



Through The Looking Glass Children's Book Review
An Online Children's Book Review Journal

How Government works ...

Constitution Translated for Kids, Cathy Travis

Non-Fiction (1-933538-01-5)

Ages 10 and up

Trying to understand how the government works is hard enough for an adult. For a child it is often quite incomprehensible and yet children hear adults commenting on, and complaining about, the government all the time. What do these grownups mean? What is the Constitution and why is it so important? Why should we care about what our government does and why do we need to understand it?

In this carefully and thoughtfully written book the author answers these and many other questions. In a "Message to Children" she begins by giving her readers a little background on the Founders and then goes on to explain what the Constitution is in the simplest of terms – a set of "rules and directions."

The next section is the document itself with all twenty-seven of its amendments. On one side of the page readers will find the original text. On the other is the author's 'translation' which helps readers understand what the Constitution is saying. There can be no doubt that there are many passages in the original document which are very difficult to understand. The translations make these sections comprehensible and help the reader see what the writers were trying to do.

The author then goes a step further, for she goes on to explain how the government works, she includes a glossary in which she defines the harder words that she uses in the text, and she has written excellent overviews of the Constitution and all the amendments. These overviews put the laws in their correct context and explain why they were written. Finally she has written a "Student Exercise in Democracy" which invites readers to discuss changes that they might make to the Constitution. Proposed amendments are described and then points are raised in favor of and against the amendment. This excellent set of exercises will help young readers get a feel for the democratic process for themselves.

Both the young and the not so young will benefit greatly from reading this book, especially if it is in a group setting where points made in the text can be raised and discussed.

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