Whose Voice Counts?

Compare different views of fairness in the 1787 Congress debate

6.P.1.2.B "Answer supporting questions related to social studies content knowledge and make connections to different interpretations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one fact that supports each side's view of fairness, circle words that show how the views differ, and number the two parts of the compromise. Your marks will help you compare the interpretations.

Two Ways to Count a Voice

1 In 1787, delegates met in Philadelphia to write a new plan for the United States government. One hard question was how states would be represented in Congress, the part of government that makes laws. Under the earlier Articles of Confederation, each state had one vote in Congress. Delegates from states with many people worried that this rule gave their residents too little say. Delegates from states with fewer people worried that a new rule based on population would leave them with little power. Both sides talked about fairness, but they measured it differently.

2 The Virginia Plan proposed that representation in the national legislature be based on population. Supporters from larger states could argue that more residents should mean more representatives. The New Jersey Plan proposed equal representation for each state. Supporters from smaller states could argue that states should keep an equal voice, no matter how many people lived in each one. These plans answered the same question: Whose voice should count when laws are made? Yet each plan treated a different group, residents or states, as the starting point.

3 Delegates reached a compromise: each state would have two senators, while seats in the House of Representatives would be based on population. A delegate who feared losing state power might see the Senate as a safeguard. A delegate who wanted more voice for residents of larger states might point to the House instead. But the debate over who counted was not settled fairly for everyone. Women could not vote in most states, and enslaved people could not vote. The compromise joined two views of fairness without giving every person a political voice.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why might delegates from large states and small states have judged the one-vote rule differently?

2. How did the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan answer the question of whose voice should count?

3. Which part of the compromise might each side have valued most, and why?

4. How do the voting limits in the passage challenge the delegates' views of fairness?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short museum label that judges whether the compromise was fair. Use at least two facts from the passage, compare the large-state and small-state views, and consider one group left out of voting.

ANSWER KEY

Whose Voice Counts?

GRADE 6 · 6.P.1.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one fact that supports each side's view of fairness, circle words that show how the views differ, and number the two parts of the compromise. Your marks will help you compare the interpretations. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why might delegates from large states and small states have judged the one-vote rule differently?	**Large-state delegates thought one vote gave their many residents too little say. Small-state delegates feared that voting by population would leave their states with little power.**
2	How did the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan answer the question of whose voice should count?	**The Virginia Plan based representation on population, emphasizing residents. The New Jersey Plan gave each state equal representation, emphasizing states.**
3	Which part of the compromise might each side have valued most, and why?	**Large-state delegates might have valued the House because its seats were based on population. Small-state delegates might have valued the Senate because every state received two senators.**
4	How do the voting limits in the passage challenge the delegates' views of fairness?	**Neither view gave everyone a political voice: women could not vote in most states, and enslaved people could not vote.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Was the 1787 compromise fair? Delegates from large states could praise the House because its seats depended on population, while small-state delegates could praise the Senate because each state received two seats. Both groups gained a way to protect their interests. Yet women could not vote in most states, and enslaved people could not vote, so the agreement did not give everyone a voice.

Accept other supported judgments about fairness. The museum label should compare both state views, use at least two passage facts, and consider a group excluded from voting.