Choosing a Republic

Hamilton and Madison on the proposed Constitution

USG.C.2.2.A "Explain the general features of the Constitution of the United States of America as outlined by Alexander Hamilton in Federalist Paper No. 1 and by James Madison in Federalist Paper No. 10."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Hamilton's claim about how people should choose a government and his claim about why the decision matters beyond New York. Circle two features Madison says could limit the harm caused by factions.

A Choice About Government

1 In 1788, New Yorkers faced a decision: should their state ratify the Constitution drafted in Philadelphia the year before? Alexander Hamilton opened *Federalist No. 1* by asking readers to take the debate seriously. He argued that Americans could decide whether people can establish good government through "reflection and choice," rather than leave their political future to "accident and force." The decision mattered beyond one state, he said, because others would judge whether self-government could work. Hamilton presented the proposed Constitution as a plan for a stronger union, but urged readers to weigh arguments instead of trusting claims shaped by ambition or fear.

2 James Madison, writing in *Federalist No. 10*, focused on a threat that even a free government must face: factions. A faction is a group driven by a shared interest or passion that threatens other people's rights or the community's long-term interests. Madison argued that differences in wealth and property create lasting divisions, and laws cannot simply erase them. Taking away liberty would destroy the freedom that allows factions to form, a cure worse than the problem. The Constitution's answer, in his view, was not to eliminate disagreement. It was to build a republic able to control the harmful effects of factions.

3 Madison explained that a republic uses elected representatives, rather than having every citizen vote directly on every law. Representatives might refine public views, although Madison warned that voters could also choose people with selfish aims. A large republic could include more voters and a greater variety of interests than a small one. That variety makes it harder for any single faction to gather a majority and act together against others. If a faction remains a minority, ordinary voting can defeat its proposal. For Madison, the Constitution's extended union and system of representation offered ways to protect rights while keeping political liberty.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Hamilton's contrast between "reflection and choice" and "accident and force" frame the decision to adopt a constitution?

2. Why does Madison reject removing liberty as a way to stop factions, and what must the Constitution do instead?

3. How might elected representatives help address factions, and what risk does Madison acknowledge?

4. How could the Constitution's extended union make it harder for a majority faction to threaten rights?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a powerful business group supports a law that would harm other residents. In one paragraph of 80 to 110 words, explain how Hamilton would want citizens to judge a proposed constitutional plan and how two features Madison describes could limit the group's power. Include one risk Madison acknowledges.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.2.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Hamilton's claim about how people should choose a government and his claim about why the decision matters beyond New York. Circle two features Madison says could limit the harm caused by factions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Hamilton's contrast between "reflection and choice" and "accident and force" frame the decision to adopt a constitution?	**People can deliberately decide what government to establish instead of letting chance or force determine their political future.**
2	Why does Madison reject removing liberty as a way to stop factions, and what must the Constitution do instead?	**Removing liberty would destroy freedom. The Constitution must control the harmful effects of factions without eliminating liberty.**
3	How might elected representatives help address factions, and what risk does Madison acknowledge?	**Representatives might refine public views, but voters could elect people with selfish aims.**
4	How could the Constitution's extended union make it harder for a majority faction to threaten rights?	**A larger republic contains more varied interests, making it harder for one faction to form a majority and act together.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Suppose a business group supports a law that would silence competitors so it can earn more money. Hamilton would urge citizens to judge the constitutional plan through careful debate, not let the group's promises or fearful claims decide the issue. Madison would call the group a faction if its goal threatened others' rights or the public good. Elected representatives might reject its proposal after considering wider needs. In a large union, varied interests would also make it harder for that group to form a majority. Still, voters might elect representatives who serve the group instead.

Accept explanations that connect Hamilton to deliberate public judgment and Madison to representation and varied interests in an extended republic. The response should also recognize that representatives might serve selfish interests.