Deals and Dilemmas

How competing concerns shaped the Constitution

6-12.US1.14 "Explain the key concerns and compromises that emerged at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, including arguments over the Bill of Rights and its eventual adoption, including, but not limited to: • New Jersy Plan, Virginia Plan..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage. Underline concerns about the new government, circle the agreements that addressed them, and write matching numbers beside each concern and agreement.

What Would It Take to Agree?

1. In the summer of 1787, delegates met in Philadelphia to replace the weak Articles of Confederation. They needed a national government that could collect money and make laws, but small states feared losing their voice. The Virginia Plan proposed representation in Congress based on state population, which favored larger states. The New Jersey Plan proposed one vote for each state, protecting smaller states. After tense debate, the Great Compromise created two chambers: the House of Representatives, based on population, and the Senate, with two members from each state. Both large and small states gained a form of representation.

2. Population also shaped arguments over taxes and slavery. Southern delegates wanted enslaved people counted when seats in the House were assigned, although enslaved people could not vote. Some northern delegates objected to counting people for representation while denying them freedom. The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three of every five enslaved people for both House representation and direct federal taxes assigned to states. This increased southern political power but also raised those states' share of direct taxes. Delegates also agreed that Congress could not ban the importation of enslaved people before 1808. These bargains protected slavery rather than resolving its injustice.

3. Disagreement continued over how much power the new federal government should have. Supporters said it needed authority to tax and regulate trade so states could act together. Critics worried that a powerful central government might threaten individual freedoms and state authority. The Constitution signed in 1787 did not include a bill of rights, and demands for written protections became a major issue during ratification. Supporters promised amendments to help win approval. In 1791, the first ten amendments were ratified as the Bill of Rights. They protected liberties such as speech and religion, while reserving powers not given to the federal government to states or the people.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Great Compromise address the different concerns behind the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan?

2. Why did the Three-Fifths Compromise matter for both representation and taxation? Explain one unequal result.

3. What did the agreement about the importation of enslaved people prevent Congress from doing, and whose interests did it protect?

4. Why did demands for a bill of rights grow during ratification, and how did the adopted amendments address concerns about federal power?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising a state ratifying convention in 1788. In 4 to 5 sentences, recommend whether to ratify the Constitution. Discuss two Convention compromises, a concern about power or rights, and one change you would request, explaining a trade-off in your recommendation.

ANSWER KEY

Deals and Dilemmas

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.US1.14

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage. Underline concerns about the new government, circle the agreements that addressed them, and write matching numbers beside each concern and agreement. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Great Compromise address the different concerns behind the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan?	**The House gave larger states more representatives based on population, as the Virginia Plan proposed. The Senate gave every state two members, protecting smaller states' equal voice as the New Jersey Plan proposed.**
2	Why did the Three-Fifths Compromise matter for both representation and taxation? Explain one unequal result.	**Counting three of every five enslaved people increased slaveholding states' House seats and their share of direct federal taxes. It gave those states more political power even though enslaved people could not vote.**
3	What did the agreement about the importation of enslaved people prevent Congress from doing, and whose interests did it protect?	**It prevented Congress from banning the importation of enslaved people before 1808. It protected the interests of states that wanted the trade to continue.**
4	Why did demands for a bill of rights grow during ratification, and how did the adopted amendments address concerns about federal power?	**Critics feared a powerful federal government could threaten freedoms and state authority. The Bill of Rights protected liberties such as speech and religion and reserved powers not given to the federal government to states or the people.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would recommend ratifying the Constitution, but only with a promise to add a bill of rights. The Great Compromise gives small states equal votes in the Senate while giving larger states more seats in the House. The Three-Fifths Compromise increases the political power of slaveholding states, a serious cost of the agreement. I fear that a stronger federal government could restrict speech without written protections. A bill of rights would address that danger, though it would not fix the injustice of slavery.

Accept either ratification recommendation if the response accurately explains two compromises and a trade-off. Students should distinguish the later adoption of the Bill of Rights from agreements made at the Convention.