

FEDERALISTS, ANTI-FEDERALISTS AND THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

SS.7.CG.1.10 Compare the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists regarding ratification of the U.S. Constitution and including a bill of rights.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.7.C.1.8
 - Changed from “~~Explain~~ the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists regarding ~~the~~ ratification of the Constitution and ~~inclusion~~ of a bill of rights.” to “Compare the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists regarding ratification of the U.S. Constitution and including a bill of rights.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
 - Changed from “Explain” to “Compare”
- Benchmark Clarification Changes
 - Deletion of “Students will compare the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists about the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.” (*now serves as the new benchmark language*)
- Vocabulary Changes
 - No changes

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. The Federalists, Anti-Federalists and the Bill of Rights
2. Key Arguments Favoring the New Federal Constitution
3. Key Arguments Opposing the New Federal Constitution
4. The Addition of the Bill of Rights as Compromise

1. The Federalists, Anti-Federalists and the Bill of Rights

It is a common misconception that the Framers of the U.S. Constitution were united in their efforts and desires to move past the Articles of Confederation and form a federal system that protected the nation from foreign and internal aggressors, and united the nation in their efforts to experience representative democracy, separation of powers, checks and balances and federalism.

In fact, those who attended the 1787 Constitutional Convention were divided along three dimensions in their opinion as to the best direction for government to take. The dominant perspective sought to retain the Articles of Confederation with some modification to address the concerns that weakened the Articles of Confederation. The year before the Constitutional Convention, in 1786, the Annapolis Convention included 12 delegates from five states (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia) that unanimously called for a constitutional convention. That convention, which began in May 1787 and ended the following September 17, was originally called the “Meeting of Commissioners to Remedy Defects of the Federal Government.” Most of those who attended the May 1787 convention did so because they wanted to “remedy defects” and not restructure the government. A second, smaller (and, at first, secret) group were those who supported a restructuring of government that would shift power from the states to a shared power system between the national and state governments. This second group was led by Virginia delegate James Madison who was soon joined by fellow Virginian, General George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, the New York delegate who drafted the resolution calling for the constitutional convention in the first place. This third, and smallest group, were those who supported returning to status as British subjects. Their memories of the stability they experienced living under British rule were fresh enough that they preferred returning to a known system than pursuing an unknown system (proposed federal system) or fixing an unworkable system (Articles of Confederation).

The dominant conflict at the convention was between the Federalists (those supporting a new federal system) and the Anti-Federalists (those who wanted to retain the structure of the Articles of Confederation). One of the key dimensions of conflict was whether the new federal constitution should include a listing of rights that protected individuals from government abuse of power. The resolution of this conflict, discussed in detail below, was achieved with the Bill of Rights.

2. Key Arguments Favoring the New Federal Constitution

The group that favored the new federal Constitution was the Federalists. They made the following arguments favoring the new federal Constitution:

- A. The separation of powers and checks and balances system protected the people. No one group could control the other two.

- B. The Constitution lacked a specific enumeration of rights. This approach actually protected the people because a list of protected rights might suggest that rights that were not on the list could then be violated.
- C. The Constitution would more closely unite the states as one nation.
- D. A strong central government would foster the commercial growth of the new country.

3. Key Arguments Opposing the New Federal Constitution

The group that opposed the new federal Constitution was called the Anti-Federalists. They made the following arguments against the new federal Constitution.

- A. The Constitution gave too much power to the national government at the expense of the state governments.
- B. The Constitution lacked a specific enumeration of rights which was needed in order to protect the people from the national government.
- C. The Constitution would allow the national government to maintain an army in peacetime.
- D. The “necessary and proper” clause (also called the “elastic clause”) gave too much power to Congress. The “necessary and proper” clause is found in Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. It allows Congress to do what it believes is “necessary and proper” in order to carry out its other responsibilities.
- E. The executive branch held too much power.
- F. The new constitution created a new and untested form of government
- G. The method selected for ratifying the Constitution violated the Articles of Confederation (the decentralized, state-centered government in place at the time that the Constitution was being debated)
- H. A country as large as the United States could not be controlled by one national government

4. The Addition of the Bill of Rights as Compromise

The most effective argument presented by the Anti-Federalists was the lack of a specific enumeration of rights. The American Revolution, in which the American people fought to defend their rights, had ended just 10 years earlier, and remained fresh in the minds of Americans. Americans feared that the newly formed and empowered national government might withhold those rights. The lack of a bill of rights became the centerpiece of the Anti-Federalists’ arguments against the new federal Constitution.

Article VII of the new constitution required that nine of the existing 13 state legislatures (or their conventions) ratify the document. This meant that several state governments, elected under a state-centered political system, had to be convinced that a shift in power to a shared system was in their best interests. The Anti-Federalists could take advantage of these circumstances, as it was the original purpose of the Second Continental Congress that began in May 1787, to retain the Articles of Confederation (provided that some fixes were made). However, the result of that process was a federal system. Put another way, most current state legislators expected that the Articles of Confederation would be retained, and likely supported the decentralized system, at least in principle. Anti-Federalists could capitalize on these state legislators’ concerns.

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What were the viewpoints of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists regarding the ratification of the U.S. Constitution? What were the Anti-Federalists' reasons for the inclusion of a bill of rights?		
BENCHMARK		
SS.7.CG.1.10 Compare the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists regarding ratification of the U.S. Constitution and including a bill of rights.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will identify and compare the viewpoints of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists regarding the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students will identify the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists about the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.Students will recognize the Anti-Federalists' reasons for the inclusion of a bill of rights in the U.S. Constitution.		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Anti-Federalist Papers, Anti-Federalists, Bill of Rights, Federalist Papers, Federalists, ratification		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Close reading of complex text	Inquiry with primary sources	Citing evidence
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Constitutional Convention imageConstitutional Convention Viewing GuideNational Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet (external link; optional)Federalists and Anti-Federalists readingFederalists and Anti-Federalists Guiding Questions		
B.E.S.T. STANDARDS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.		

- ELA.7.V.1.1- Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To begin this lesson, project the “Constitutional Convention” image. This image is a painting by Junius Brutus Stearns titled ‘Washington as Statesman at the Constitutional Convention’. 2. Pass out the “Constitutional Convention Viewing Guide”. 3. Review the viewing guide as a whole class and provide students with time to identify evidence and write answers in complete sentences for each question. Teacher Note: If your students require additional direction for analyzing this painting please use the “National Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet”. 4. Discuss with students the following key points about the painting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This painting was the first to portray the activities of the Constitutional Convention. ■ The painting portrays some of the delegates in attendance at the Convention with George Washington at the center. ■ This painting was set in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. ■ During the summer of 1787, between May and September, the delegates agreed to replace the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution. ■ In order for the Constitution to officially replace the Articles of Confederation, nine of thirteen states had to vote in favor of the new Constitution. After the conclusion of the convention, delegates needed to convince the state legislatures (or their conventions) to agree that this was a good document and that they should support it. 5. Pass out the “Federalists and Anti-Federalists” reading and “Federalists and Anti-Federalists Guiding Questions”. Explain to students that they will read to understand the debate that occurred over the ratification of the Constitution. Encourage students to mark the text as they read by underlining evidence that helps them answer the guiding questions. 6. Place the students into pairs and review the guiding questions as a whole class. 7. Provide time for students to complete the reading and activity sheet. 8. Pose the following questions for discussion and to assess student understanding of the reading: What were the viewpoints of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists concerning the ratification of the Constitution? Why did the Anti-Federalists want to include a bill of rights? How did the Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers play a role in this debate? 9. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment): Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using one of the following prompts: <u>Prompt 1</u> Using what you have learned from the reading and activity sheets, explain the viewpoints of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists regarding the ratification of the Constitution. As part of your response, explain why the Anti-Federalists found it necessary to include a bill of rights. <u>Prompt 2</u> During the ratification process, Anti-Federalist Patrick Henry made the following statement: <i>As long as we can preserve our unalienable rights, we are in safety.</i> Explain how this statement is related to the Anti-Federalists’ reason for including a bill of rights in the Constitution.

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
Anti-Federalist Papers	a series of essays written to oppose and defeat the proposed U.S. Constitution
Anti-Federalists	a group of people in the early United States who opposed ratification of the U.S. Constitution because they feared a strong national government and a lack of protection for individual rights
Bill of Rights	the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution
Federalist Papers	a series of essays written to explain and defend the proposed U.S. Constitution
Federalists	a group of people in the early United States who favored the establishment of a strong national government and who worked for ratification of the U.S. Constitution
ratification	the process of formally approving something; ratification of the U.S. Constitution

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* by Linda R. Monk

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Constitutional Convention Viewing Guide

Sample Answers: Federalists and Anti-Federalists Guiding Questions

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

SOURCES

Washington as Statesman at the Constitutional Convention painting by Junius Brutus Stearns:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/stearns/>

Federalists and Anti-Federalists: <http://www.ushistory.org/us/16b.asp>,

<http://www.thefederalistpapers.org/anti-federalist-papers>

Patrick Henry Quote:

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-delivered-at-the-virginia-convention-debate-of-the-ratification-of-the-constitution-june-7-1788/#:~:text=As%20long%20as%20we%20can,ignorant%20of%20the%20Spanish%20transactions>