p. 68, ¶ 1, last sentence – “And deep-seated fears of the abuse of power were certain to surface no matter what aspect of that government the delegates discussed.”

p. 69, ¶ 2, line 6 – “How far do you intend to go in reducing the power of the state?”

p. 68, ¶ 4, last sentence on page – “The clear choice facing the convention was this: Shall we have a confederation or a nation?”

p. 70, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The issue... was not cowardice or bravery; the issue as Roger Sherman now pointed out was the limits of this convention’s legitimate authority. Sherman agreed that the Confederation lacked sufficient power to be an effective government. He agreed that the jurisdictions of the federal and the state governments must not overlap.”

Note: This issue of federal verses state authority and responsibility is precisely what is at issue with regard to the crisis associated with Hurricane Katrina.

p. 71, ¶ 2, line 1 – “Why had the Articles of Confederation been abandoned so calmly and so soon?”

p. 71, ¶ 2, line 6 – “But few men who opposed drastic change had bothered to come at all.”

p. 71, ¶ 3, line 1 – “There was a consensus on only one thing: A new and more effective central government was essential.”

p. 71, ¶ 4, line 1 – “The Virginia Plan proved maddeningly vague on all these issues. It offered no clear statement of what powers the new government would have.”

p. 73, ¶ 2, line 7 – “In the Virginia Plan, he relied on the diffusion of power among three branches – legislative, executive, and judicial – to thwart that temptation to tyranny.”

p. 73, ¶ 4, line 1 – “With a surgeon’s skill, Madison had cut the most important branch in half, creating a bicameral congress.”

p. 74, ¶ 1, line 2 – “As weeks dragged into months, the convention debated, argued, and came dangerously close to dissolving over the fundamental question: What was the basis of representation in
the legislature to be?”

p. 74, ¶ 2, line 7 – “How, or if, slaves would be included in determining congressional seats was, for the Pinckneys and their slave-holding neighbors, a matter of no small concern.”

p. 75, ¶ 2, line 1 – “Unless the delegates could agree on the form the legislature would take, its powers in relationship to the state legislatures, who that legislature would represent, and how its members would be chosen to serve – unless all this could be resolved, the nation would be in more danger than it was under the Articles of Confederation.”

p. 76, ¶ 1, line 1 – “Few delegates underestimated the difficulties that lay ahead.”

p. 76, ¶ 1, line 1 – “On June 1 the delegates gathered once again as a committee of the whole to test the strength of that united wisdom. Their blueprint was the Virginia Plan, which they had accepted in principle but not in specifics.”

Note: The notion of an independent executive branch was in direct opposition to the parliamentary system where the nation’s chief executive is elected by, and a member of, that legislative body.

p. 77, ¶ 1, line 23 – “They spoke as defenders of popular will on one issue and as guardians of elite judgment on the next. They voted to enhance the powers of the central government on a Monday and to protect the sovereignty of the states on a Tuesday. They reaffirmed their nationalism and then doggedly defended the interests of their region.”

p. 79, ¶ 1, line 8 – “‘I am apprehensive,’ wrote the normally optimistic Ben Franklin, ‘that the Government of these States, may in future times, end in a Monarchy. But this Catastrophe I think may be long delayed...’”

p. 79, ¶ 2, line 4 – “While the delegates too their seats, the doors were locked, the windows closed, and the guards took up their posts around the statehouse.”

Note: When modern politicians and jurists (judges) speak of the adhering to the “original intent” of the Founders or of the U.S. Constitution the fact that the members of the Constitutional Convention placed themselves in seclusion makes this task extremely difficult, if not impossible, to the precision implied by such simplistic interpretations of history.

p. 80, ¶ 1, line 3 – “If the convention split, if delegations abandoned their tables and returned home, if the Confederation continued to oversea the demise of the nation, the death of the nationalists’ hopes would undoubtedly come from the debate over the legislature.”
p. 80, ¶ 2, line 13 – “In writing state constitutions, they had debated ...”[the whole ¶ through the end of the ¶ on the next page].

p. 83, ¶ 2, line 5 – “The executives that they (the convention members) knew before independence were, after all, a tyrannical king and a long parade of his royal governors. Most delegates still carried scars of struggles for control between king and colonists and between governors and assemblymen. Many a royal governor, either a novice bureaucrat or a man in the twilight of his career, had brazenly demanded bribes for concessions to local interests or rewards for their compliance in ignoring the king’s instructions.”

Question: What convention delegate first proposed the popular election of the chief executive (i.e. the president)? [answer on page 88].

p. 90, ¶ 3, last sentence – “It was, Gerry insisted, patently foolish to place so much responsibility in the hands of the people since the people were ‘too little informed of personal characters in large districts.’ Far worse, they were ‘liable to deceptions.’”

Note: This is the same Elbridge Gerry (1744-1814) from whom his political efforts to redistrict Massachusetts led to the coining of the term “gerrymandering” which is used by most English-speaking cultures. [biography on p.213]

p. 92, ¶ 2, line 4 – “Behind his (Franklin) argument was the now familiar fear of power an its abuses. ‘The love of power, and the love of money,’ the good doctor argued, wielded a powerful influence over the affairs of men.”

Question: What delegate first proposed not only a bicameral legislature, that had been proposed by Madison earlier, but one in which there would be two distinctly different forms of representation? [answer on page 93].

p. 95, ¶ 1, line 7 – “The branches had to be able to cooperate, but they also had to be able to restrain one another. The tools of restraint given to one branch depended upon the dangers inherent in the powers given to another.”