

Debating the Constitution

Analyze competing arguments and the role of civil discourse.

8.17.A “analyze the arguments of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, including those of Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and George Mason, and explain how their debates exemplify civil discourse; and”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each Federalist reason for a stronger national government, circle each Anti-Federalist concern, and number two details that show civil discourse.

A Debate Over Power

- ① At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Americans faced a serious question: how much power should a new national government have? Federalists supported the proposed Constitution. Alexander Hamilton argued that the Union needed enough power to defend the country, raise money, and carry out national duties. In *The Federalist* No. 10, James Madison argued that a large republic could limit harm from factions, groups driven by shared interests. Its variety of interests would make it harder for a majority to unite to oppress others. Both men supported a stronger national structure because they believed it could protect public safety and stability.
- ② Anti-Federalists worried that the Constitution gave the central government too much power. Patrick Henry warned that distant national leaders might threaten the liberties won in the Revolution. He questioned whether the people could closely watch such a large government. George Mason objected that the Constitution lacked a bill of rights to protect freedoms such as speech and fair trials. He also feared that national power could weaken the states. Henry and Mason did not reject liberty or order, but they believed rights and local self-government needed stronger safeguards.
- ③ These conflicts did not mean that every speaker used calm language. Still, the debates often showed civil discourse, public discussion in which people exchange reasons while addressing a shared problem. Federalists and Anti-Federalists gave speeches, wrote essays, and argued at state ratifying conventions. They challenged opposing ideas about power, rights, and representation instead of settling the issue by force. The debate led supporters to promise amendments, and the Bill of Rights was added after ratification. Civil discourse did not erase disagreement, but it allowed citizens to weigh arguments and change the Constitution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did Hamilton's and Madison's arguments each justify a stronger national government?

2 How did Patrick Henry's concern about the national government differ from George Mason's concern?

3 What problem did Madison say a large republic could help manage, and how would it help?

4 Give two details from the passage that show civil discourse during the ratification debate. Explain how one detail supports civil discourse.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly four sentences for a mini-debate. In the first two sentences, present a Federalist argument from Hamilton or Madison. In the third sentence, have Henry or Mason respectfully state an Anti-Federalist concern, and in the fourth sentence identify a shared goal or point of agreement.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each Federalist reason for a stronger national government, circle each Anti-Federalist concern, and number two details that show civil discourse. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Hamilton's and Madison's arguments each justify a stronger national government?	Hamilton said it needed power to defend the country, raise money, and carry out national duties. Madison said a large republic could control the effects of factions. Both saw a stronger national structure as a way to protect public safety and stability.
2	How did Patrick Henry's concern about the national government differ from George Mason's concern?	Henry feared that distant national leaders could threaten liberty and be hard for people to watch. Mason objected to the lack of a bill of rights and feared weakened state power.
3	What problem did Madison say a large republic could help manage, and how would it help?	It could limit harm from factions. A greater variety of interests would make it harder for an oppressive majority to form and act together.
4	Give two details from the passage that show civil discourse during the ratification debate. Explain how one detail supports civil discourse.	Accept any two: speakers gave speeches, wrote essays, argued at state ratifying conventions, challenged opposing ideas, and did not settle the issue by force. The explanation should connect a detail to exchanging reasons about a shared problem rather than using force.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hamilton argues that the national government needs power to defend the country and raise money. He believes this structure will bring public safety and stability. Mason responds, "I respect the need for security, but a bill of rights must protect freedoms from that government." They disagree about safeguards, yet both address the shared problem of protecting the people.

Accept historically accurate Federalist and Anti-Federalist arguments from the passage. The response should include all four required sentence roles and show respectful disagreement or a shared goal in the final two sentences.