

Lesson 5: Ratification and the Conflict Over a Bill of Rights

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- There was a struggle between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists over the ratification, or approval, of the Constitution.
- Federalists favored the Constitution. They wanted to limit state power and believed in a strong executive branch.
- Anti-Federalists believed the Articles of Confederation just needed to be changed. They did not favor the Constitution. They were not in support of a strong national government.
- Anti-Federalists also worried that the Constitution did not do enough to protect individual rights.
- As a compromise, a promise was made to add a Bill of Rights to the Constitution. This helped get it ratified.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students explore the struggle to ratify the Constitution. They read and summarize an informational text selection and then engage in small group discussions on the positions of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Students then evaluate the arguments about the need to add a Bill of Rights.

Content Expectations

5 – U3.3.7: Describe the concern that some people had about individual rights and why the inclusion of a Bill of Rights was needed for ratification.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects:

SL.5.4: Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Key Concepts

amendment
Bill of Rights
compromise
Federalists and Anti-Federalists
limited government
U.S. Constitution

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Overhead projector or document camera/projector

Student Resource

Bower, Burt, et al. *America's Past*, Social Studies Alive Program. Palo Alto, CA: Teacher's Curriculum Institute, 2010 or a similar fifth grade social studies textbook. Pp. 201-202.

Teacher Resource

Egbo, Carol. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 5)*. Teacher-made material. Michigan Citizenship Collaborative, 2012.

Lesson Sequence

1. Using Word Card #13, explain that following the Constitution Convention the process of trying to get the Constitution ratified, or approved, began. This was not an easy process.
2. Give each student a copy of "Steps to Ratify the Constitution", located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 5)* and have them read the first two paragraphs independently. Then, discuss use the following questions to discuss the content of the reading:
 - Who created the Constitution?
 - Why did some believe they had exceeded their authority?
 - After the Framers had completed and signed the Constitution what had to happen before the Constitution went into effect?
 - How did the Framers make sure the people had the opportunity to give their consent to be governed by the new constitution?
3. Using Word Cards #14 and #15, explain that two groups, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, had serious differences regarding the Constitution. Give each student a copy of the "Federalists and Anti-Federalists" chart, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 5)* and explain that students should complete the text reading they began in Step 2 and summarize the viewpoints of each group on the chart. Note that a chart showing sample answers has also been included in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 5)*. If your textbook includes a section on this topic, you may also want to have students read that in order to locate additional information for their charts.
4. Give students time to read and complete the chart. Then, review the reading in a whole class discussion using the following questions:
 - What made ratification of the Constitution difficult?
 - Who were the two sides in the ratification debate?
 - What were some of the Anti-Federalists' concerns?
 - How did the Federalists respond to these concerns?
 - How did the Federalists and Anti-Federalists solve their disagreements?
5. Divide students into groups of four and assign two students in each group to represent the Federalists' point of view and the other two students to represent the Anti-Federalists' point of view. Have students discuss the ratification of the Constitution from their assigned perspective, using what they learned in the lesson and their chart from Step 3.
6. Lead a discussion on the Federalist/Anti-Federalist debate by having students summarize the small group discussions in Step 5. Explain that because of the two different viewpoints regarding the Constitution there was a struggle to get the Constitution ratified. Both sides tried

to convince people to join their side, often using writing as a way to convince people. For example, Federalists Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay wrote 85 essays for New York newspapers defending the Constitution against the criticism of the Anti-Federalists. These essays were later collected into a two-volume set called “The Federalist.”

7. Display “Ratification of the Constitution”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 5)*. Guide students in a discussion of the information contained on it using the following questions:
 - What state was the first to ratify the Constitution?
 - Do you think there was much disagreement in this state regarding the Constitution? Why or why not?
 - What was the last state to ratify the Constitution?
 - Why do you think it took so long for the Constitution to be ratified in this state?
 - Which state was the last to ratify the Constitution for it to go into effect?
 - In which states was the vote very close?
8. Draw students’ attention to the section of the Ratification chart that shows the information for Massachusetts. Explain that Federalists considered this state to be critical in the struggle for ratification. One of the issues that concerned the people of this state, was the lack of a Bill of Rights (Word Card #16) in the Constitution. Federalists at this time changed their position on a Bill of Rights in an attempt to compromise. They promised a Bill of Rights would be added to the Constitution after it was ratified. This resulted in Massachusetts ratifying in February of 1788. Explain that a Bill of Rights was proposed in 1789 and ratified by the necessary eleven states in 1791. Explain that students will explore this important document in the next lesson.

Assessment

The chart students create in Step 3 can be used as an assessment. As an alternative, students could write a short essay describing the differences between the Anti-Federalists and Federalists including their different viewpoints on a Bill of Rights.