



# A Country With No Name: Tales from the Constitution

By Sebastian De Grazia

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In an imaginative and masterful work of history, Pulitzer Prize-winner Sebastian de Grazia has created two memorable characters. Nineteen-year-old Oliver Huggins is in for the tutorial of his life. For twelve afternoons, Claire St. John, a beguiling British graduate student, will reveal to him the untold story of American Constitutional history. Her means: the Socratic method. Her message: that the Constitution was itself unconstitutional, and that its authors' inability to choose a name for the republic muddied the document's meaning for the future ahead.

Through these "tutorials" de Grazia passes in review our most revered heroes—Jefferson, Washington, Marshall, Lincoln, and Thoreau—revealing the complexity of their characters. St. John's unsettling tales arouse more in her disciple than intellectual curiosity. Their relationship unrolls in so humorous and seductive a way that only a musty academic could object. Satirical, intelligent, and sure-handed, *A Country with No Name* combines history and literature, politics and law to reinvigorate our best traditions.

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## **A Country With No Name: Tales from the Constitution** By Sebastian De Grazia Bibliography

- Rank: #1909359 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-04-27
- Released on: 2011-04-27
- Format: Kindle eBook



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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a freewheeling, irreverent romp through American history, de Grazia, who won a Pulitzer in biography for *Machiavelli in Hell*, claims that the Founding Fathers illegally overthrew the first U.S. constitution?the Articles of Confederation?and framed our present Constitution to consolidate centralized federal power. Furthermore, he observes, the Constitution does not use the term Americans, and the newly unified 13 colonies called themselves "Columbia" and "America" interchangeably, which indicated a lack of cohesive national identity in the early republic. Written in the form of 12 dialogues between a female, English-born graduate student and her inquisitive male American pupil, this iconoclastic inquiry wants to force us to rethink basic assumptions about the American political system, but it frequently overstates its case with hairsplitting legalistic analyses, as when Lincoln is portrayed as a slippery lawyer whose self-appointed mission to save the Union undermined the voluntary basis of political unity. We also meet Thoreau, a self-proclaimed individualist who never left his parents' household and who erected a prefabricated dwelling along Walden Pond. But if constitutional history is not your bag, the grad student and her Yankee disciple enjoy a titillating relationship fraught with sexual undertones.

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From Library Journal

Strict constructionists, take note: de Grazia argues (via an alter ego, a mysterious Englishwoman instructing a young American) that since our country wasn't called anything until the end of the 19th century, when the names "America" and "United States" came into use, we can't really tell who are the parties to the Constitution?and hence what all our political ideals mean in the first place. From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Machiavelli in Hell*.

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From [Booklist](#)

Derek Bell, Patricia Williams, and Richard Delgado are among the names associated with "legal storytelling," a technique for studying the broad context of laws and legal decisions. De Grazia, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his biography, *Machiavelli in Hell* (1990), uses this method effectively in examining the central issue of our current culture wars--what it means to be an "American" --and myths and misinformation about the constitutional basis of the U.S., which for nearly half its existence lacked an official name for the nation and its citizens. De Grazia's British tutor, Claire St. John, mixes scuttlebutt and scandal with serious analysis in her constitutional tales for an adult student, Oliver Huggins (educated in Europe and thus in need of an American history review), who tries to concentrate on Montezuma, Tom Paine, John Marshall, and Abraham Lincoln rather than the appeal of his very attractive tutor. *A Country with No Name* is irreverent and politically incorrect, but it is also full of startling insights about the nation's character over time and its written (and unwritten) Constitution. *Mary Carroll*

### Users Review

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**Mary Sims:**

The book A Country With No Name: Tales from the Constitution give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your

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**Megan Snyder:**

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even restricted. What people must be consider when those information which is inside former life are difficult to be find than now's taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you buy it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen throughout you if you take A Country With No Name: Tales from the Constitution as the daily resource information.

**Barbara Palmer:**

The reason? Because this A Country With No Name: Tales from the Constitution is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap it but latter it will distress you with the secret it inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who also write the book in such amazing way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of gains than the other book include such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to delay having that book? If I had been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

**Frances Stone:**

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