

The Ratification Debate

Trace the arguments that shaped approval of the Constitution.

SS.8.A.3.11 "Analyze support and opposition (Federalists, Federalist Papers, Anti-Federalists, Anti-Federalist Papers, and the Bill of Rights) to ratification of the U.S. Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline reasons Federalists supported ratification. Circle Anti-Federalist fears, then number the details that show how the papers or the Bill of Rights influenced the debate.

A Constitution Under Debate

- ① After delegates signed the Constitution in 1787, the document needed approval from nine of the thirteen state conventions. Supporters, called Federalists, argued that the new plan could solve problems under the Articles of Confederation. Congress had struggled to collect taxes, regulate trade, and respond quickly to conflicts. Federalists believed a stronger national government would protect the Union while still leaving many powers to state governments. They organized speeches, newspaper essays, and convention debates to persuade voters and delegates.
- ② To explain their case, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote the Federalist Papers under the name Publius. The essays defended the Constitution and answered fears about national power. In Federalist No. 10, Madison argued that a large republic could limit the damage caused by factions. Other essays explained separation of powers and checks and balances. Federalists said these limits would keep any one branch from becoming too powerful. Their central claim was that ratification would create a more effective government without destroying liberty.
- ③ Opponents, known as Anti-Federalists, feared that the proposed Constitution gave the national government too much power. Writers using names such as Brutus and the Federal Farmer published Anti-Federalist Papers that warned about distant rulers, a powerful president, and federal courts. They noted that the Constitution did not list protections for freedoms such as speech, religion, press, or jury trials. To win support for ratification, Federalists promised amendments. In 1791, the Bill of Rights added ten amendments that protected individual liberties and limited government power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What problems under the Articles of Confederation did Federalists use to support a stronger national government?

2 How did the Federalist Papers try to reassure people who feared a powerful national government?

3 What did Anti-Federalist Papers warn about, and what missing protections concerned Anti-Federalists?

4 How did the Bill of Rights respond to Anti-Federalist opposition to ratification?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 70 to 100 word statement as a state convention delegate. Take a position on ratification, use one Federalist reason and one Anti-Federalist concern, and explain how the Bill of Rights affects your decision.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline reasons Federalists supported ratification. Circle Anti-Federalist fears, then number the details that show how the papers or the Bill of Rights influenced the debate. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What problems under the Articles of Confederation did Federalists use to support a stronger national government?	Congress could not effectively collect taxes, regulate trade, or respond quickly to conflicts.
2	How did the Federalist Papers try to reassure people who feared a powerful national government?	The essays explained that separation of powers and checks and balances would limit each branch of government.
3	What did Anti-Federalist Papers warn about, and what missing protections concerned Anti-Federalists?	They warned about distant rulers, a powerful president, and federal courts. Anti-Federalists also feared that freedoms such as speech, religion, press, and jury trials were not protected.
4	How did the Bill of Rights respond to Anti-Federalist opposition to ratification?	It added ten amendments that protected individual liberties and limited government power.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As a convention delegate, I would vote to ratify the Constitution because the Articles of Confederation left Congress unable to collect taxes or regulate trade. I would still share Anti-Federalist worries that national leaders might threaten freedoms such as speech and jury trials. The Federalist Papers explain limits on each branch, but those limits may not protect every right clearly. I would support ratification if amendments were added, because the Bill of Rights would list liberties and limit government power.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect Federalist support to stronger national government and Anti-Federalist opposition to fears about power and missing rights. For the open response, accept either position when it includes accurate evidence from both sides and explains the Bill of Rights.