THE CONSTITUTION WITH CARL

Volume 13 - The Twelfth Amendment - How We Elect a President

How We Elect a President

Central question: Why do we vote separately for President and Vice President?





Carl is holding two ballots, and that is the whole lesson of this book in one picture. One ballot is for President. The other, separate ballot is for Vice President. It was not always so, and the reason it changed is one of the best stories in the Constitution.

Earlier volumes in this series covered the Constitution itself and the Bill of Rights, and Book 12 covered the Eleventh Amendment. This book is about a repair. The original Constitution asked electors to cast two votes without saying which vote was for which office. First place became President, and second place became Vice President. That plan worked while George Washington stood above parties. Then it broke twice in a row, in 1796 and in 1800, and the second break nearly broke the young country with it.

One distinction runs through every page, so learn it now: **voters** and **electors** are not the same people doing the same job. Voters cast ballots in November. Electors are the smaller group of people a state appoints to cast the actual electoral votes in December. This amendment is written to the electors. Keep the two groups separate in your mind and the whole book will make sense.

For ages 7 to 11. Level Up boxes reach to age 13.

START HERE

Meet Carl and the Four Strands

Carl the Cardinal is Ballot Carl in this volume. He stands at a plain wooden ballot box with a ballot in each wing, because the Twelfth Amendment's central act is a small one: put the President's name on one ballot and the Vice President's name on a different ballot. Carl's job is to keep the two piles separate, count them honestly, and show you what happens when the piles get mixed.

The four strands, kept separate

Strand	What it is
THE WORDS	The amendment itself, in ORIGINAL WORDS, plus a PLAIN LANGUAGE EXPLANATION set apart from it.
THE HISTORY	Evidence from before and around 1804 about why the words were added.
COURTS HAVE SAID	Named cases with years. This amendment is mostly procedure, so its courts page carries the cases that truly belong to it, and no others.
STILL DEBATED	Real disputes that remain. Stated fairly, never as settled fact.

How to use this book

- Read the words aloud first. Then read the explanation.
- Write, draw, point, or dictate your answers. All of those count.
- The elections in the activities are fictional and small on purpose, so the counting rules stand out.
- Family Talk is where the family viewpoint lives. It is never presented as a court holding.

THE GUARDRAIL FOR THIS WHOLE BOOK: VOTERS ARE NOT ELECTORS

Voters are the citizens who vote in November. When you hear "the people chose," that is the voters, acting through the rules their state set. **Electors** are the people each state appoints, as many as the state has senators and representatives in Congress, who meet in December and cast the electoral votes that actually elect the President and Vice President. A voter never casts an electoral vote, and an elector's ballot is not the November ballot. Whenever this book says "elector," picture Carl at the ballot box in December, not a crowd at a polling place in November.

MEET CARL BOX

Carl counts carefully and out loud. A count that everyone can watch is a count everyone can trust, and this amendment is built out of counting: separate ballots, separate lists, signed and sealed lists, and a public count in front of both houses of Congress. An open count is a count anyone can check, and a count that can be checked is a count people can trust.