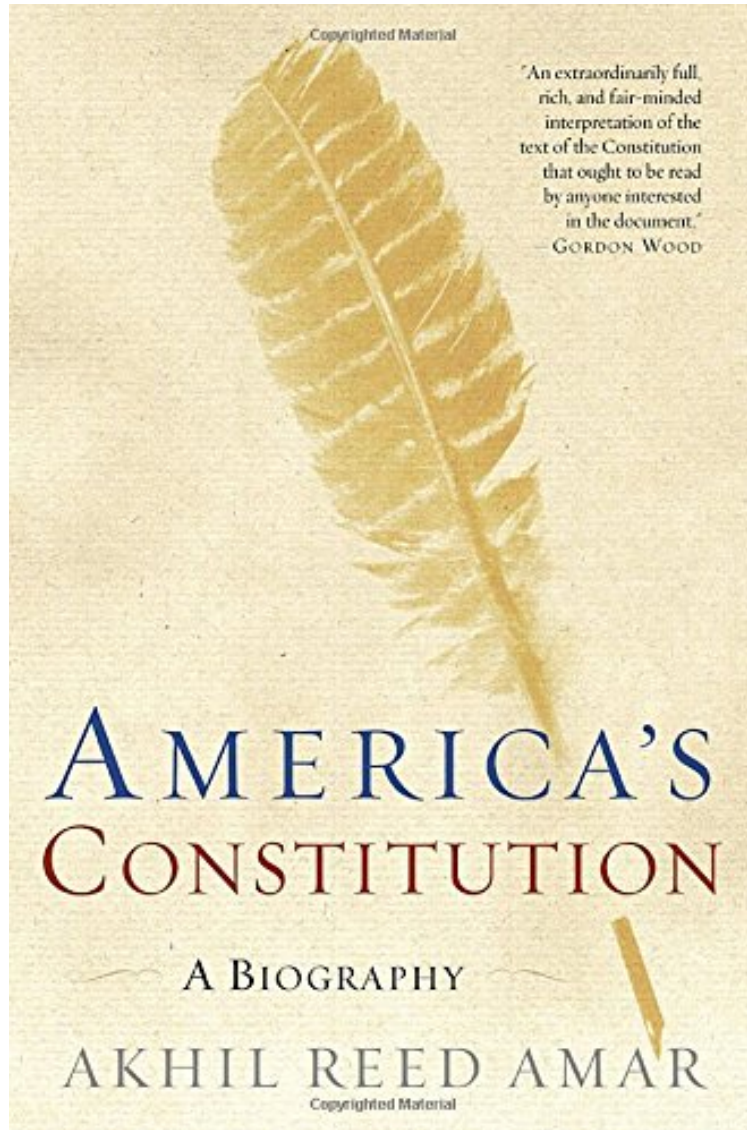


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flawed by the 3/5s proposition? How many have traveled the intellectual and political roads that led to the most powerful and influential political document since the Magna Carta and the Mayflower Compact? What better a guide and companion than Yale law professor Akhil Reed Amar's monumental work, "American's Constitution: A Biography"? Amar takes the 4000+ words that are the signature of American life, admired the world over, and gives us a sturdy volume (657 pages), exhaustively researched, written with clarity and style. Anyone interested in American life and values should not fail to read (and re-read) this near classic. Why a "biography"? Because the US Constitution is at once a rock solid declaration, and a celebration of a modern democracy and, unlike other antecedent models of government, has a built-in safeguard against abuse through its compelling amend-ability. It has a life; it was born; it was nourished; it matured and is subject to re-birth through the will of the people. Amar has made an adventure story of the documentary founding of the nation and has parsed the enduring words and phrases whose meanings and interpretations and re-interpretations over the nation's history are forever marked by the glorious and majestic opening line, WE THE PEOPLE. . . . Scholars and laymen alike will be enriched by this book. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Should you desire to learn more about the Constitution! By John Stanhaus If you have a genuine curiosity about the Constitution, I highly recommend this book. I caution you that it will most likely not be a quick read, for as the author notes he aims higher than the ninth grade level targeted by most general classroom textbooks, as he attempt to employ a holistic approach synthesizing law, history and political science, to create his fascinating constitutional story. I often found myself googling terms and discussions I wanted to learn more about as I went along. I recommend reading the entire text of the constitution, along with the preface and the postscript BEFORE jumping into the book itself. This will help you better appreciate his method which he describes as unique to the discussion the constitution, as well as pointing out specific sections where the views expressed in the book are either original on his part, or subject to different interpretations. I feel I am a much better informed citizen for having read it.

In America's Constitution, one of this era's most accomplished constitutional law scholars, Akhil Reed Amar, gives the first comprehensive account of one of the world's great political texts. Incisive, entertaining, and occasionally controversial, this biography of America's framing document explains not only what the Constitution says but also why the Constitution says it. We all know this much: the Constitution is neither immutable nor perfect. Amar shows us how the story of this one relatively compact document reflects the story of America more generally. (For example, much of the Constitution, including the glorious-sounding We the People, was lifted from existing American legal texts, including early state constitutions.) In short, the Constitution was as much a product of its environment as it was a product of its individual creators' inspired genius. Despite the Constitution's flaws, its role in guiding our republic has been nothing short of amazing. Skillfully placing the document in the context of late-eighteenth-century American politics, America's Constitution explains, for instance, whether there is anything in the Constitution that is unamendable; the reason America adopted an electoral college; why a president must be at least thirty-five years old; and why, for now, at least only those citizens who were born under the American flag can become president. From his unique perspective, Amar also gives us unconventional wisdom about the Constitution and its significance throughout the nation's history. For one thing, we see that the Constitution has been far more democratic than is conventionally understood. Even though the document was drafted by white landholders, a remarkably large number of citizens (by the standards of 1787) were allowed to vote up or down on it, and the document's later amendments eventually extended the vote to virtually all Americans. We also learn that the Founders' Constitution was far more slavocratic than many would acknowledge: the three-fifths clause gave the South extra political clout for every slave it owned or acquired. As a result, slaveholding Virginians held the presidency all but four of the Republic's first thirty-six years, and proslavery forces eventually came to dominate much of the federal government prior to Lincoln's election. Ambitious, even-handed, eminently accessible, and often surprising, America's Constitution is an indispensable work, bound to become a standard reference for any student of history and all citizens of the United States. From the Hardcover edition.