



In May of 1787, Jared Mifflin, a young Philadelphian, is looking forward to a leisurely summer before entering college in the fall. When the Constitutional Convention convenes in Philadelphia's State House, Jared's uncle Thomas Mifflin, one of the delegates, arranges for him to be James Madison's aide. Jared is kept so busy serving Mr. Madison, running errands for the delegates, and trying to keep spectators away from the meetings that he barely has time for courting Hetty Morris, a lovely and talented artist.

Through his work he makes two new friends who open his eyes to other ways of life less fortunate than his own. Henry Blair is a slave who has come with one of the delegates from Georgia and has been working at an inn. William Ellsworth is a British immigrant who arrived in America only to find his uncle in jail for debt. Penniless, he took a job as houseboy for Benjamin Franklin and came to Philadelphia with Dr. Franklin for the Convention. Now, at Jared's suggestion, William plans to work as a courier, distributing copies of the Constitution to the colonies.

After sixteen weeks of deliberation and debate, the Constitution is presented to the delegates for approval. This excerpt from the novel describes the historic occasion.

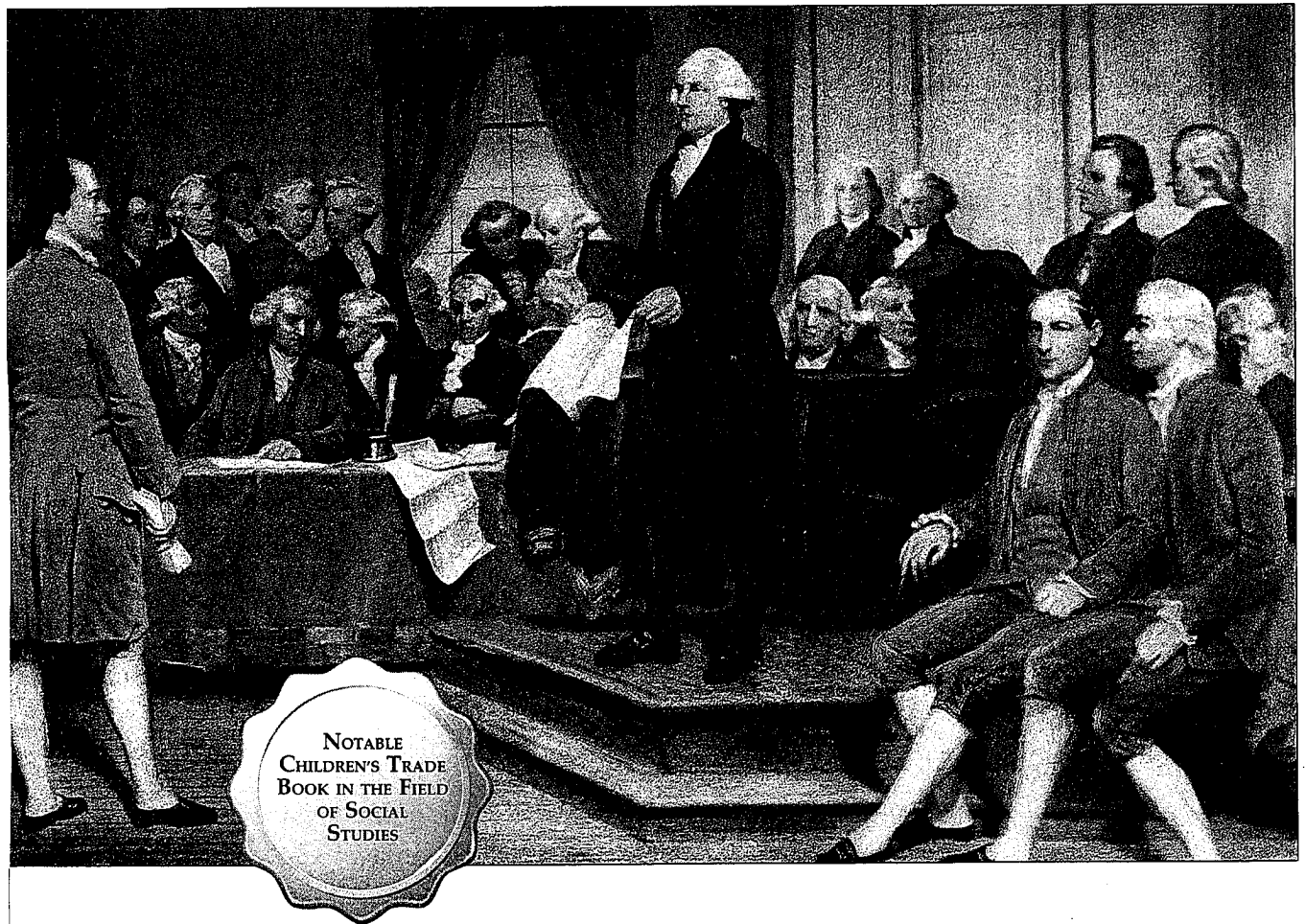
We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. . . .

As Secretary Jackson continued to read, Jared stood in the back of the East Room gazing upon the delegates, none of whom moved a hair as they listened to the words they had labored so hard to formulate into a sturdy document. *Another hour or so, and the whole thing will be over,* Jared thought, a tinge of sadness stirring his soul as he realized his unique experience was coming to an end.



The windows of the East Room had finally been opened, allowing an unfamiliar cool breeze to descend upon the delegates at this, their last official meeting.

1787



by Joan Anderson
