Power and Promises

Arguments and outcomes in the Constitution's ratification debate

6-12.US1.15 "Analyze the arguments and outcomes of the ratification debate between leading Federalists and Anti-Federalists, including, but not limited to: • Federalists (John Jay, Alexander Hamilton…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two Federalist arguments, circle two Anti-Federalist arguments, and number two ways the debate shaped ratification or later amendments.

Would the Constitution Protect Liberty?

1. In 1787, Americans faced a practical question: Would the proposed Constitution fix the weak national government, or create a government too strong to control? Nine of thirteen states had to approve it before it could take effect. Federalists urged approval. Alexander Hamilton argued that a stronger national government could raise money and defend the country. John Jay warned that separate states would struggle to face foreign powers together. James Madison argued that a large republic could make it harder for any one faction, or group with a shared interest, to dominate. Together, their case linked national power with security and stability.

2. Anti-Federalists asked who might lose power if the new government gained it. Patrick Henry warned that the proposed president and national government might threaten liberty. George Mason and Elbridge Gerry refused to sign the Constitution; both objected to its lack of a bill of rights protecting individual freedoms. Writing as Brutus, an Anti-Federalist warned that a vast republic would place representatives too far from ordinary people and let national power grow. Samuel Adams raised concerns about rights and state authority in Massachusetts. Their arguments were not identical, but each challenged the idea that stronger central power automatically protected freedom.

3. The debate shaped the result, not just the speeches. In Massachusetts, Samuel Adams supported ratification after delegates agreed to recommend amendments protecting rights. Other states also proposed amendments while approving the Constitution. Virginia ratified after a close fight in which Henry argued against it and Madison argued for it. The required ninth state, New Hampshire, ratified in June 1788, so the new government could begin under the Constitution. Congress later proposed amendments, and ten became the Bill of Rights in 1791. Federalists won ratification, but Anti-Federalist demands helped shape the protections that followed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Hamilton and Henry disagree about the likely effect of a stronger national government?

2. Why would Madison and Brutus reach different conclusions about a large republic?

3. How did Mason and Gerry's objection connect to a change that followed ratification?

4. How did Samuel Adams's position in Massachusetts help turn disagreement into an outcome?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are speaking to undecided delegates before their state votes. In four or five sentences, recommend ratifying or rejecting the Constitution, weigh arguments from two named people on opposite sides, and propose a way to address the other side's strongest concern.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.US1.15

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two Federalist arguments, circle two Anti-Federalist arguments, and number two ways the debate shaped ratification or later amendments. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Hamilton and Henry disagree about the likely effect of a stronger national government?	**Hamilton argued it could raise money and defend the country. Henry feared that it, along with the proposed president, might threaten liberty.**
2	Why would Madison and Brutus reach different conclusions about a large republic?	**Madison thought a large republic would make it harder for one faction to dominate. Brutus thought its size would distance representatives from the people and allow national power to grow.**
3	How did Mason and Gerry's objection connect to a change that followed ratification?	**They objected to the lack of a bill of rights. Ten amendments protecting rights later became the Bill of Rights.**
4	How did Samuel Adams's position in Massachusetts help turn disagreement into an outcome?	**Adams had raised concerns about rights and state authority, but he supported ratification after delegates agreed to recommend amendments protecting rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I urge you to ratify the Constitution because Hamilton is right that the country needs a national government able to raise money and provide defense. Yet Mason's objection to the missing bill of rights matters because liberty needs clear protections. We should approve the Constitution while recommending amendments that protect individual freedoms. This plan would strengthen the country without ignoring the concern that national power could grow too great.

Accept answers that accurately connect a named person's argument to an opposing argument or an outcome. For Your Turn, the proposed response to the other side may differ from the historical result if it addresses the concern raised.