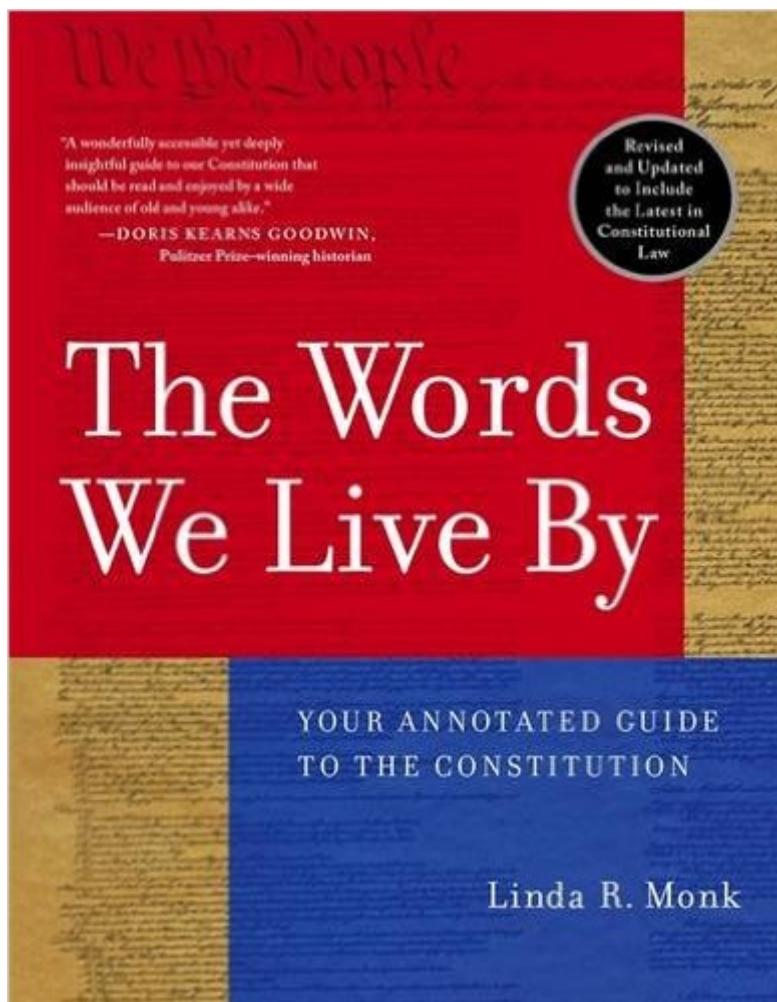


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# The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide To The Constitution (Stonesong Press Books)



## **Synopsis**

UPDATED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 10 YEARS, *The Words We Live By* takes an entertaining and informative look at America's most important historical document, now with discussions about new rulings on hot-button issues such as immigration, gay marriage, the right to bear arms, and affirmative action. In *The Words We Live By*, award-winning author and journalist Linda R. Monk explores the many interpretations of the Constitution's text in a balanced manner. *The Words We Live By* presents a new way of looking at the Constitution through entertaining and informative annotations--filled with the stories of the people behind the Supreme Court cases and historical perspective, along with enough surprises and fascinating facts and illustrations to prove that the Constitution is every bit as relevant today as it was in 1787.

## **Book Information**

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Age Range: 18 and up

Grade Level: 06 - 08

## **Customer Reviews**

Linda R. Monk, author of *The Bill of Rights: A User's Guide*, has done an amazingly fine job with this book. If you want a one-volume introduction to the Constitution of the United States, this is it. (As a lawyer I try to keep an eye out for books I can recommend to people who want to learn how U.S. law works. This one and Jay Feinman's *Law 101* are two of the best.) In just over two hundred pages, Monk walks the reader through the text of the entire document (including the Bill of

Rights), giving history, relevant cases, and an overview of competing interpretations. Sidebars present relevant quotations from, well, lots of people -- Charlton Heston on the Second Amendment, Ted Nugent on the importance of copyright, and tons of others. Monk makes her selections from across the political spectrum and she carefully refrains from taking sides herself. Terms that won't be familiar to the typical reader are defined in the margins. Despite what you may have heard, her presentation is neither 'liberal' nor 'revisionist'. (For example, her presentation on the Second Amendment is nicely handled; we hear from all sides, but Monk makes clear that a federal appellate court has held that the right to bear arms is unambiguously an individual right.) In fact, she does remarkably well at presenting all major points of view on each issue within a very short space, and she doesn't slight anyone; any reviewer who thinks otherwise didn't read the book very carefully (if at all). Don't let the noise from the peanut gallery scare you off. People who don't want a 'living constitution' don't have a clue what it would be like to have a dead one. (For one thing, libertarians -- of whom I am one -- would be miserable.

The Words We Live By is a readily accessible, quick reference analysis of the Constitution of the United States of America. It makes use of a functional format (that resembles a text book) as well as interesting little anecdotes that restore a portion of the textual and historical romance that you naturally lose in any abridgment. It presents the analytical and background material in a manner that easily correlates to the corresponding text within the Constitution. Taking a "one bite at a time" type of approach, The Words We Live By briefly examines our Constitution in multiple contexts--a refreshing little jaunt, through a critical piece of our heritage. Linda Monk employs an informative method in her writing; it kind of resembles a letter that you'd write home, describing your new surroundings. She tells things, quite technically, "how they are," and then proceeds to give some necessary background. In her own words, "the Constitution is also the product of an ongoing conversation among Americans about the meaning of freedom in their daily lives." (Monk 9) Frequently she goes beyond glossary or the bare minimum historical information to reveal glimpses of the fascinating complexity of it all. I didn't always feel edified by the sidebar comments made, but they were varied and presented a broad spectrum of things one wouldn't normally have considered. I didn't find this book to be constructed to lead the reader to any one opinion. While personally I don't care too much for her type of voice, she did employ her method very well, and it effectively brought out appealing details of the study of our history. The book begins by establishing some common ground with a general introduction, as does each section.

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