protect us from tyranny? What aspects of our system of government are the opposite of tyranny? Why were the Founding Fathers so concerned by authoritarianism?
7. "We must respect each other's right to speak freely, *especially* when we strongly disagree," writes the author. (p. 24) Discuss the importance of sharing different viewpoints in a free society. Do you think the free exchange of ideas is possible under authoritarian governments? Why or why not?
8. Analyze the role of slavery in the Constitution as it was first written and as it evolved. Why was slavery prevalent in the South? Discuss the figures in the book about the number of slaves in each colony and how that affected Congress. Why did it take so long to outlaw slavery? Discuss the amendments that pertain to slavery and to rights for African Americans. ★
9. At Virginia's ratification assembly, Patrick Henry and others shared their worry that the Constitution didn't do enough to address individual liberties. Why were they concerned about this, and what solution was presented? What was Madison's argument defending the Constitution? How does the Bill of Rights demonstrate that the Constitution is a living, flexible document?
10. Khan writes that the Constitution belongs not just to those who wrote it but to young people who are reading his book. What does he mean? In what way does it belong to you? How can you strengthen your connection to the Constitution?

The discussion questions correlate to Common Core Standard CCSS.RI. 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1; CCSS.RI. 5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2; CCSS.RI. 5.3, 6.3, 7.3, 8.3; CCSS.RI. 5.5, 6.5, 7.5, 8.5; CCSS.RI.5.6, 6.6, 7.6, 8.6; CCSS.RI.5.8, 6.8, 7.8, 8.8; CCSS.SL.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.

★ Classroom Activities ★

1. The history of the Constitution is full of debates. As a class, make a list of debate topics drawn from the book, such as voting age, the Electoral College, and the death penalty. Have groups of four students choose a topic and form two pairs, one for each side of the debate. They should prepare arguments supported by evidence and hold a formal debate in front of the class. (Find debate rules at homepage.ntu.edu.tw/~karchung/debate1.htm)
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1; CCSS.SL.5.4, 6.4, 7.4, 8.4.
2. Persuasive speeches draw on emotion, as well as facts and ideas. Have students choose a controversial topic addressed in Khan's book and prepare a short speech designed to persuade their audience to agree with their point of view. They should present the speech to their classmates and then see if they changed any minds.
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1; CCSS.SL.5.4, 6.4, 7.4, 8.4.
3. Several topics in this book are addressed in the Broadway musical *Hamilton*. Have students listen to song lyrics and discuss how they relate to the Constitution and its history. Be sure to review the lyrics in advance to make sure they are appropriate for your class. (genius.com/albums/Lin-manuel-miranda/Hamilton-original-broadway-cast-recording)
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.SL.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.
- ★ 4. Those born in the United States may take citizenship for granted, but for immigrants who become naturalized citizens, it's life-changing, as Khan attests. Have students research the process for becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen. Then, as a class, watch and discuss this Arizona Public Media video of the swearing-in ceremony for new citizens: tv.azpm.org/p/originals-azill-news/2015/6/25/66874-new-americans.
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.5.7, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7; SL.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.
5. "There are many countries in the world that have an official religion or that privilege people who practice one religion over those who practice another." (p. 22) Divide up the world's 196 countries among the students and have them research which ones have a state or favored religion. Make a chart that shows the results. Discuss what it means to live in a country with religious freedom versus one without such freedom. ★
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.5.7, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7; SL.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.
6. Khan and his wife pay their taxes "with pride." (p. 112) He lists some examples of where tax dollars go in support of the "general Welfare" of our nation, and an IRS graphic shows spending categories. As a class, create a list of how taxes are spent. Brainstorm specific types of spending, starting with Khan's list and adding to it. Students can gather additional information from adults in their lives. Have students discuss which spending they consider most important and whether they would cut certain spending.
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.SL.5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2.
7. The author notes that it is rare for women in the U.S. to hold high office. Have students read this short piece from the Pew Research Center about women leaders around the world, current as of March 2017. (pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/08/women-leaders-around-the-world/) Discuss why there have been so few female heads of state. Brainstorm ways that women could gain more elected offices.
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.RI.5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2; SL.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.
8. Hold a class read-a-thon of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, both included in the book. Make sure that everyone has a chance to read and listen to the original words. As a class, discuss the power of the original writing. Why do you think Khizr Khan chose to rewrite it in everyday English for this book?
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.SL.5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.
9. As a class, watch and listen to Khizr Khan's speech at the Democratic National Convention. Have students discuss it and make connections between the speech and the book, noting differences. What are Khan's goals in the speech? In the book? What are the strengths and drawbacks of each medium? (c-span.org/video/?c4615876/khizr-khan-father-veteran)
Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.RI.5.7, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7; SL.5.3, 6.3, 7.3, 8.3.
10. Have students consider the author's suggestions for how they can "defend and support the ideals of the United States." (p. 203) Each student should write an essay about what they've already done along these lines and what they intend to do in the future. Their essays should address why everyone has a responsibility to participate in democracy. ★
Correlates to Common Core Standards CCSS.W.5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2.



Internet Resources



Library of Congress: Primary documents and other information related to the U.S. Constitution
loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/NewNation.html

National Archives: A reproduction of the Constitution with links to biographies of the framers
archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution

The New York Times Upfront, "10 Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know": Reviews constitutional cases that have involved teenagers, starting in the 1960s
nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20080915monday.html

PBS Revolution Part 2: Issues around slavery during the Revolutionary War and related to the Constitution, including primary documents
pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2narr5.html

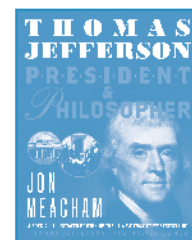
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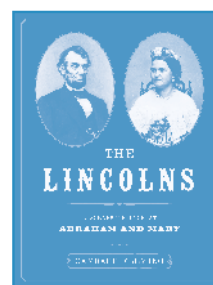
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